



# PT Butler

## Bible Study Notebooks

### Study of First Corinthians

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## TEACHER'S NOTES I CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

### Introduction

“Corinth” in Greek language is Korinthos, meaning “ornament.” In Paul’s day Corinth was the capital of the Roman province called by them, Achaia, the “ornament” of Greece, and the most important city in Greece at that time (even more important from the Roman viewpoint than Athens). Athens was the intellectual center of Greece—Corinth was the commercial and military center of Greece in Roman times. The Romans declared Greece and Corinth “free” in 196 B.C. But a Greek rebellion in 146 B.C. caused the Romans to destroy Corinth, totally, its famous art treasures were taken to Rome as booty. Julius Caesar rebuilt Corinth as a Roman colony and made it the capital of Achaia in 46 B.C. Corinth occupied a strategic geographical position. It was the southern gate on the isthmus into Greece. The city was built along the side of, and at the foot of, the 2000 ft. high Mount Acrocorinthus. The acropolis of Corinth was atop this mountain. On a clear day you could see from this acropolis 40 miles northeast to the city of Athens. Corinth had three harbors. Ancient seafaring men so dreaded having to make the 200 mile voyage around the southern capes of the Peloponnesus, they would tie ropes to their ships, put logs under them, and drag them across the isthmus. Large ships were unloaded, dragged across while the cargo was carried across, and when the cargo was put back on board they would sail on across the Mediterranean Sea. Many attempts were made to build a canal across the isthmus in ancient times; the most notable being that of the Roman emperor Nero (about 15 years after Paul established the Christian Church there) in A.D. 66.

The acropolis, in Paul’s day, had the pantheon upon it where the Greek “gods” were housed. Poseidon, god of the sea, was the chief “god” of Corinth. Athletic games were held there every 2 years in honor of Poseidon. The agora (market place and public buildings) were also on the acropolis. In Paul’s day, Corinth was a city of wealth, luxury and immorality! To “live like a Corinthian” meant to live a life of profligacy and debauchery. All over the Roman empire, women who were promiscuous or of loose morals were often called “Corinthian girls.” The reason for this is that at the temple of Aphrodite, on the Acropolis, there were 1000 “Corinthian girls” employed as hierodouloi (literally, “temple maiden servants”)—actually prostitutes. Aphrodite was the goddess of love (eros). Worship at the temple involved sexual intercourse with one of these “priestesses.” This “worship” formed a great temptation, even to the new Christians at Corinth, as evidenced from Paul’s exhortations against it (1 Cor. 5:1ff; 6:9-19). The temple of Aphrodite attracted “worshippers” from all over the Roman world. It was customary in a stage play at the theater for a Corinthian actor to come on the scene drunk. Much drunkenness, homosexuality, adultery, fornication, robbery, thievery, idolatry and immorality of all kinds went on in Corinth. Corinth had many important industries—its pottery and brass and marble for building columns were famous all over the world. Sex crazy, sports crazy, affluent and cynical—would this be a place to start a church? Indeed!

At the height of its power and influence, Corinth probably had a population of

200,000 free born Greek citizens and 500,000 slaves—about the population density of St. Louis, Missouri. Its population consisted of descendants of the Roman colonists who came in 46 B.C (100 years before Paul). Many Romans came for business from Italy, and with a large Greek population, with many “strangers” from different nationalities, and the inevitable Jewish community with its synagogue such an ethnic mixture made Corinth a very cosmopolitan, urban giant of a city in the Roman empire of Paul’s day!

Paul visited Corinth for the first time on his 2nd missionary journey (Acts 18) about A.D. 50-51. Claudius was emperor of Rome at that time. He had just been to Athens where he was not well received so he came to Corinth hesitantly (“in much weakness, fear and trembling” 1 Cor. 2:3). The Lord told Paul he had much people in this city. Paul became acquainted with Aquila and Priscilla, tent-makers like he. During his stay of 1 ½ years he resided in their home. Soon after his arrival, Silas and Timothy joined him with news from Thessalonica. Paul undoubtedly wrote 1st and 2nd Thessalonians from Corinth and sent them to the Christians in Thessalonica to encourage them in their persecutions by the Jews and Gentiles. Every Sabbath Paul preached in a synagogue of the Jews; he met with strong opposition and gave the rest of his stay in Corinth to the Gentiles (Acts 18:6). Titus Justus, Crispus, Gaius and Stephanas were some of Paul’s first converts. During Paul’s stay, Gallio, the elder brother of the Roman philosopher Seneca came to his rescue when the Jews tried to have him imprisoned.

Paul seems to have visited Corinth again, during his 3rd missionary journey when he was headquartered at Ephesus (2 Cor. 12:14; 13:1). While at Ephesus, Paul wrote an earlier letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 5:9) which has been lost, so what we call “First” Corinthians may very well be “Second” Corinthians, and “Second” Corinthians may be “Third” Corinthians. Paul wrote what we call our “First” Corinthians from the city of Ephesus about A.D. 56 or 57 in answer to a letter from Corinth (probably brought to him from there by Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus, 1 Cor. 16:17). This letter from Corinth probably related some of the problems in the church there. Paul had also heard of factions in the church from the servants of Chloe (1:11), probably one of the women members of the church. Paul wrote this letter to deal with these problems which plagued the saints (that is the theme of 1 Corinthians!). Of course, “the church” at Corinth was probably composed of many small groups of Christians meeting in different homes. There were no church buildings as such until about 200 A.D.

## TEACHER'S NOTES I CORINTHIANS

### 1 CORINTHIANS, 1:1-31

All “saints” (i.e., Christians) have problems! Any preacher or evangelist or teacher who tries to bring a person to Christ and tells them all their “problems” will vanish is a false teacher! It was never true of faithful believers in the Old Testament—not even of those “saintly” prophets! It was not true of the Son of God become incarnated in a fleshly body, Jesus Christ! It was never true that the chosen 12 apostles of Jesus had no problems! **IN FACT, BECOMING A CHRISTIAN MAY EXACERBATE THE PRESSURE OF TEMPTATION AND TRIAL!** The Christians (saints) in Corinth were beset with “problems”—nearly every chapter of Paul’s “first” (probably second) epistle to Corinth deals with some problem in the church at Corinth. The Corinthian church was only 6 years “old” when Paul wrote this epistle. They had problems with schism (contention, division); with Paul’s apostolic authority to proclaim the word of God; with perceptions that Paul was playing “favorites” in his ministry; with sexual immorality and their perception that it was sophistication; with disciplining a recalcitrant brother in Christ; with their lawsuits against Christian brethren; with sexuality, marriage, divorce and remarriage; with matters of opinion; with Christian freedom; with presumptuous attitudes toward gender roles in the church; with disorderly worship; with diversity in the body; with true Christian love; with what is edifying and what is not; with the most fundamental doctrine of Christianity—the resurrection of Christ; and with support for the ongoing of the gospel.

By God’s grace, sinners become “saints.” God is faithful to keep his promises to save sinners by grace (1 Cor. 1:8-9). No matter how immature and carnally-minded a believer is, he/she is still a “saint” and a brother/sister if he/she remains teachable. No matter how wrong some of these Corinthian “saints” were about Christian doctrine and practice, so long as they were willing to receive Paul’s word as divinely-inspired instruction and grow toward it, he said they were “sanctified in Christ Jesus.” Remember, kingdom growth is **SLOW AND DIFFICULT** (Mark 4:26-29) and the devil is always sowing “tares” in the same “field” in which God’s servants are sowing good seed. All members of Christ’s church are “erring-brethren”—they may err in different areas, but they all err! What was true of the “saints” at Corinth was true of all the “saints” in all the cities to whom the epistles of Paul, Peter, John, Jude, and James were written! Even apostles erred, after the resurrection of Christ—Paul “rebuked” Peter to his face at Antioch for his “error” (Ga. 2:11)! Paul found himself unable to keep God’s word as he should (Rom. 7:7-25). Paul instructed Timothy to “stick to the preaching of the Scriptures” (1 Tim. 4:11-16) because **IT IS THE SCRIPTURES, NOT THE OPINIONS OF PREACHERS AND TEACHERS, THAT ARE “PROFITABLE FOR TEACHING, REPROOF, CORRECTION, AND FOR TRAINING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS..”** (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Paul appealed to the Christians at Corinth on the basis of the name (authority) of the one Lord of all Christians, Jesus Christ, that they all agree. The Greek phrase in 1:10 is, *hina to auto legete pantes*, literally, “that the one thing you may be saying, all!” In this

context Paul is directing them the Corinthians to all say (agree on) one thing— i.e., that there is only one church of God, i.e., one body of Christians, over which Jesus Christ alone is the head! These Corinthian Christians are exhorted to quit “choosing up sides” between the apostolic leadership of the church as if there could be two or three or four “heads” of the church! NO APOSTLE, DEAD OR LIVING (INCLUDING SELF-PROCLAIMED ONES LIKE THE POPE, JOSEPH SMITH, OR “FATHER DIVINE”) IS THE “HEAD” OF THE CHURCH. JESUS CHRIST ALONE IS THE “BOSS” OF THE CHURCH! Paul is not here insisting that all Christians must agree on every issue of life—especially those issues and practices not expressly commanded or clearly enjoined in the New Testament of Jesus Christ!

All Christians should agree in the fundamental doctrines and apostolic precedents which are clearly stated in the NT. For Christians to be ordered by Paul (or any other apostle) to agree on everything would contradict what Paul teaches in 1 Cor. chs. 8-9-10, and Rom. 14. It would also contradict Paul’s own actions with Barnabas over whether to take John Mark with them on a missionary journey. When a congregation truly agrees (has one-mindedness) on the fundamental doctrines of the NT, it will have UNITY in explicit doctrine and LIBERTY in matters where the NT does not speak clearly! But even liberty does not mean LICENSE. Liberty demands responsibility under the principle of LOVE IN ALL THINGS—and “love” is not self-defining—God alone gives the ultimate definition of “love.” “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.” 1 Jn. 5:2-3.

Many times it is the “leaders” in the church who, like Diotrefes (3 Jn. 9-10), have succumbed to worldly pride, ambition, and hostility that create division. Most often, however, it is the members (the “followers, the sheep”) who are ignorant, hostile, selfish, greedy, ambitious or contentious who create divisions in the church. Paul certainly didn’t put himself off to the Corinthian church as someone who arrogantly wished to usurp the authority of Christ over the church! (1 Cor. 1:10-31; 2:1-5; 2 Cor. 1:15-24; 3:1-6; 7:1-4; 10:1-18; 11:1-33; 12:1-21). We can speculate on some of the rationale the Corinthian Christian church used for dividing over human leaders: (a) alleging the “charisma” (Apollos) of one leader over the other leader; (b) the supposed “standing” or “position” of one leader (Peter) compared to that of the other; (c) an obsession for a tangible leader (i.e., an apostle) versus an invisible “head” (Jesus Christ was gone from the earth); (d) a hope by the “choosers” to be able to manipulate their chosen (Paul) “leader”; (e) downright spiritual laziness; (f) a desire to be like the “structured” society around them (e.g. the people of the OT wanting a “king” like the nations); (g) ignorance of the apostolic preaching on this subject; (h) “it works”—pragmatism. We know what causes division in the church—IT IS FLESHLY-MINDEDNESS! We have that on the authority of the apostolic Word of God. James wrote, “What causes wars, and what causes fightings among you? Is it not your passions (Greek word for “passions” is hedonon, from which the English word “hedonism” comes) that are at war in your members? You desire (Greek for “desire” is epithumeite, “lust”) and do not have; so you kill. And you covet (Greek for “covet” is zeloute, English, “jealous”) and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions (Greek, again, is hedonais). Unfaithful (Greek word for “unfaithful” is moichalides, “adulterers”) creatures! Do you not know that friendship (Greek word for “friendship” is philia, “love”) with the world is enmity (Greek word for “enmity”

is echthra “hatred, hostility”) with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (Jas. 4:1-4). Laziness causes division in the body of Christ (see 1 Thess. 4:9-12; 2 Thess. 3:6-15). Sexual misconduct causes division in the church (1 Cor. 5:1-13). In a word it is SIN, opposition to the apostolic doctrine (Rom. 16:17), that causes division in the body of Christ!

There does not have to be division in the church of Jesus Christ. Harmony, peace, love, and unity can be accomplished. If it can't, then Jesus' prayer in John 17 is a hoax. DIVISION IN ANY CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION IS ONLY INEVITABLE WHEN MEMBERS AND/OR LEADERS DELIBERATELY, ARROGANTLY AND IMPENITENTLY VIOLATE CLEAR NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE OR DELIBERATELY, ARROGANTLY AND IMPENITENTLY VIOLATE THE LOVE OF CHRIST FOR OTHERS AND FOR THEMSELVES! The church of Christ (members and leaders) must “give diligence” to “maintain” the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). The “unity” is already there, in the church, through the Holy Spirit’s “bonding” of each member to the other member into ONE BODY (1 Cor. 12:12-13)—all Christians, by one Holy Spirit’s conviction and authority, are “baptized into one body.” It is every Christian’s responsibility to keep that unity tied-up with “peace” (wholeness, integrity, goodness).

There is only one name (authority) by which Christians are “baptized” (immersed)—the name and authority of Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; 4:12; 10:4; 22:16). Believers are not baptized in the name of (by the authority of) the church! Paul was thankful that he had not baptized many at Corinth with his own hands lest some glory in the fact that they had been immersed by the great apostle Paul! We know he immersed at Corinth people named Crispus (Acts 18:8), and Gaius, and the household of Stephanas (1 Cor. 16:15). He could remember no others! Paul would have a difficult time understanding some preachers today who take great pains to advertise the number of baptisms they perform. PAUL WAS NOT DENIGRATING THE BIBLICAL, NEW TESTAMENT, NECESSITY OF BAPTISM OF BELIEVERS. Anyone with an ounce of intelligence, honesty, and knowledge of the New Testament knows that! Paul himself was immersed into Christ (Acts 22:16). Paul preached that those who believed in Christ must be immersed in water unto the remission of sins (Acts 16:33; 18:8; 19:1-7). Otherwise, there would have been no questions raised about some claiming to have been baptized in Paul’s name! Paul wrote in his epistles that immersion (baptism) was necessary to be “in Christ” (Rom. 6:1-11; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:11-12). And, since Paul claimed and proved that he preached and wrote under the inspiration and inerrancy of the Holy Spirit, what he preached and wrote could not contradict what Holy Spirit says in the rest of the NT about the necessity of baptism (e.g. Matt. 28:18-20; Heb. 10:22; 1 Pet. 3:21).

Even Jesus never baptized the people he converted (Jn. 4:1-2). The apostles undoubtedly did not, with their own hands, baptize each of the 3000 converts on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2;38ff). There is no commandment in the NT that only an ordained clergyman may officiate at the immersion of a believer into Christ. There was no problem with immersion in water in obedience to the gospel covenant of salvation in the first century church; neither in mode nor in purpose! The problem Paul had to deal with in Corinth was sectarianism, not gospel immersion. It is not immersion Paul is renouncing here but the

argument over who immersed whom! He is disclaiming the idea that being immersed by any particular human leader, or church, makes the immersed one a member of any religious faction or party. He is saying that it is possible to overemphasize baptism. Baptism is not the source of human redemption. Redemption is what Christ did on the cross and through his resurrection—he (Christ) is the source of our redemption (1 Cor. 1:30). But the NT is equally plain to state that we cannot receive that “source” without accepting the “Source’s” covenant terms. The NT command to be immersed in water for the remission of sins is one of the initial covenant terms by which that redemption is granted (by grace) to a believer. The NT is plain: to possess redemption requires covenant relationship and covenant relationship requires, initially, faith, repentance and immersion in water (baptism). But to make the person or party or church by whom one is immersed the central issue of redemption is to empty the cross of Christ of its power. Paul is declaring that he was not commissioned an apostle of Christ to compete in sophisticated word-games (Gr. sophia logou). He wanted no one to become his disciple or trust their redemption in his eloquence or other abilities. The fact of the cross of Christ cannot apply its power when human pride gathers followers through human cleverness. Such an approach inevitably produces heresy and destroys unity in Christ.

BY ANYONE’S STANDARDS THERE’S NOTHING “FOOLISH” ABOUT PREACHING! Preaching is argumentation, dialogue, reasoning, expounding, teaching, persuasion. EVERYBODY DOES THAT! What the world calls “foolishness” is the thing (message) preached, the kerygma, as Paul calls it. Vicarious atonement dispensed by grace through covenant relationship to Christ is what the world calls “foolishness.” And without the historic facts of the Gospel record, it is! Unification of men and women from all different strata and mentality of humankind in one brotherhood of peace and love is operative only by the instrumentality of the Word of the Holy Spirit of God (the New Testament Scriptures). That is so because only the New Testament Scriptures are the final, complete and perfect revelation from God. It alone is the divinely-sanctioned, perfectly-delivered, and supernaturally-functional instrument for man’s redemption. Paul is saying in 1 Cor. 1:18ff) the word (teaching or doctrine) of the cross is foolishness (Greek word for “foolishness” is moria, “moronic, stupidity) to those who are continuing down the road to perdition! However, God’s declaration and demonstration in the cross (and resurrection) of Jesus Christ that he atoned for all the sins of all the world is the dynamic (Greek, dunamis, “power, dynamic, dynamite”) of God to those who are continuing to be save through it.

It doesn’t make sense, from a strictly human perspective, that someone else should suffer (or could suffer) for my sins. It does not seem reasonable; it does not seem fair. Bishop G. Bromely Oxnam, former head of the World Council of Churches, wrote the following: “We hear much of the substitutionary theory of the atonement. This theory to me is immoral. If Jesus paid it all, or if He is the substitute for me, or if He is the sacrifice for all the sin of the world, then why discuss forgiveness? The books are closed. Another has paid the debt, borne the penalty. I owe nothing. I am absolved. I cannot see forgiveness as predicated upon the act of someone else. It is my sin. I must atone” A Testament of the Faith, 1958, p. 144. Bishop Oxnam was right until he got to the last three sentences! And this is precisely why the doctrine of the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ on the cross at Calvary must be established on the basis of the historically-verified resurrection of Jesus

Christ. It is a doctrine that is unacceptable to human pride. It is a doctrine that must be accepted on the basis of faith (a faith based on verification). IT IS A DOCTRINE REVEALED! Jesus teaches that man's willingness to accept revelation from God is PRIMARY in the matter of kingdom citizenship (Matt. 11:1-30). So long as there are those claiming citizenship in the kingdom of God, and are unwilling to let God give arbitrary, indisputable, seemingly-irrational revelations in the Bible, there will be division. FINAL AUTHORITY IS THE ISSUE IN CHRISTIAN UNITY!

Verse 1:19 is a quotation from Isaiah 29:14 as God's prophecy that in the Messianic era he would deliver a divine revelation which would destroy dependence upon human pride (read all of Isa. chs. 28-29). Isaiah predicts there that the Messianic kingdom (the church) would be one in which people would humble themselves and let God teach them by revelation rather than presumptuously thinking they knew all they needed to know through their own wisdom. Isaiah (and all the prophets) predict that God is aiming to build his Messianic kingdom filled with people willingly surrendered to total guidance, in every area of life, under the revealed word of his Messiah. That is a fundamental issue of the prophets—"they shall all be taught by God" (see Isa. 54:13; Jn. 6:45).

God is One—he is not divided. His mind, will and purpose are all united. The unity of God's revealed will (the Bible) may be thoroughly demonstrated by simply comparing it with the pronouncements and writings of the "scribes and debaters" of the ages. Philosophers, theologians, scientists, teachers and sages have contradicted and negated one another consistently since the world began. Their inability to find unity in human tenets has been the cause of men dividing themselves from one another and from God. But the Bible, because it is the divine revelation of the One Unified Being, God, produces unity when every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God is destroyed by the Gospel and every human thought is taken captive to obey Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5). The power of the Gospel to change wicked, idolatrous pagans into loving, believing, hoping people demonstrated the utter foolishness of the alleged "wisdom" of the ancient philosophies and philosophers. Claiming to be wise, the ancient philosophers exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and became fools (Rom. 1:18-32). That was not simply theoretical—that was demonstrated in life! It still is today! Human unity, harmony, and peace operates through the instrumentality of the Gospel, or it doesn't operate at all!

Paul never intended to reject all human knowledge. Paul himself knew Jewish rabbinical traditions—he had to in order to be a pupil of Gamaliel. He knew Greek poets and philosophers and quoted lines from them in his preaching (e.g. Acts 17:28) and debated with them in Athens. Paul knew about sailing, geography, politics, and history. He knew a number of different languages (Acts 21:37-40). He declared there was knowledge and wisdom which all humans were responsible to know (Rom. 1:18-32; 2:12-16; Acts 17:29). Paul insisted that there was innate knowledge (logic) which all humans were responsible to exercise (e.g. Rom. 1:18-32; 2:12-16; 12:1-2). All knowledge (science, history, logic) that glorifies God and goodness must be pursued by all human beings. The "wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever" Paul was rejecting in our text (1 Cor. 1:19-25) is that human "wisdom" which refuses to honestly use logic and apply it to the facts of history and science (i.e., "nature"). Paul's renunciation of human "wisdom" is explained in Romans 1:18-32 and 1



Cor. 15:1-58) which, when given the unimpeachable testimony of “creation” and the unimpeachable testimony of eyewitnesses to Christ’s resurrection, deliberately “exchanges the truth of God for a lie.” The Jews called the eyewitnessed testimony (preaching/teaching) of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection scandalous (i.e., “a stumbling block”) and the Gentiles called it “foolishness” (i.e., moronic). When Paul preached it to the Jews they wanted to kill him (Acts 21:31, etc.); when he preached it to the Gentiles they mocked him as a “babbler” (Acts 17:18,32). YET ALL PAUL HAD SAID TO THEM WAS WHAT WAS FACTUAL AND COULD BE SEEN OR HAD BEEN SEEN BY EYEWITNESSES! The Old Testament writings of Solomon (Proverbs and Ecclesiastes) indicate that knowledge of the world outside the Scriptures, if gathered and evaluated and applied honestly and obediently, will increase any human being’s knowledge of God and practice of holiness. Science and the Bible are not contradictory! God is the source of both! WHAT DOES CONFLICT WITH THE SCRIPTURES, HOWEVER, IS HUMAN “WISDOM” (SPECULATIVE EVALUATION OF THE FACTS) THAT IS DISHONEST, BIASED, INADEQUATE, AND IRRATIONAL!

YES! Christians should keep reminding themselves of what they were before being saved! That is not being “negative” or “pessimistic.” The Old Testament prophets kept reminding their people of what they were before. John the Baptist reminded sinners of what their sins were. Jesus reminded his followers, even his own Twelve apostles, what they were before they believed in him! Paul does this in almost every one of his epistles to Christians (i.e., remind them of what they were before they became Christians, e.g., Rom. chs. 1 & 2; 1 Cor. chs. 1 & 6; 2 Cor. chs. 1-13; Gal. ch. 3; Eph. ch. 2; Col. ch. 1; Philemon, Timothy, Titus, Hebrews). Paul even reminded himself and others of his own past sinful and unbelieving life!! (Acts 22:1-21; 26:1-18; Rom. 7:7-25; 1 Tim. 1:12-17) Peter, John and Jude remind their fellow Christians, in their epistles, of the contrast between their former lives of sin and conversion. IT CULTIVATES GRATITUDE FOR THE GRACE OF GOD! IT CULTIVATES THE URGE TO EVANGELIZE SINNERS! It is a constant check against returning to the vain and depraved ways of a sinful life! IT CREATES A LONGING FOR THE RETURN OF CHRIST AND HEAVEN! There can never be enough warning, exhorting, reproof, correcting, instruction from the Scriptures and from life as it is lived by a sinful world from the pulpit, the Sunday School classroom and from the supper-table in the home! David says as much in Psa. 119—read the whole Psalm 119!

NO! Christians have nothing of themselves about which they may boast! Their former sinful and ungodly lives (1 Cor. 1:26-28; 6:9-11) proved that the very fact of their existence as a body of believers, immature, and still struggling with sin, was to be credited to the glory and grace of God and not to themselves! Paul even told the Corinthians that an apostle, specially chosen by Jesus Christ and endowed with divine authority and miraculous gifts, had nothing about which he could boast (1 Cor. 3:5-9). God’s kingdom of love and peace is created out of the unsophisticated, powerless, humble, penitent, trusting people of the world. Paul wrote the Roman Christians that all boasting in human achievements of righteousness must be excluded (Rom. 3:27). Paul told the Ephesians that salvation by the grace of God through belief leaves no room for boasting of human works of righteousness (Eph. 2:8-10). On his way to a reception in his honor, Ulysses S. Grant got caught in a rainstorm. He shared his umbrella with a stranger going to the same reception, a stranger who did not recognize Grant. “I have never seen Grant,” he said, “but I have always thought

that he was a very much overrated man.” “That’s my view, also,” said Grant! Humility (i.e., “lowliness of mind”) is a virtue that is constantly held up in the Scriptures (both O.T. and N.T.) as absolutely essential to entering the kingdom of God—the Church. (Matt. 18:1ff; Lk. 14:11; 18:14; Phil. 2:1-11; Col. 3:12; Jas. 4:6,10; 1 Pet. 5:5,6). God even requires humility from earthly potentates and all other human beings (Ex. 10:3; Prov. 15:33; 18:12; 22:4; Isa. 2:11; 5:15; 10:33; Dan. 5:22; Micah 6:6). The greatest example of humility the world has ever seen is that of Jesus Christ, God’s Anointed, who “counted not equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant...” Phil. 2:5-8. **IMAGINE----** **BEING EQUAL WITH GOD AND BE UNWILLING TO BECOME HUMAN! COULD YOU DO IT!** What would it be like to be equal to God? Having all power, all authority in heaven and on earth, having all wisdom and knowledge, having all creation at your beck and call, having the right and capability to determine and control the destiny of human beings, having all that exists redound to your glory and honor,—it’s beyond our comprehension. We would probably have a very difficult time laying aside such **POWER AND AUTHORITY AND GLORY!** But the Son of God not only gave it up, he came to earth as a human and became our Servant unto salvation! **THAT’S THE KIND OF MENTALITY AND ACTION REQUIRED OF ALL HUMAN BEINGS WHO WANT CITIZENSHIP IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD!**

## TEACHER'S NOTES I CORINTHIANS

### 1 CORINTHIANS, 2:1-16

The Greek love for sophisticated, philippic (irony, sarcasm) argumentation colored their concept of the worth of the apostolic gospel. The heroes of Greek culture were the philosophers who spent all their time debating philosophies (see Acts 17:16-21) and displaying their expertise in eloquent and intricate use of language. “The speaking of the thing” was the supreme goal of discourse in their estimation— not the reality of what was being said. In Paul’s day, the Greek “Sophists” were men with glorious and persuasive verbosity who could make bad reasoning appear to be the better reasoning—they were the “stars” of that era. The “Sophists” had no real interest in solutions or facts. Their great ambition was the stimulus of the “mental journey.” Plutarch says of the rhetoricians in Greece, “They made their voices sweet with musical cadences and modulations of tone and echoed resonances...They thought not of what they were saying, but of how they were saying it. Their thought might be poisonous so long as it was enveloped in honeyed words.” Philostratus tells us that Adrian, the sophist, had such a reputation in Rome, that when his messenger appeared with a notice that he was to lecture, the senate emptied and even the people at the games abandoned them to flock to hear him. The Greeks (in Corinth) were intoxicated with rhetoric and eloquence. They would look on Paul’s plain, straightforward proclamation of the facts of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, as crude and uncultured. You see, the Greek philosophers (and their followers) were certain that they could “figure out” what absolute truth is by simply engaging in rationalizing and speech-ifying about ideas and concepts and speculations. They believed that by constant theorizing they could arrive at the ultimate presupposition upon which all other suppositions would have to rest.

Divine revelation is information given by divine fiat (decree) that could never be “reasoned out” from any empirical (factual) data. Divine revelation is God telling humankind (through prophets and apostles) information that is not available—it is unknowable unless God reveals it. Human beings may (indeed, must) use their reasoning powers directed upon the evidences in “nature,” archaeology, ancient manuscripts, etc., to conclude that the Bible is God’s inerrantly revealed Word to mankind unto salvation. But the crucial issue is that in the Bible there is much that God alone could know, and humans could not know unless God revealed it (e.g., heaven, hell, holiness, the meaning of life, the origins of life and the cosmos, sin, promises of God, etc., etc.). That there is a God we can conclude by the use of honest reasoning from the facts of “nature” (Rom. 1:18-32; Psa. 19; Acts 17). That Jesus Christ is the Son of God we can conclude from the evidence of his resurrection (John 20:30-31; 1 Cor. 15:1-58, etc.). **HOWEVER, THAT JESUS’S DEATH FOR OUR SINS, HIS PROMISE OF ETERNAL LIFE, THE GLORIES OF HEAVEN, THE PURPOSE OF LIFE, THE HORRORS OF HELL, AND MANY OTHER THINGS, WE MUST TAKE AS REVEALED FROM GOD AND WE ACCEPT HIS WORD FOR IT ON THE BASIS OF OUR TRUST IN HIS AUTHORITY TO SAY SO!**

Authority—that’s the real issue! Human beings have a tendency to want to be their

own authority—determining anything and everything to be “knowable” by their own human powers. That started in the Garden of Eden when Eve fell for the temptation of the devil! God revealed to Adam and Eve that the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” was not a tree from which they should partake. But they let their fleshly desires overrule their faith (trust) in God’s authority to tell them things they could not know on their own! Walter Scott said it this way: Jesus’ Messiahship is concluded from the testimony (the evidences); his authority (his revelation through the Holy Spirit in the Bible) is based on his Messiahship. **IN MATTERS OF “RELIGION” AND THE BIBLE REVELATION & AUTHORITY IS STILL THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM IN BOTH THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD TODAY!** Many human beings today, as has always been, have their own fleshly-oriented moral agendas and simply refuse to be honest in reasoning upon the evidences out there in the empirical arena that the Bible is God’s revelation. They simply do not want God meddling in their lives so they reject any notion that God has revealed absolute truth in the Bible!

Paul is not defending the simplicity of his proclamation of the gospel on the basis of his being ignorant or his lack of ability to reason and use language. He is defending his proclamation on the basis of it being factual and rational as compared with the Greek sophistries of mythology, subjectivity, irrationality and semantics. **ALL HUMAN REASONING MUST BEGIN WITH TWO FUNDAMENTAL PRESUPPOSITIONS.** Number one is that the human mind has the capacity to think reasonably by the use of inductive and deductive logic. Number two is that there are “real” things and/or happenings out there beyond the human mind itself to which the mind applies logic to arrive at a conclusion or decision beyond any reasonable doubt. Once those two presuppositions are “granted” any human being can (if they want) come to certain honest, trustworthy conclusions based on empirical (factual) evidence. That’s what Romans 1:18-32 teaches us. So, Paul writes to the Corinthian Christians (who were enamored of Greek sophistry) that he proclaimed to them “nothing...except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (and, of course, resurrected, i.e., 1 Cor. 15:1ff). His message was not delivered in sophistries, in eloquent rhetoric, in sly and irrational use of semantics. Paul’s message was in “demonstration of the Spirit and of power...of God”—**THAT IS, PAUL’S MESSAGE WAS DELIVERED IN STRAIGHTFORWARD, PLAIN, UNEQUIVOCAL LANGUAGE BASED ON THE MIRACULOUS DEMONSTRATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD AND DIVINE POWER DONE THROUGH HIS HANDS!** Paul’s message to the Corinthians was essentially a message based on historical facts (see 1 Cor. 15:1-11). Paul used the Greek word *apodeixe* (translated, “demonstration” in 1 Cor. 2:4) and it is a word used to describe the examining of witnesses in trials testifying to evidence they have seen or handled—or used to describe the testing of ore in a crucible to provide evidence of its identity. Paul calls these “historical facts” this message of “FIRST IMPORTANCE” (1 Cor. 15:3). Paul did not try to entice, trick, seduce, or “psych” people into faith in Christ. He plainly and simply presented the evidence for Christ’s authority and let his listeners form their conclusions as their honesty or dishonesty led them. It is essential that human beings “hear the word and understand it...accept it...hold it fast in an honest and good heart and bring forth fruit with patience” (see Matt. 13:23; Mk. 4:20; Lk. 8:15).

There is a great deal of information in the gospel of Christ that is **PROFOUND**—but the “profound” is that which is revealed. There is nothing “profound” about the empirical facts

of history (Christ's physical death and physical resurrection)—WHAT THOSE FACTS NECESSITATE IN HONEST, HUMAN REASONING, IS "PROFOUND." Those facts necessitate an honest conclusion "beyond-any-reasonable-doubt," that Jesus Christ is who he claimed to be and that his word is the ultimate, revealed truth which human beings cannot know unless he tells them. It should be evident to every honest-minded human being that "the wisdom of this age...is doomed to pass away" (1 Cor. 2:6). Just as Paul wrote the Romans, "the creation (which is all the knowledge man can know apart from God's revealed knowledge) was subjected to futility..." and is in "...bondage to decay" (Rom. 8:18-23). In other words, all that man can know by his own efforts is this "creation" which tells him that everything is dying, everything is futile, everything is decaying (e.g., the "law of entropy" or 2nd law of thermodynamics). Solomon concluded, and wrote in Ecclesiastes that all knowledge not in accord with God's revelation is "vanity" (meaningless)

The gospel is to be proclaimed and defended TODAY in precisely the same manner by which Paul defends it here in 1 Corinthians chapter 2—through demonstration of the evidences for its factuality. "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him," God has revealed to us through the Spirit. THIS PHRASE IS NOT TALKING JUST ABOUT HEAVEN. IT IS TALKING ABOUT EVERYTHING TAUGHT BY CHRIST AND THE APOSTLES WHICH WAS NOT EYEWITNESSED FACTS ABOUT JESUS' LIFE, DEATH AND RESURRECTION. All God's word needs is to be defended and preached. It will produce faith in the mind and heart of anyone who will allow it (Rom. 10:1-17). The word of God does not need the sophistries of psychology, theology, philosophy or politics to make it relevant and powerful. It has power in itself. It is a "living seed" and will produce of itself (Mark 4:26-29; Isa. 55:10-11).

Paul illustrates that no man can know the mind of God unless God reveals it. God's plan of salvation by grace through an incarnation of himself in the human person, Jesus Christ, was not understood (Greek *egnoken*) by the "wise and powerful" of this world. If they had understood that Jesus Christ was Almighty God-incarnated they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. WHO DOES UNDERSTAND THE INCARNATION OF GOD????? NO ONE! Therefore, what Paul must be saying is that the "wise and powerful" of this world did not BELIEVE that Jesus was God incarnate. The INCARNATION can't be "understood"—it has to be believed! They had enough evidence through fulfilled prophecies and Jesus' miracles before they crucified him that they should have known he was who he claimed to be! There is evidence "beyond any reasonable doubt" to BELIEVE Jesus' claims that he is God-incarnate! Why, then, didn't the "wise and powerful" of this world believe Jesus' claims? BECAUSE THEY CONSIDERED THEMSELVES TOO SMART TO ALLOW IT TO BE "REVEALED" TO THEM THAT AN INVISIBLE GOD COULD BECOME "INCARNATED" IN HUMAN FLESH. As a result of their own arrogance and pride, they would not accept the evidence when it was right before their eyes. Jesus tried to reason with the Pharisees about this very matter in Matt. ch. 12! He tried to reason with those in the house when the paralyzed man was let down through the roof (Matt. 9:1-8) that he had power on earth to forgive sins (which power only God has)!

The "mature" of 1 Cor. 2:6 (Greek, *teleiois*, "perfect") are those who "reached the goal" of receiving the gospel message in honest, virtuous, unbiased and logical minds. The

“mature” accept the message as the revelation of God on the basis of the evidence presented. The immature are those who are prejudiced and dishonest who deliberately refuse to acknowledge that there is an Absolute Being existing outside the empirical knowledge of this world, and that this Absolute Being is able to reveal knowledge which man may not otherwise discover by his own human resources (see my comments in First Corinthians, pub. College Press, pp. 36-38).

Paul also illustrates that no man can know the mind of God unless God reveals it by stating it in the language of human experience! Paul simply says, “For what person knows a man’s thought except the spirit of the man which is in him?” IN OTHER WORDS, NO HUMAN BEING CAN “READ” THE MIND OF ANOTHER HUMAN BEING! Some have pretended they can; some humanistic psychiatrists and psychologists make pretense that they can delve into the inner workings of the human mind (or “psyche”) through “psychoanalysis” but that is hogwash! No human being can determine what another human being is thinking—unless the human being tells (i.e., reveals) to the other what he/she is thinking! THEN, IT IS OFTEN IMPOSSIBLE FOR ONE TO UNDERSTAND THE OTHER EVEN WHEN ONE TRIES TO EXPLAIN WHAT ONE IS “REVEALING” ABOUT HIS/HER THOUGHTS!

God has revealed his “mind” to the writers of the New Testament miraculously which was confirmed by “signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will” (Heb. 2:4). Those writers of the NT then “revealed” it to all other human beings through their preaching and writing. The understanding of this whole chapter (1 Cor. 2) hinges upon two major premises (1) clearly, the antecedent to the repeated pronoun “we” and “us” all the way through this chapter is Paul and the other supernaturally endowed apostles, the only persons Christ ever said would be “led into all truth” (Jn. 16:13); (2) contextually, the subject is divinely revealed truth as opposed to the limits of finite knowledge. The context is not dealing with different levels of understanding or even with ability to comprehend. It is dealing with the impossibility of knowing the mind of God until God decides to reveal his mind to certain individuals so they might pass it on through human language (“words” 1 Cor. 2:13). Whatever Paul is saying, it must conform to these two fundamental rules of understanding what someone else has written—grammar and context. Notice the clear indication Paul is speaking of the revelational aspect of the apostolic message of the cross by the continuity of the antecedent: (a) “When I came to you...” 2:1; (b) “For I decided to know...” 2:2; (c) “And I was with you...” 2:3; (d) “...and my message...” 2:3; (e) “...Yet among the mature we do not impart...” 2:6; (f) “But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom...” 2:7; (g) “God has revealed to us through the Spirit...” 2:10; (h) Now we have received...” 2:12; (i) “...that we might understand...” 2:12; (j) “And we impart this in words...” 2:13; (k) “But we have the mind of Christ” 2:16. Paul’s shift from the first person to the third person means only that he is including the other apostles as those who have received the “mind of Christ” by revelation—it does not include all Christians. All Christians, other than the apostles, receive the “mind of Christ” through the human language (“words” 2:13) preached and written by the apostles.

The apostle John makes it plain that only the apostles were authorized to reveal the mind of Christ. He writes that the only way to distinguish whether a preacher (“prophet”) is

proclaiming the word of God or not is to “listen” to the apostolic doctrine in the NT (1 Jn. 4:1-6). Whoever does not listen to the apostolic doctrine is not of God! It should be evident to any sane, honest, reasonable human being that God would not contradict himself —and that there are so many conflicting, contradicting “gospels” being proclaimed today that they cannot all be correct. So, how are we going to decide which is correct? JOHN SAYS, “BY THIS WE KNOW THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF ERROR” AND THE “THIS” IS THE APOSTOLIC DOCTRINE TAUGHT EXCLUSIVELY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT OF THE BIBLE!

God has used three instrumentalities to reveal himself to humankind: (a) Creation (“in the things that have been made” Rom. 1:18-23; Psa. 19:1-4; Acts 17:24-28); (b) Incarnately, through Jesus Christ, the Son of God (John 1:1-18; 12:45; 14:8-11; Col. 1:15,19; 2:9; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 1:1-4); (c) Propositionally, in human language through especially chosen “prophets and apostles” (Matt. 16:19; Lk. 24:46-49; John 16:12-15; 20:19-23; Acts 1:1-11; 1 Cor. 2:1-16; 2 Cor. 12:11-21; Gal. 1:15-17; 2:7; Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 1:1-4; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; 2 Pet. 1:16-21, etc.). But this text in 1 Cor. 2:13 is emphasizing that God spoke through the NT apostles in human language, i.e., “words.” Paul uses three significant Greek words—the first one is *apekalupsen* (2:10) which is translated, “revealed”; the second is *laloumen* (2:13) which is translated, “we speak”; the third is *logois* (2:13) which is translated, “words.” The Greek word *logois* is at the end of the phrase in the Greek text emphasizing the agency of apostolic revelation is not in emotions, feelings, or any other subjective “experience”—BUT IN HUMAN LANGUAGE. Language is versatile. It is unique in the reception and transmission of knowledge. It is the only means which possesses such potentiality. Mystical or subjective “communications,” in which the intellect is in abeyance and the object of the participant is to merge himself by a non-verbal process into the Godhead, is excluded by a word often on the lips of the writers of the Old Testament. That word is *shema*, translated “to hear,” and signifies not only to hear, but “to understand” and “to obey” what is said. There are literally hundreds of references in both OT and NT representing God as “speaking” words (Ex. 20:1; Deut. 1:6; Psa. 33:9; Jer. 7:13; 14:14; Jn. 6:63; Matt. 24:35; Jn. 17:14,17, etc.). Language is the only conceivable means of communicating non-empirical places, things or concepts to human beings. Language has the ability to cross dimensional limits of time and space, and communicate by verbal deputies (figures of speech, analogies, logic, etc.) the non-empirical.

So, the apostles spoke the mind of God and Christ in the NT in human words, but not in human teachings. There is a difference! The devil is able to take human words and proclaim demonic teaching (Jas. 3:13-18). The apostles were taught what was on God’s mind about redemption by the Spirit of God in human language. They, in turn, teach God’s mind in human language (originally, in Greek, later translated at this time in nearly 4000 different languages and dialects) to all who will listen (read their words in the Bible) to them. When a person reads (“listens”) to the teaching of the apostles and obeys them, that person is being taught by the Holy Spirit of God. If the apostles were “led into all truth” (Jn. 16:13), and if the faith is “once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3), then there is nothing more the Holy Spirit intends to say to mankind (this side of heaven) about redemption. The apostles have said it all!!!

The RSV translation of the phrase in 2:13, "...interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit," is not a good translation! The Greek phrase would literally be translated, "...with spiritual things, spiritual things comparing..." Paul is not dealing with those receiving the apostolic message—he is dealing with those giving the apostolic message. This is Paul's way of saying that the apostles spoke the revelation of the spirit (i.e., "spiritual things") in terms or "words" ("comparables") which the inerrant Holy Spirit of God oversaw in their speaking and writing. In other words, the apostles spoke and wrote the very message in the very terminology the Spirit of God desired it be written (2 Pet. 1:20-21). The Greek word *sunkrinontes* is translated "comparing" but means, more precisely, "combining, fitly joining together." It means "to adapt the language to the subject." This does not mean that the Holy Spirit spoke to the apostles in some "unknown tongue" or that the Bible is in some heavenly language that cannot be understood by the same rules of human language used in all other communications. It simply means that the Holy Spirit guided the apostles in selecting exactly the right words in the Greek language (for the NT) to communicate exactly the mind of God concerning redemption.

Only the apostles (in the NT) were privileged to receive the mind of God through the Holy Spirit (Jn. 4:1-6). And they received it as a gift from God because no human being can know the mind of God unless God decides to give it. The "natural" man may know God's mind only if he is "borne along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:20-21) because no prophecy (word from God) ever came by the impulse of man." The Greek word *psychikos* is translated "unspiritual" in the RSV, but means "the physical man, i.e., the "natural man without the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. The "natural man," limited to natural faculties, cannot know the will of God unless it is revealed to him by the Spirit of God. God's will for man's salvation must be revealed before any human can know it. This is precisely what Paul has already said in 1 Cor. 1:21. It certainly does not mean that every human being must have his mind "illuminated" separately from the apostolic word before he can understand the Bible! There is no need for extra-Biblical illumination or revelation for humankind today. As a matter of fact, the NT clearly teaches that a cessation of the miraculous gifts of prophecy and discerning prophecy, etc., would come soon after the first generation of Christians passed away (see comments on 1 Cor. chs. 12-13-14). The Greek words *ou dunatai gnoai*, in verse 14, mean literally that the physical man is not able to know the mind of God unless the Spirit of God reveals it. Until God's Spirit reveals God's mind, the physical man (i.e., "natural man") looks upon "spiritual" things as "folly" (2:14, Greek, *moria*, "moronic, stupid"). The "natural man" is unable to know spiritual things until God reveals them! This may be illustrated by all the ancient and modern pagan attempts to explain history and nature without the propositional revelation (the Bible) of God. William Shakespeare, in *Macbeth*, said of history, without divine revelation, "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player, That struts and frets his hour upon the stage, And then is heard no more; it is a tale Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, Signifying nothing." Ancient philosophers grew cynical, depressed, and suicidal when they tried to explain life without a direct, spoken revelation from God.

With God's Spirit searching the deep things of God's mind and revealing them as "gifts" through the apostles, everything necessary for the redemption and salvation of man becomes discernable in the apostolic doctrine. Nothing really makes sense in this world without the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul said it succinctly in Rom. 8:20



—“...for the creation was subjected to futility...” Without God revealing his mind in human language existence would all be “vanity” or meaningless (see Ecclesiastes). The physical man is not able to discover by investigation (Gr. anakrinetai, critique, discern) the deep things of God because they are “discerned” (Gr. anakrinetai) by God’s Spirit. Verses 14-16 and verses 11-13 mean exactly the same thing—“...so also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we (apostles) have received not the spirit of the world (physical), but the Spirit which is from God, that we (apostles) might understand the gifts bestowed on us (apostles) by God.” In verses 14-16 Paul is simply restating what he said in verses 11-13!

The Spirit-filled ones (Gr. pneumatikos), who are the apostles (not other Christians)—remember the continuity of antecedents—discerns and discriminates what the mind of God is and how God wants it taught, and teaches all things as God’s Spirit chooses to reveal them. The apostles, borne along by the Spirit of God, discerned the deep things of the revealed mind of God and then spoke them in language that could be understood by the human mind. The Spirit-filled apostles were, in their capacity as revealers of God’s mind, were not to be judged by any one about the content of their message. This would not apply to judging their authority to claim to have the mind of God—their authority was proved by the miracles they wrought—everyone has a right to “judge” whether the NT is the inspired word of God or not. This would apply to judging the life-style of the apostles—they were to be obedient to what they preached just like everyone else. But when it came to what they preached, no one could say it was not from God. The apostolic message became the touchstone by which all other preaching was judged. The evidence that the apostles spoke God’s mind was in their miracles. It was the miraculous baptism in the Holy Spirit that endowed the apostles to determine whether any teaching was from God or not (1 Jn. 4:1-6). The man of the Spirit (i.e., the apostle, not every Christian) was not to be contradicted or disobeyed when he spoke God’s revealed mind. In the 1st century, before the NT revelation reached its completion in written form, only an apostle (or someone upon whom the apostles had laid hands) could judge whether a purported “revelation” was a God-given revelation or not. Now that we have the completed revelation of God in written form, all truth purporting to be from God is to be tested as to its conformity by the written revelation of the apostles.

In verse 16 Paul summarizes this whole discussion of the problem of revelation versus the wisdom of the world. The RSV translates the first sentence, “For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” Actually, the word instruct is a translation of the Greek word *sumbibase*. That is the only place in the NT where *sumbibase* is translated instruct. Everywhere else in the NT the word is translated knit (Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:2; 2:19) or proving (Acts 9:22; 16:10). The word *sumbibase* really means, “to understand or know or conclude so as to be joined together with God.” In other words, Paul is saying, “We, inspired apostles, so have the mind of God through the revelation of the Spirit that we are united in him teaching his will as no uninspired (“natural”) man could ever do.” The second sentence of this verse (16) leaves no doubt that Paul’s subject here is divine revelation, and not spiritual maturity (or “sanctification” or a “second work of grace” or miraculous gifts) of every Christian. The Greek is constructed: *hemeis de noun Christou echomen*, literally, “we indeed, the mind of Christ are having.” The syntax puts strong emphasis on we (the apostles). That is the subject—what the apostles have as a supernatural gift and not what

every Christian has by faith.

The world can only come to faith in Christ through hearing and believing the preaching of the word of Christ—“So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ” (Rom. 10:17). **FACTS, TESTIMONY, FAITH, FEELING**—in that order! Biblical faith is based on the facts of history—evidences. Biblical faith is not based on feeling. Faith cannot be elicited without the proclamation of the facts of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection (Col. 1:24-29).

# TEACHER'S NOTES I CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 3:1-23

Paul used the word “babe” as a metaphor in 1 Cor. 3:1 for a spiritually immature Christian! In chapter 2 the contrast was between uninspired human beings and the inspired apostles. In chapter 3 the contrast is between Christians who are carnal (Greek *sarkikois* “fleshly-minded”) and the spiritual maturity they should have attained (Greek *pneumatikois*, “spirituality”). Chapter 3 deals with spiritual maturation which all Christians may attain through study and practice of the written word of God. Use of different Greek words in the two chapters makes the difference apparent. There is a connection between the two chapters. Had the Corinthians fed themselves on apostolic revelation more than on Greek sophistries, they would not have the problems of immature, fleshly-minded attitudes toward the ministry of the apostles. The old adage “We are what we eat,” is even more applicable to the spiritual than to the physical (Jn. 6:25-71). Unless a person feeds on the Bread of Life (Christ’s words, Jn. 6:63) he will have no spirituality in him. The explicit work of the Christian ministry is to bring the church of Christ to spiritual maturity (Acts 20:28; Jn. 21:15-19; 1 Pet. 5:2; Eph. 4:1-16; Col. 1:24-29; Heb. 5:11-13). The NT is not ambiguous as to what spirituality is—there is no ambivalence about it in the writings of Paul. Paul clearly defines spirituality as “setting the mind on the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5-8; Col. 3:1-17). Spirituality is fundamentally a mind-set. It doesn’t have its origin merely in emotionalism or enthusiasm. It is not measured by quantity of good deeds. A “BABE” AS PAUL USES IT HERE IS A SCRIPTURALLY- “UNDER-FED” CHRISTIAN! The “babe” has been “planted” but not “watered.”

Paul said he had to use language down on the level of spiritual-infants (Greek, *napes*, “babies”) when he wrote to the Corinthians. It was clear to him they were of a “fleshly” mind-set! They were still thinking as worldly-minded people would about the church and its leadership and its ministry. Having made their initial commitment to Christ and having been baptized into him (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 12:13), they had not fed themselves on God’s word sufficiently to bring them to a state of spiritual growth commensurate with their opportunities and privileges. THEIR ACTIONS (AS PAUL DOCUMENTS ALL THROUGH THIS EPISTLE) WERE WORLDLY! They allowed their way of thinking and living to be dominated more by the habits of their pre-Christian life than by God’s revealed will. They were too much like their heathen neighbors and not enough like Jesus!

Do not wonder that Paul still called them “brethren” and “saints.” Spiritual maturation comes, like physical growth, slowly! We would not throw away a baby brother in our physical family because he did not grow into physical manhood overnight. But we do insist that a baby brother eat, learn, train his faculties by exercise, and grow. And we make all kinds of personal sacrifices to see that he does. So must we tenderly feed and strengthen our spiritual brethren, no matter what state of spiritual growth they may manifest. All of us are spiritually deficient when we compare ourselves to Christ, our Elder Brother. The leadership of the church cannot relax its dedication to the ministry of bringing all members to

spiritual maturity in Christ. There may be many causes for Christian immaturity: (a) inadequate study of the Bible—superficial sermonizing—unhermeneutical Bible studies; (b) low expectations for individual growth—teachers and preachers not expecting their members to be able to think deeply; (c) failure of the church leadership to provide opportunities for all members to share in the Lord’s work (“each part working properly...” Eph. 4:16); (d) failure of the church leadership to accept their call as “feeders” of the flock; (e) just plain unwillingness on the part of Christians to give up thinking and doing worldly things—if anyone is willing to do Christ’s will he will mature (Jn. 7:17; 17:17).

A clear manifestation of spiritual immaturity is when a Christian is “being tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles...” (Eph. 4:14). THE “PARTY (DIVISIVE) SPIRIT” IS A CLEAR SIGN OF SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY. And that is the FIRST sign of spiritual immaturity Paul deals with in this letter to the Corinthians (there are many more signs which he will deal with throughout this epistle). Only the carnal (worldly-minded) think of structuring the church in terms of human superiority and arrogance. Paul tells the Corinthian Christians they were behaving like “run-of-the-mill” heathen (non-Christians) who, through jealousy and strife, scheme and plot to promote their own fame and fortune. Probably the most crucial issue Jesus dealt with in his ministry on earth was the nature of the kingdom of God. Most people conceived of the kingdom as a place to establish worldly fame and to promote their own agenda. This involved jealousy and strife: (a) in Mary, mother of Jesus (Jn. 2:3-4); (b) in disciples of John the Baptist (Jn. 4:25-30); (c) in 1000s of followers (Jn. 6:15); (d) in the 12 apostles (Mk. 9:38-41; Lk. 9:49-50); (e) when the disciples wonder who is greatest (Matt. 18:1); (f) in Jesus’ own half-brothers (Jn.7:3-4); (g) in those dining at Pharisee’s home (Lk. 14:7-14); (h) in James & John asking Jesus for chief honors (Matt. 20:20-28; Mk. 10:35-45); (i) in Pharisees in their love for the places of honor in synagogues (Matt. 23:5-12); (j) in 12 apostles at the Last Supper arguing about greatest (Lk. 22:24-28); (k) in Peter, refusing to let Jesus wipe his feet as a servant (Jn. 13:5-11). That such jealousy and strife arose among the 1st century churches is thoroughly documented in the epistles and letters to the 7 churches of Asia Minor (Rev. 2-3). The life style of the person whose highest hopes begin and end with this present world and a fleshly existence is one of immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealous, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing and the like (Gal. 5:19-21).

Those who are maturing in Christ are decisively putting such a life-style to death (“crucifying it”). Only Christians who have a firm mind-set on heaven will grow (mature) spiritually! Giving oneself to a life of “servanthood” in the name of Christ is the only way to turn spiritual immaturity into spiritual maturity! Paul makes that clear in 1 Cor.. 3:5-9. Christian edification—building up—is the way to arrive at spiritual maturity. All Christians are workers in God’s field—builders on God’s “building” (the church). What are apostles? WORKERS, like every other Christian. They may have gifts from God diverse from ours to equip them for the special job to which God called them, but they are still only workers. Paul calls himself and Apollos servants (Gr. diakonoi, “deacons, ministering ones”). The apostles were merely messenger-boys delivering God’s revelation to mankind. They were sent into the world of the first century to serve, not to be served. Paul was a planter (Gr. ephuteusa) and Apollos was a waterer (Gr. epotisen) in God’s field. God is the owner of the field and the

Master of the servants. Everyone else is a planter, waterer, cultivator, or a reaper. Some are sent to sow and some to reap (Jn. 4:36-38). Neither one is more important than the other. Since not even one apostle is superior to another, partisan loyalty to one human servant of God or another is senseless. What Paul planted was the Word of God! ALL ONE HAS TO DO TO DISCOVER THAT IS TO READ THE BOOK OF ACTS AND PAUL'S EPISTLES! Paul emphasized in all his preaching and writing that spiritual maturity was accomplished through the instrumentality of the proclamation of the word of Christ! IT CAN'T BE DONE BY HUMAN PROGRAMS, ENTERTAINMENT, REGIMENTATION, ENTHUSIASM, BUSY-WORK, OR THE OTHER HUNDRED WAYS SOME CONGREGATIONS TRY TO MAKE PEOPLE "GROW" IN CHRIST! ULTIMATELY, IT WILL ONLY BE ACCOMPLISHED BY GETTING THE WORD OF CHRIST INTO THE "MIND-SET" OF THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH! Whoever and whatever serves, in any way, getting the word of Christ into human hearts is helping make mature Christians out of immature ones.

THE ONE AND ONLY ESSENTIAL TO CHURCH GROWTH IS GOD. Human beings do not produce the growth—they merely sow and water the seed. The "seed" (the word of God, Lk. 8:11) grows automatically (the Greek word in Mk. 4:28, is *automate*). When the "seed" (God's word) is sown by human sowers, the "seed" automatically produces—it grows "of itself." The word that has gone forth from God's mouth shall not return to him empty, but will accomplish that which God purposes and will prosper in the thing for which he sends it (Isa. 55:11). One human plants, another waters, and each is the same as the other, i.e., nothing without God. Their labors produce only because God makes it to be so! It is the word of the Holy Spirit of God (the Bible) that "convicts or convinces the world of sin, of righteousness and of the judgment to come" (Jn. 16:8-11)—not the eloquence or intelligence of people. The Greek tenses in verse 3:6 point to an interesting emphasis. The verbs used for "planted" and "watered" are aorist tense while the Greek verb for "growth" (*euxanen*) is imperfect. Aorist means a single action completed in the past, while imperfect shows continuous past action. It could be translated thus: "At one time in the past, Paul planted in Corinth, and later Apollos watered there; but God was making growth occur all along during that time." The strong adversative conjunction in Greek *alla* ("but only") puts emphasis on the contrast—"He who plants is nothing, he who waters is nothing, but (*alla*) only God who is giving growth (Greek *auxanon*, present participle) is everything." Jesus warned would-be "sowers" that 3/4 of the seed they sow would fall on unproductive hearts (Matt. 13; Mk. 4; Lk. 8) but they should never be discouraged by that for only those with "good and honest" hearts are fit for the kingdom! SO LONG AS A CONGREGATION OR AN INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN IS FAITHFULLY FULFILLING THE STEWARDSHIP OF SOWING, IT SHOULD NOT FRET ABOUT THE GROWTH—GOD IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE GROWTH!

Verse 8 is a reaffirmation of what Jesus taught in the gospels. All Christian servants are equal—they are all servants. Each servant will receive his wages according to faithfulness. Servants do not receive wages according to the amount produced, because producing is God's doing—God gives the increase. The servant is responsible only to faithfully use the tools over which he has been given a stewardship. The servant is not responsible for the amount of the crop. The church is not an organization where people compete for honor and position. The church is a body with only one head and many

functional members with “less honored” members actually the most important (1 Cor. 12:22-26). “Party” spirit is perpetuated by “comparing or measuring ourselves with one another instead of Christ (2 Cor. 10:12). The “party” spirit is a clear sign of spiritual immaturity. Growth in servant-hood comes from being fed large doses of servant-behavior through precept and example. All Christians must let Christ rule their minds and thus see no one from a human point of view (2 Cor. 5:16). Servant-hood is learned, not inherited. Every Christian is nothing more than a laborer in God’s field—some plant, some water—GOD ALONE (BY HIS WORD) IS RESPONSIBLE FOR INCREASE.

The apostle uses two figures of speech (3:9) to illustrate the human side of the work of God. Humans doing God’s work are “farming” and “building.” Paul called himself a “master-builder” working with his co-laborers erecting God’s building, the church. The Greek word *architekton* (“master-builder”) is the origin of our English word, architect. It doesn’t mean “boss” it means “skilled craftsman.” Thus Paul exhorts Christians, “Let each man take care how he builds...” Each Christian must be a “skilled craftsman” in doing his work building God’s house. The ministry of the Gospel demands the best skill in selection and use of “building materials.” Paul refers to his own extreme care, as if he were a master-artificer, using precisely and exactly the right “material” for the foundation of the church in Corinth. Paul used Jesus Christ and him crucified and risen from the dead as the foundation!

But the main thrust of this passage is that Paul used the “material” he was told to use by the “Boss” (God). He writes, “According to the grace given to me, like a skilled builder I laid a foundation...” Paul used all the skill he had to follow the orders (or instructions) of God who was gracious enough to employ him as a builder on God’s building. Immature, spiritual babies were not ready to really add to the “building” of God in Corinth which Paul had begun. Paul’s foundation was the sure and solid rock of God’s revelation that Jesus is the Christ. Paul did not vary from the instructions of the “Boss.” Ignorant (1 Cor. 10:1) and unskilled (in the revelation of God) Christians must not disregard the divinely revealed word (blueprint) of the Owner concerning the building of the church. All Christians who wish to involve themselves in building the Lord’s church must train themselves (2 Tim. 2:14-19; 4:1-5; Heb. 5:11-14), lest they attempt to lay a foundation other than Jesus as the Christ, or lest they build upon that foundation with unendurable materials. God is so serious about the right “foundation” and “edification” for his church he laid the promises of the Messiah-Servant, his Son, as the foundation-stone in the Zion (“church”) of the Old Testament (Isa. 28:16; Psa. 118:22-23; Matt. 21:42).

Paul knew the Corinthian church members were “building” into the “house of God” (the church) by making disciples who were jealous, indifferent to immorality in the congregation, bringing litigations against one another in pagan courts, careless about marriage, uncaring about weaker brethren, disrespectful in the corporate worship of the church and toward God-ordained structures of human authority, prideful and envious in the matter of supernatural spiritual gifts, teaching confusion about the bodily resurrection, and slack in matters of Christian stewardship of their blessings. The teaching leadership of the Corinthian church was constructing God’s building with weak and unendurable material. They were not building up Christian people who had strong, self-disciplined, servant-minded faith in Christ and his Word. AND THIS WAS CRUCIAL TO THE LIFE AND DESTINY OF

## THE CHURCH!

There are two classes of building materials (i.e., disciples); fireproof and flammable. Some Christians will be able to stand the scorching heat of persecution and testing while others will wither under it and die (Matt. 13:5-6; 13:20-21). The book of Revelation classifies the faithful as those with the “mark of God” and the unfaithful as those with the “mark of the beast.” Paul’s main concern in this exhortation is the ability of the Corinthian Christians to withstand the fiery trials which were coming upon the whole first-century world of Christendom (1 Cor. 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:20-23; 4:12-13). The apostle John wrote in his book of Revelation about the “great tribulation” coming upon the church and the Roman Empire to last from A. D. 100 to A. D. 500. Christians had been put to the “fires” of testing ever since the Day of Pentecost when the church was begun (Acts of the Apostles, and Pauline epistles). And physical or economic hardships are not the only forms of testing the Christian must prepare to meet. There is also the seductiveness of fleshly self-indulgence and the deceptiveness of false religious dogma.

A day of testing comes to every follower of Jesus, in every age. The word *hemera*, Greek for day, is not capitalized in the Greek text, although it is preceded by the definite article. That, however, does not necessarily mean *he hemera* (“the day”) is pointing to the final Judgment Day of God. The OT and NT both have many references to specific, past, historical judgments of God upon the earth and use the term, “the day of the Lord.” Many days of testing (in fact every day) are in the Christian’s future discipleship when he’s “bearing his cross daily” (Lk. 9:23) before the Lord returns! The trials of the Christian life will prove not only what the material (disciple) is, but it will also prove how careful the builder-teacher has been with the material. The “day” (“sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof”) will disclose each teacher’s work! Temptations, trials and tests of faith are revealing. Every preacher, Sunday School teacher, Christian parent, elder, and deacon, who has ever sown the seed of God’s word anywhere will have his work tested. Fires of testing are so certain to come Peter chides Christians for being surprised, or acting as if these “fires” were something strange (1 Pet. 1:7; 4:12-13). It was predicted that the Messiah would bring the fires of testing to mankind (Zech 13:9; Malachi 3:1-5). Jesus himself said he came to cast testing fire upon the earth (Lk. 12:49). God will not have any person built into his church as a living stone who has not been tested. The “wood, hay, stubble” kind of disciple is illustrated by Jesus in his parable of the soils and the “rock ground” which has “no root in itself” so when the scorching heat of tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word “immediately he falls away”; or in the “thorny ground” which lets the word be choked out by the cares of the world and the delight in riches. The gold, silver and precious stones kind of disciple is like the “good ground” who “hears the word and holds it fast in an honest and good heart bringing forth fruit with patience (Matt. 13:1-23; Lk. 8:4-15).

Thoughtless building, using shallow and superficial “building (people) materials” into the church will program the structure for demolition when the inevitable fires of testing come. But there will be reward for the worker in God’s “field” or on God’s “building” who builds with depth and discipline. Such a worker’s materials will “survive” (Gr. *menei*, “remain”)—they will not perish in the scorching pressure of temptation and trial. Paul’s reward was seeing his converts endure to the end of their lives (Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19-20). The apostle John

expressed the same joy (2 Jn. 4; 3 Jn. 3,4). The teacher who uses superficial materials will suffer the loss of this reward but he will be saved even if his part of the building (converts) cannot survive the fiery trials. Even the best teachers cannot be sure those whom they teach and to whom they give their best will withstand temptation and persecution. Jesus lost Judas as well as many “thousands” of disciples who left him and followed him no more (Jn. 6:66ff). Paul lost Demas (2 Tim. 4:10). John lost Diotrephes (2 Jn. 9). The 7 churches of Asia Minor lost members (Rev. chs. 2-3). However, the teacher’s own salvation does not depend on the faithfulness of his disciples, but on his own faithfulness to Christ. The teacher himself must go through the fire. He will be saved only if he is built of enduring material. The teacher, also, is a part of God’s building, having been built into it by someone else. Every human being endures God’s testing-fires according to his own faith.

The honest and sincere builder (proclaimer of the Gospel) will be saved, even if some of his material (pupils) does not endure the testing. He may “suffer at the loss” of those unfaithful pupils. But the one who deliberately takes up the work of wrecking God’s building will most certainly be destroyed! In this context, the entire church is being called “God’s temple” (see also Eph. 2:19-22). This is not a reference to the individual Christian as it is in 1 Cor. 6:19-20, and it should not be used as such. This refers to the jealous and striving brethren at Corinth who were quarreling (1:11-17) and dividing the church into separate parties following human leaders. There is no excuse for separating the local, or universal, church of Jesus Christ into factions following human leaders or using human names. Not even the name of Christ may be used to separate oneself from anyone else who is sincerely trying their best to be obedient to Christ’s teachings. The only reason by which a Christian may justify separating himself from one who claims to be a follower of Jesus is deliberate, demonstrable, provable false teaching (sometimes called “heresy”) or impenitent licentious living. Even then such separation must have as its goal the reclamation of a brother or sister straying from Christ (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:3-5; 2 Cor. 2:5-11; 2 Thess. 3:14).

God will not tolerate those who wreck his church by willful division. One must be either a builder or a wrecker. There is no middle ground. Every man or woman either gathers with Christ or scatters against Christ (Matt. 12:30). All people fall into one of two categories; either a citizen of God’s kingdom making every effort to build it, or an alien enemy trying to destroy it. How terribly awesome is the sin of those who rebelliously and deliberately perpetuate divisions among believers in Christ. Division is perpetuated when unscriptural doctrine is wilfully perpetuated; when party-spirit or partiality is perpetuated; and when legalism is perpetuated. Schism and schismatics within the church are to be dealt with promptly, severely yet lovingly. **THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE IF THE SCRIPTURES ARE TO BE OUR GUIDE!** The person who thinks he/she is following the way of wisdom by dividing the church into factions is self-deceived. The Greek word *exapatato* (“self-deceived”) is intensive and means thoroughly self-deceived; it is related to the word *apatao* which means “to cheat.” The person who looks to glorify self or some other person in the church is only “cheating himself/herself of the real reward from God. The wisdom of this doomed world which is “scattering” against Christ is foolishness. A world (or person) refusing to see life in the perspective of God’s revealed truth is a world (or person) that cannot know what is real and abiding. Faithful Christians do not see anything from a human point of view



(2 Cor. 4:16-18; 5:16-17). Faithful Christians are “controlled by the love of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:14). If we are to follow Christ and have his reward we must be ready to be seen as “fools” by the worldly-wise. The Christian who is willing to take the lowliest task or position, and let others receive the credit and applause, is a “fool” according to the world. The Christian who gives his money and time to see that the gospel is proclaimed and to minister to people’s physical needs in the name of Jesus are “fools” according to the worldly-wise. But it is the worldly-minded person who is a fool! No human being can “out-fox” God. Paul says here that all wisdom in this world which is not focused on knowing God and doing his will is foolishness—but how many people believe that? The one who lives by deceit and dishonesty is caught in the trap of guilt, shame, self-destruction and the ultimate judgment of Almighty God!

While the non-Christian thinks the Christian is a fool and has nothing, Paul says the Christian has EVERYTHING! Everything God has made belongs to the Christian to use to glorify God and thus be glorified by God. God has given everything to the Christian because only the child of God has surrendered his evaluation and use of everything to the revealed will of God. The Christian is the only person who understands that for which everything in God’s creation is made! To surrender one’s mind to humanistic and unbelieving ideas and leaders is really a kind of self-impoverishment. Human “wise-men” who deny God understand nothing about what God has made. They will eventually use what God made for good to produce evil. But the Christian, in harmony with Christ’s will, has opened up to himself the whole universe as his servant. Everything God has made is good (Gen. Chs. 1-2; 1 Tim. 4:4-5). God intended his creation for man’s benefit—to make human beings spiritual partners with him and to give them enjoyment. When humans use all that God has made to promote good, truth, purity, holiness and mercifulness, they are rewarded with glory and happiness.

All things belong to the Christian! Some in Corinth had been saying, “I belong to Paul,” others, “I belong to Apollos.” But the truth was, Paul and Apollos belonged to the Christians at Corinth! In fact everything in the world belonged to the Christians at Corinth to use properly and legally in service to God by serving men. Life was their to live in harmony with God’s truth and holiness. Even death belonged to them (not to the devil). Death belongs to the Christian as a release from the trials and tribulations of this world and as a door opening into eternal bliss (Phil. 1:21; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; 5:1-21). “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?” (Rom. 8:32). Christians are stewards of the whole universe. It belongs to their Father. He has given it into their hands for faithful use. He did not give it to them to be enslaved by anything in it. They are to control it as people made free by Christ to enjoy and praise the name of their Master. They will be asked for an accounting when the Master returns. They will be asked only if they honestly used it to the best of their abilities according to his will.

The fact that God has given the Christian everything in his creation in no way gives the Christian room to be arrogant or boastful. It has all been “given” for ministry. To minister or not minister has been a problem with God’s covenant people from the time Israel left Egypt until now. In old Israel (from Moses to Malachi) the majority of priests, prophets and kings were self-centered. There were always a few saintly exceptions. Among the

thousands of Israel who assumed the offices of ministry, only a few heroic individuals really ministered God's will to God's people. There was Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Elijah and Elisha—David, Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah—Isaiah, Amos, Jeremiah and the other faithful prophets. These ministered in times of great distress, devastation and discouragement. But for the most part the whole nation of Israel defaulted on its call from God to minister to the nations around them—they begged, rather, to be ministered unto. So, God said through the OT prophets that he would form a new "nation" a "new Israel" out of every nation on earth who would be ministers unto him and the world (Isa. 66:18-23, etc.). The church of Christ is that new nation of priests (1 Pet. 1:9-10). Every Christian is called to be a minister. Every Christian is a priest offering the sacrifices of praise and confession with the lips and of good deeds toward those in need (Heb. 13:15-16). When every Christian is committed to ministry rather than being ministered to, the problem of division in the church will disappear.

# TEACHER'S NOTES I CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 4:1-21

Understanding the admonition against favoring one church leader over another is crucial. PAUL IS NOT HERE TALKING ABOUT “FEELING CLOSER” TO SOME CHRISTIAN BRETHREN THAN OTHERS. The Corinthian Christians were being partial with people and matters that should not have been given partiality. The Corinthian Christians were being partial in order to create division in the church. Partiality defined is: “To show favor to a person because of his external possessions, position or privilege; or, to accept the person instead of the cause.” Partiality, as defined above, or in order to advance one’s own, or another’s, ambition to “lord it over” anyone else has no place in the kingdom of God. In the OT the Hebrew words *nasha panim* are translated partiality and mean literally, “face-taking” (i.e., to judge on the basis of appearance). The Greek words *prosopolempsia* and *prosopolempetes* (sometimes translated, “respect of person”) also mean literally, “face-taking” (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; Jas. 2:1,9). Partiality is severely condemned in the OT (Lev. 19:15; Deut. 1:17; 16:19-20; Job 13:10; Prov. 24:23; 28:21; Mal. 2:9). Jesus clearly taught that it was not to be a part of the character of the kingdom-citizen (Matt. 5:43-48). The epistles speak severely against partiality (Col. 3:22—4:1; Rom. 2:11; Gal. 2:6; Eph. 6:9; 1 Tim. 5:21; Jas. 2:9). Partiality creates discord (Matt. 20:24; Mk. 9:34; Lk. 9:46ff; 22:24-27; Acts 6:1-6; 2 Cor. chs. 11-14); partiality causes denigration of God (Jer. 18:13ff; Rom. 2:24; Gal. 2:1ff); partiality defiles the conscience and destroys the soul.

The cause for the display of partiality among the Corinthian brethren was evident to Paul. They were not evaluating apostles and other leaders by the one and only God-approved standard which is faithfulness to the ministry of the Word of God. Paul uses two Greek words by which he categorizes all Christians whether they be leaders or followers. The word servant in Greek is *huperetas* and is from a mariner’s vocabulary designating the “under-rower” in the ancient galley ships of the Mediterranean. It came to mean “under-servant” or “underling” and was applied to anyone who took orders from someone higher. The second word, steward, in Greek is *oikonomos*, literally, “law of the house,” meaning “house manager.” Barclay calls the *oikonomos* the “major-domo” of a household—“a butler.” The point Paul is stressing here is that no matter what a Christian’s place in the church, he is a servant! All Christians are “underlings” and take orders from Christ. All Christians are merely “butlers” (i.e., stewards) taking care of the Master’s goods. All Christians are to be evaluated only as to whether they have faithfully accepted this position as servant or not. We are not to compare one another’s relationship to the Lord or to ourselves on the basis of skills, talents, accomplishments or any other quantitative measurement. If quantitative measurements are the criteria of God’s judgments, the servant given five pounds (Lk. 19:11-27) should have been condemned for not returning 10 more like the first servant. The only servant condemned was the 3rd servant who was unfaithful and distrusted the nobleman’s faithfulness and fairness.

Paul says that a certain character is required in all stewards—

TRUSTWORTHINESS. The Greek word is *pistos* and means, “full of faith” or “faithful.” The connotation in this context for *pistos* is “trustworthy” synonyms for which are “dependable, reliable, loyal, responsible, conscientious.” EXPERTISE, TALENT, AND “CHARISMA” DO NOT ENTER IN TO THIS STANDARD EXCEPT AS ONE IS DEPENDABLE IN USING WHAT ONE HAS! We must not elevate or applaud only those who seem to be more talented or even productive (according to human standards). GOD DOES NOT LOOK ON THE OUTWARD MAN BUT ON THE INNER MAN—AND THAT’S THE WAY A BELIEVER IN GOD MUST SEE THINGS! (2 Cor. 5:16; 10:12). Each servant of Christ (including apostles) is required only to be reliable and dependable with as much as Christ has given him. Jesus described the “faithful and wise steward” in Luke 12:42-43. Remember the dependability of such men as Joseph, Daniel, Nehemiah and Hananiah with what they had of God’s “gifts.” The apostles have come down to us in history as men of greatness, not because of their educational attainments or political achievements, or even of their social contributions, but because they were faithful to Christ and in proclaiming his Gospel.

The crucial, fundamental thing a congregation must seek in appointing preachers, apostles, elders, deacons, S.S. teachers IS CHARACTER —TRUSTWORTHINESS, DEPENDABILITY, RELIABILITY WITH THE WORD OF GOD. The Corinthian Christians had a problem with judging the apostle Paul! Paul said, “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court.” The Greek phrase is: *de eis elachiston estin hina huph humon anakritho e hupo anthropines hemeras*—literally translated would read, “But unto a little it is that by you I have been judged, or by the agency of a man’s day.” The phrase, “or by the agency of a man’s day” is idiomatic referring to the indisputable limitations of the human experience to make eternal judgments. Human life is bounded by too narrow an horizon to make such judgments. There is no human diet (i.e., “day”) or court with sufficient authority or expertise to divide the church over human leaders. All a Christian (or congregation of Christians) needs to know about a spiritual teacher and leader (preacher, elder, S.S. teacher, etc.) is whether he/she is faithful to the Lord’s Word and the Lord’s way of life. All Christians manifesting honest effort to be dependably and reliably following Christ are to love, cherish and honor one another and unite their hearts, minds, and talents in singleness of praise and serve to Christ alone.

J. B. Phillips paraphrases Paul’s statement in 4:3-4, “I don’t even value my opinion of myself. For I might be quite ignorant of any fault in myself—but that doesn’t justify me before God. My only true judge is the Lord.” When Paul said he knew nothing against himself he was not claiming that he had never sinned. He was well aware of his failings (Rom. 7:13-25; 1 Tim. 1:15; etc.). Paul is simply speaking hypothetically. He is saying, “For the sake of illustration, let us presume that I can’t think of any wrong doing or wickedness against myself—that still does not infallibly prove there isn’t any!” All it would prove is that Paul could not think of any. But what about the omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent God! Before God (Heb. 4:11-13) all humans are sinners—even apostles! Before God all saved humans are humans saved by grace through faith! Every human is predisposed to evaluate himself too highly (Rom. 12:3; Phil. 2:3). Human beings must not even trust self-evaluation (let alone evaluation of others) because the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt (Jer. 17:9). Only the Word of God is able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the human heart correctly (Heb. 4:12-13). Of course, some judgments have to

be made (Matt. 7:6,12,13; Matt. 7:15-20; 7:21-23; 7:24-27; Jn. 7:24; 1 Cor. 6:1-8; 1 Thess. 5:21; 1 Cor. 14:29; 1 Jn. 4:1-6; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; Gal. 6:1ff; Jas. 5:19-20, etc.). BUT IT IS NOT WITHIN THE PURVIEW OF ONE CHRISTIAN TO JUDGE THE MOTIVES AND INTENTIONS OF ANOTHER PERSON'S MIND AND HEART! All Christians can critique ("judge") are the outward "fruits" (actions) of another's behavior! WHY ANOTHER'S ACTIONS ARE AS THEY ARE, IS BEYOND ANYONE'S JUDGING, EVEN THE ACTOR HIMSELF—ONLY GOD CAN RIGHTFULLY JUDGE THAT THROUGH HIS REVEALED WORD. So, in the end, judging motives and intentions is up to the individual—to his/her responsible and honest comparison of himself/herself with the Word of God!

Sarcasm or satire is often the only way to bring "puffed up" people back to reality! Jesus' teachings are saturated with satire and irony! If you want to find satire in the Word of God, read the O.T. prophets! Paul had already made it clear in this epistle that Peter, Apollos, and he, had all received their stewardship to Christ by grace, not by merit. He insisted that whatever any apostle or leading teacher in the church might appear to be by the world's standards, they were nothing more than servants seeking to be found faithful to their Lord. Paul made himself and Apollos an illustration for their benefit. The Greek phrase, *di humas*, means, "for you, or on account of you..." Paul continues to call these schismatic Corinthians "brethren" even though they are thinking too highly of themselves and are "puffed up." He hasn't written them off—yet.

But, as believers in the Messiah, they were bound by the Scriptures to be humble before God as much as anyone else. Paul had already quoted 6 OT references about boasting (Psa. 33:10; Isa. 29:14; Jer. 9:24; Isa. 64:4; 65:17; Job. 5:13) and there are many more in the OT (Psa. 49:6; 94:4; 17:7; Prov. 27:1; Isa. 10:15). Jesus spoke much about humility and against arrogance and conceit, and it may be that Paul is referring to the gospel documents since there is evidence that some of them may have been in existence as early as A.D. 50. The Christian must not be guided by personal feelings or any other human standard in his concept of the church and its membership. His attitudes are under the control of the mind of Christ which is revealed in the Bible (and no where else)!

In verses 7 & 8 Paul asked a series of questions, with just a trace of satire or sarcasm, to arrest their attention and bring them back to a realistic view of themselves! His first question was, "Who makes you different from somebody else?" The Corinthian Christians may have had many different functionaries ("gifts") within their congregation (e.g. 1 Cor. 12:4ff), but they all had the same position or rank before God—servant! Their attitude of superiority toward one another and other Christians was born of presumptuous conceit even the fact that they had chosen one apostle over another to follow did not make them superior, for apostles are only servants. Their conceit was perpetuating division which in turn was destroying the temple (church) of God. His second question was, "What have you that you did not receive?" Everything they had they received from God as a "gift." Life, salvation, spiritual gifts, the apostolic word, the Spirit of God—nothing was merited—everything by was by grace (1 Cor. 1:26-31). All Christians everywhere need to be constantly reminded of this fact! Paul's third question was, "If then you received it, why do you boast as not having received it?" There was simply nothing they could claim to have earned or originated themselves—therefore, they had no reason to boast. There was no need to elevate one

apostle over another for they, too, had only what they received from God by grace.

These Corinthian brethren had become so egocentric, they were exploiting apostles and teachers for their own aggrandizement. They were building (they thought) their own reputations and glory at the expense of the apostles, for their divisions and schisms hurt the apostles and brought disrepute to the name of Christ and his church. But they did not care so long as they appeared to be “wise” in their selectivity and exclusivity. Paul corrects them by sarcasm and irony. **THEY MUST BE BROUGHT TO SEE THEMSELVES AS THEY REALLY ARE—ARROGANT, EXPLOITATIVE, UNCARING SPIRITUAL BRATS.** They considered themselves to have arrived at the goal of the Christian life—spiritual maturity—by being wiser than others. They exalted one leader over another, thereby arrogating to themselves the stature of “spiritual giants.” They thought they proved by their divisions that they alone knew which leader was the right one for the church. Each party or group believed they alone could make superior spiritual evaluations. Each group deemed the other groups immature, unqualified, and unacceptable for fellowship in the Lord. Each group considered itself the ruling group and “reigned as kings,” as Paul satirically pictured them! It was a serious problem. It was destroying the Corinthian church. It has destroyed **MANY** churches (congregations) through the centuries! Striking, impressive, attention-getting words must be used to solve the problem!

The apostles are **NOT** “widely” **VENERATED** by the world today! **MOST OF THE NON-CHRISTIAN WORLD AND SOME OF THE SO-CALLED “CHRISTIAN” WORLD TODAY SPENDS LONG YEARS OF TIME AND MILLIONS OF DOLLARS TRYING TO CAST DOUBT ON THE VERACITY OF THE WRITINGS OF THE APOSTLES!** Many in today’s world think the apostles of Christ were mis-led, gullible, credulous, fanatics who couldn’t think straight and were inventors of myths and fables.

The apostles never considered themselves kings (or even “princes of the Church” as Roman Catholic “cardinals” do today). They knew there was only one King—Jesus. Paul is reminding the Corinthian Christians that all followers of Jesus are merely his bond-slaves and servants. Paul then proceeds to tell those who were “glorying” in having chosen certain apostles to follow just where apostles were in the scheme of things (especially as viewed by the non-Christian world of their day). First, apostles were made to be spectacles (the Greek word is, *theatron*, from which we get the English word theater, “publicly exposed” see Heb. 10:33). The apostles were made public spectacles of humiliation through what they suffered (see the book of Acts and 2 Cor. 11:21-33). The Jews called Paul an apostate and blasphemer; Greek philosophers called him a babbler and trouble-maker; governors called him “mad.” Paul had a reputation as a menace to society (Acts 17:6). Second, Paul says, the world looks upon apostles as morons (the Greek word in 4:10 is *moroi*, “fools”). Paul accepted the world’s evaluation, willing to be called a fool if it was for Christ’s sake. He is saying to the Corinthian Christians that if they are expecting to gain a reputation from the world by dividing up and claiming to be followers of any of the apostles, their reputation will be that of “fools” following “fools.” **AND THAT’S HOW MOST OF THE NON-CHRISTIAN WORLD SEES A DIVIDED CHRISTENDOM TODAY!**

All through this section, Paul contrasts what the sophisticated world thought of the

apostles and what the Christians at Corinth, in their naivete, thought the world should think of them. To the unbelieving world the apostles (and all Christians) were weak fools and disreputable. The Corinthian Christians thought that if they structured the church after worldly ways, with positions and parties of seniority and superiority by selecting the most prestigious leaders to follow, they would rule, be wise, be strong, and be honored. But the world did not see apostolic Christianity that way—then or now!! The apostles were, by temperament, quite unlike the sophisticated Greeks. Aristotle's highest virtue was megalopsuchia—"with great soul"—and he said that the "great soul" would not endure insults. But the apostles had the Spirit of Christ in them which constrained and controlled them, so that being insulted or reviled, they blessed; being persecuted, they bore it; being blasphemed, they entreated or conciliated. The pagan Greek and Roman world of Paul's day looked upon conduct such as the apostles exhibited as groveling weakness, a character defect, and a sure mark of the lowliest class of humanity.

Jesus pointed out the capriciousness and vacillation of human nature in his condemnation of the Pharisees for saying they "honored" the prophets of hundreds of years before their time while they were plotting to murder THE PROPHET (JESUS CHRIST) who was the ONE that all the old prophets wrote and preached about! What Jesus is really saying in Matt. 23:29-31 is that the Pharisees only pretended to venerate the old prophets. Had they lived in the days of their forefathers they would have joined right in the persecution of those prophets by the ungodly Israelites. Ungodly human nature has a tendency to pretend to venerate what their forefathers despised! While some unbelievers today pretend to venerate the apostles, had they lived in Paul's day as unbelievers they would have joined right in with "bad-mouthing" them.

The apostles were, by the world's reputation, the "scum of the earth." The Greek word perikatharmata, translated, "refuse," refers to the garbage scoured or scraped off a kitchen vessel. The Greek word peripsema, translated "off-scouring" means "to wipe the dirt off all around." In other words, the majority of the world, in that day, looked upon these apostles of the crucified Christ as garbage and dirt. And these Corinthian Christians thought their choosing one apostle over another would make them appear wise and worldly in the eyes of the pagan culture of the day. One is reminded of modern church people who create divisions in the body of Christ because of preacher-worship. Preachers are not exactly considered first-class citizens of modern culture. In fact, movies and television go to great lengths to portray preachers of the Bible as rabble-rousing, ignorant, self-serving menaces to society—garbage and dirt. Preachers, teachers and other leaders of the Lord's church should never be the object of a church's pride. They certainly are no reason over which to divide the church.

The Greek phrase (4:15b) is: en gar Christo lesou dia tou euaggelion ego humas egennesa—"for in Christ Jesus through the gospel I, you, begat." KJV translates it, "for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." RSV translates it, "For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel." Paul brought about their conversion to Christ personally through his preaching (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 3:10). Paul "travailed" over their "birth into Christ" like a pateras "father" (1 Cor. 4:15) (see also Gal. 4:19; Philemon 10; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4, etc.)

It is important to note in this text that Paul says the Corinthians were begotten by Paul in Christ through the gospel which he taught them. Spiritual birth (the new birth, being born again) is through the gospel preached by the apostles. Where does one find the gospel preached by the apostles? In the book of Acts, beginning in Acts chapter 2. What is the apostolic gospel through which the Corinthians were born again or anew? What is the “mystery” of the Christian religion? (1 Tim. 3:16). It is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was manifested in the flesh, died on a cross for the atonement of the world’s sin, arose from the dead on the third day to validate that atonement; it is that human beings must so trust that declaration of God they will repent (change their minds) and submit to the command of the apostles to be immersed in water unto the remission of sins; it is that the Holy Spirit of Christ will take residence in the penitent and obedient believer and become to him God’s down-payment on eternal life. No human being since the redemptive work of Christ at the cross and the resurrection, can be begotten in Christ apart from believing and obeying the apostolic gospel. Christians are begotten through the word of God, the gospel (1 Thess 2:13; 2 Thess 1:8; 2:13-15; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:22-25). The word of God, the gospel, is the spiritual seed (Greek sperma or spora, Lk. 8:11; 1 Pet. 1:23) or sperm of God which begets the Spirit of God in man’s heart but only when man believes it and obeys it. Many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were immersed in water (Acts 18:8) and were thus begotten in Christ through the proclamation gospel.

Certainly, those who lead others to Christ by teaching them the gospel, have every right to feel as Paul did. I know I have felt that way towards those to whom I have taught the Bible (not just those I’ve baptized into Christ). All those who have been both “begotten” and “matured” in Christ by me through the teaching of God’s Word (some 4000 different Bible College students) are my “children-in-the-faith” and there’s no dearer relationship! I truly feel like a “child” of those who have taught me the precious word of God through the years.

The power of truth is what Paul was going to exercise to chasten the Corinthians. Paul had heard that some of the Christians in Corinth were not only misbehaving, they were arrogant (Greek, ephusiothesan “Puffed up”) about it. He wrote this epistle at Ephesus in the Spring of A.D. 57 and told the Corinthians he planned to stay in Ephesus until after Pentecost (June) (1 Cor. 16:8) and then come to Corinth for a visit. But he changed his plans (2 Cor. 1:15,16,23) and sent Timothy instead. Apparently the Corinthians then accused him of weakness and cowardice, so he wrote what is entitled the “Second” epistle to defend his change of plans. There must have been some indication at the writing of his “original” letter (the one before “First” Corinthians) to them that some of the Corinthians were arrogantly boasting that Paul would never come to Corinth and exercise any apostolic authority. They accused him of being bold when he was away from them and meek when face to face with them (2 Cor. 10:1). So the apostle promises, “But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills...” and he promises to show that their mockery is all talk without any power behind it. They had become puffed up and had not repented. For some reason the teachers and leaders of the church there had not seen the error of their ways and they were getting more arrogant and bold with each passing day about straying from the apostolic doctrine!

The truth of God (in the gospel of Christ) and the apostolic preaching of it has power to destroy all philosophies and sophistries that are merely guesswork (and not even



good guesses at that). The power of the Spirit of God in his word is able to cast down all imaginations (rationalizations) and bring every thought into captivity to obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5). Paul is talking about going to Corinth to exercise the power of truth in the apostolic message versus the boasting sophistries of the wayward and divisive Christians there. He is not threatening a demonstration of any physical or ecclesiastical power. None of the apostles ever assumed any papal powers!

Paul is challenging the schismatics at Corinth that when he comes to them he will put their sophisticated philosophies to the test to see if they can stand against the historical facts of the gospel (see 1 Cor. 15). He also will put their sophistries in the crucible of pragmatics to see if they are producing in the lives of people what his apostolic gospel is able to produce. Paul says to them that the kingdom of God in a man's life is not demonstrated by words, but by the power of Christian living. So far, their sophistries have shown the exact opposite of Christian love and unity. In the kingdom of God, every thought and deed is to be brought into obedience to Christ. The choice is theirs. The question is, will they repent and bring their thinking and acting into obedience to Christ (as preached to them by Paul), or will they continue in their egotistical divisiveness? If they repent Paul will come with a gentle love. If they do not repent Paul will come with a chastening love. He says he will come with a rod (Greek *hrabdo*, "large wooden staff"), but he is using the word rod as a metaphor. He does not intend to beat them physically, but to chasten them with the truth. It is by the power of the truth that people are set free from enslavement to the destructive, damning lies of the devil which alienate them from God. Freedom from falsehood cannot be accomplished by any physical beating.

Jesus Christ was known even by his enemies as one who "did not regard the position of men" (Matt. 22:16). But it would be nothing short of a miracle for any other human being to say that he/she had never shown partiality or had never wanted to be shown partiality! Probably all of us have, if not openly, secretly envied, been jealous, and "chosen up sides" in our Christian relationships. **NOT EVEN APOSTLES OF CHRIST COULD KEEP FROM BEING "PARTIAL" ON OCCASION** (Acts 15:36-41; Gal. 2:11-21). But there is no place for partiality in the church of Christ because we are all "bond-servants." We have, every one of us, indentured ourselves to Christ and must expect to be treated as "unworthy servants" even when we've done all we've been commanded to do (Lk. 17:10).

# TEACHER'S NOTES I CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 5:1-13

Paul describes this sin with shock as, “such immorality as is not even named among the pagans.” Paul was using hyperbole to emphasize the seriousness of the crime. It was apparently classed as incest. A man in the Corinthian church was “living” (in marriage and sexually) with his “father’s wife.” Whether this was the guilty man’s own mother, or whether she was a second wife of his father (or one of multiple wives of his father), and whether his father was dead or alive, is all beside the point. Of course, in isolated cases, incest was practiced among pagans, both before Paul’s time and during the 1st century A.D. Lot had incestuous sexual relations with his daughters. Some Egyptian princes and their sisters married incestuously (Cleopatra II and VII with Ptolemy XIII her brother). Herod Antipas (who had John the Baptist beheaded) married Herodias who was his niece, his cousin and his sister-in-law all at the same time. Caligula, the Roman emperor, lived incestuously with two of his sisters, according to Suetonius in his Lives of the Twelve Caesars. A few of the aristocratic Greeks had incestuous relationships with near relatives. Ezekiel (22:11) says that some of his Jewish brethren in his day were committing incest. Although some of the more depraved have practiced it through the centuries, the crime of incest was generally abhorrent to the pagan. Modern day anthropologists and sociologists also find in their studies that incest is a crime considered immoral, aberrant and destructive by the overwhelming preponderance of human beings—believers and unbelievers alike. It is difficult to believe that a sin which even the pagans shunned had invaded the Church! Carnality plays funny tricks. It often turns truth upside down, or as Isaiah put it, “calls good evil and evil good.”

What shocked Paul the most, however, was their continuing arrogance about the blatant sin rather than being ashamed. The congregation had puffed itself up with conceit and pagan “sophistication.” It wanted to be known as “tolerant” and “liberal-minded” about the social behavior of the day. It was more interested in maintaining its cliques and parties and its image with the worldly-wise than it was in righteousness. The Corinthian Christian church was concentrating on patterning itself after human institutions and worldly structures of leadership. Perhaps they were so puffed up about their image they did not want to admit this problem existed among them. If they took the drastic action taught by Christ and the apostles, they might be stigmatized as “prudish” by the pagan society of 1st century Corinth. Paul’s orders (“with the power of the Lord”) to the Corinthian congregation were not unChristian! Paul’s orders to the Corinthians were not nearly as severe as the directions of God in the Law of Moses! Three times Paul directs the church to “remove this man from among you” (5:2) “deliver this man to Satan” (5:3) and “drive out the wicked person from among you” (5:13). The last order (5:13) is an imperative verb in the Greek, *exarate*, “Remove.” Many a modern day so-called Christian congregation of people have fallen for the same lie from the devil—which is, “the church must keep up with, or at least tolerate, the moral standards of the majority of society.” But God’s word has only condemnation for sexual promiscuity and impurity. The crime of incestuous sexual intercourse is severe

enough to warrant the death penalty in the Old Testament (Lev. 18:6-18; 20:10-21; Deut. 27:20). AND THAT WAS GOD'S LAW—NOT MAN'S! Anyone who has studied the history of the Israelites knows that it was a "civilized" society, even more so than any modern society! Why do human psychologists, sociologists and criminologists think it is more "civilized" to incarcerate millions of criminals and parole them after a few years (especially sexual perverts) so they can continue to victimize innocent people, than it is to punish them with the same punishments Almighty God decreed in the Old Testament???? BUT WHAT IS EVEN MORE INTOLERABLE ARE THE CHURCHES, CLAIMING THE NAME CHRISTIAN, WHO NOT ONLY TOLERATE SEXUAL PERVERSION BUT PROMOTE IT! If the apostle Paul was alive today he would write more scathing letters to them than he did to Corinth!!!

There's nothing "sophisticated" about sexual promiscuity and perversion. Such crimes brutalize the individual human psyche and contaminate society in general more than any other kind of crime! Civil governments, ordained by God to be a "terror to bad conduct" and "execute the wrath of God on the wrongdoer" must summon enough "moral backbone" to do what God has mandated them to do! BUT, ABOVE ALL, THE LEADERS AND MEMBERS OF A CONGREGATION CALLING ITSELF CHRISTIAN MUST FOLLOW THE APOSTOLIC COMMAND AND PRECEDENT OF SWIFT AND INFLEXIBLE DISCIPLINE OF IMPENITENT CHURCH MEMBERS IN CASES OF SEXUAL PROMISCUITY AND PERVERSION. Crimes and sins of this nature cannot continue to be tolerated in an impenitent member! Even sin such as this, repented of, would restore the penitent to brotherhood.

The apostolic order to "deliver this man to Satan" in the Greek text is *paradounai ton toioton to satana eis olethron tes sarkos*, literally, "to deliver such a person to Satan for destruction of the flesh." *Paradounai* means, "give over, abandon, deliver up." "To abandon someone to Satan" is the same as, "Let him become to you as a Gentile and a publican" (Matt. 18:17); it is the same as "having nothing to do with him" (2 Thess. 3:6,14,15). To deliver, or abandon, a church member to Satan is to declare him a non-covenant person. Those of the OT dispensation who were "cut off from the congregation" were to be considered no longer members of Israel and severed from all rights and privileges of the covenant! They could not offer sacrifices at the temple, they could not associate with God's people, and they were considered unclean. They were no longer able to be reconciled to God. The same is true in the case of a Christian excommunicated from the church. Such a one is unreconciled to God, a rebel, and not a member of God's redeemed community until he repents and seeks forgiveness. Delivering an immoral impenitent church member to Satan is really only an acknowledgment by the church of that which the sinner has already done to himself! It gets the church's position straightened out on sin as much as it gets the sinner's attitude straightened out on it! An impenitent, remorseless church member excommunicated from one congregation should not be given "safe harbor" in another congregation until there is evidence of repentance! To welcome a sinning, incorrigible sinner from one congregation to another serves neither the sinner nor the church and brings shame upon the name of Christ! Excommunication is to be done by the leadership and the congregation (Matt. 18:15-20). Excommunication does not mean that the church has given up on the sinner and wishes him/her to be lost forever. In fact, it means just the opposite. It means the church really cares that the sinner is jeopardizing his eternal salvation by

continuing in his sin, and the church is jealous for his salvation and fellowship, but the church must also fear God and keep his commandments concerning “sin in the camp.”

This is precisely why Paul qualified his order to deliver the man to Satan with the words, “...for the destruction (mortification, KJV) of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” The church was not to physically kill or destroy the man, but to reclaim the man for Christ! While he was living in contemptuous rebellion against Christ’s rule over him, he was giving allegiance to Satan! The church must understand this is where the man is, admit the man belongs to Satan and not to Christ, and take unpleasant but affirmative action that might move the man to return to Christ’s lordship in his life. When such a case demands attention by the congregation and its leadership, it must be done with firmness, without partiality and as quickly as love allows. “Because sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men is fully set to do evil” (Eccl. 8:11; see also Isa. 26:9-10).

Satan, of course, would not personally offer any assistance to the guilty man to destroy his carnal-mindedness. Satan would use every opportunity and circumstance to deceive the man into involving himself ever deeper into carnality. God alone, through his word and Spirit in our hearts, destroys fleshly-mindedness. Paul did not mean the physical body of the man was to be obliterated---he meant the destruction of an attitude! The apostle wanted to slay a certain mind-set, a philosophy of life, which the man had accepted and allowed to turn him away from godliness. Paul himself had to fight and conquer (by God’s grace) this same mind-set (Rom. 7:13-25; 1 Cor. 9:24-27). **THERE IS THIS SAME STRUGGLE IN EVERY CHRISTIAN—EVEN IN APOSTLES** (Rom. 7:14-25; 8: 5-8; Gal. 2:11-21; 5:17; Jas. 4:1-10; 1 Pet. 2:11-12).

Paul believed this man would learn something by being excommunicated and given over to some realm where Satan is allowed by God to function which might motivate the man to draw near to Christ. Paul “delivered to Satan” two of his co-workers, Hymenaeus and Alexander, that they might learn “not to blaspheme.” How did he expect them to learn this? How did God teach Job to depend more on God’s grace than on his own self-righteousness? God “delivered” Job to Satan (Job. 2:6-7). How was Paul, the apostle, taught that he should not boast in having received revelations from God that no other human had received? How did Paul learn that God’s grace was sufficient and that he should not rely on himself? God “delivered” Paul to Satan and sent Paul through the school of affliction (2 Cor. 12:1-10; 1 Cor. 1:3-11, respectively). Jesus “delivered” Peter to Satan “to be sifted as wheat” (Lk. 22:31-32). God sometimes allows those who sin to suffer physical affliction in order to bring them to repentance (Rom. 1:27); other times he allows them to suffer the “great accuser’s” (Satan’s) torments of guilt “that he/she might be ashamed” (2 Thess. 3:14-15). If this guilty man, delivered to Satan, puts to death his attitude that this world and physical things are man’s ultimate purpose and goal, his spirit will be saved!

Yes! This is “mind-control.” And it is Biblical! Christians must set their minds on the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5-8); they must set their minds on things that are above, not on things on the earth (Col. 3:1-4); Christians must have the mind of Christ in them (Phil. 2:3-11); Christians must bring their every thought into captivity to obedience to Christ (2 Cor.

10:3-5). NO ONE CAN BE A CHRISTIAN WHO IS UNWILLING TO TURN HIS/HER MIND, MOTIVES, MORALS, AND ACTIONS OVER TO THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST AND HIS WORD!

All the symbolism of Jewish history and God's redemptive program for man is applied here to the Christian experience. The Christian covenant is God's ultimate feast on this earth. Jesus spoke often (parabolically) of his new kingdom (the church) as a "feast." Paul is not referring to the Lord's Supper, per se, in these verses. He is using the same figure of speech Jesus used in his parables. Paul is likening the whole Christian life to a festival or holy-day. Of course, the best symbol to illustrate that idea is the Jewish Passover feast. The Christian's Passover is Christ (Greek, pascha). Christ is the absolute Passover—the perfect Passover. He is the fulfillment of that which all the Jewish feasts typified and prophesied. It was a very common thing for the writers (especially Paul) of the NT to show that the Christian dispensation is the fulfillment of the entire Mosaic system (see 1 Cor. 10:1-14, esp. 10:11 where Paul uses the Greek word tupos or "type" to refer to the history of Israel). Hebrews 4:9 speaks of the whole Christian life as a "Sabbath-kind-of-life." Hebrews 9:9 says the Israelite tabernacle is "symbolic" (Greek, parabole, "parable") of the Christian dispensation. Christ is the fulfillment of that which all the Jewish feasts typified and prophesied. The OT Passover specifically celebrated God's redemption of Israel and sanctification or separation from bondage into a people called out for God's glory and purpose. All the festivals or holy-days ordained by God in the law of Moses were celebrations of righteousness, love, truth and goodness. They were holy dedications acknowledging man's reconciliation to the will of God through sacrificial, vicarious atonement.

At the Jewish Passover, all Jewish homes had to be searched with minute care for leaven and any that was found was to be put out of the house (Ex. 12:14-20). If anyone disobeyed this commandment they were to be "cut off" from the congregation of Israel. Leaven, in the matter of the Jewish Passover, symbolized the old life of bondage in Egypt, which, in turn symbolizes sin. In the Jewish Passover the old leaven had to be thrown out before the slaying of the sacrificial lamb and the observance of the festival. In the Corinthian antitype their lamb had already been sacrificed and they were trying to celebrate the festival (the Christian life) with the old leaven still remaining in their "house" (the sinning church member).

The whole Christian experience is said to be a festival or a feast. The OT prophets often predicted the Messianic age in the figure of a feast (Isa. 25:6-9; 55:1-2; Zech. 14:16-19, etc.). Jesus used the figure of a feast to predict his Messianic Kingdom (Lk. 14:1ff; Matt. 22:1-14; 25:1-13; Jn. 6:35-63; Lk. 15:22-32). The apostles frequently spoke of the Christian life as feasting (Heb. 6:1ff; 12:22-23; 1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Pet. 2:2-3; Eph. 5:28; Jn. 4:34; Matt. 5:6; Isa. 65:13). So, when Paul says here, "Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival..." (Gr. heortazomen "feast") he is not limiting the need for cleansing to partaking of the Lord's supper. The church must purge itself (by whatever method the NT directs for each occasion) of the sin within it in order to be considered as being a participant of the whole Christian experience! Paul is saying to the Corinthian congregation that it must purge itself of its arrogant attitude or disposition toward worldly-sophistication—along with purging itself of impenitent individuals continuing to commit sexual sin.

Verse 9 confirms that Paul wrote at least 3 letters to the Corinthian church, one before First Corinthians which is “non-extant”—this one called “First” Corinthians—and a later one called “Second” Corinthians. In the “non-extant” letter Paul had exhorted the Corinthians “not to associate with immoral men.” The Greek word *sunanamignusthai* is a compound of three words and literally means, mix up with, and is translated, “associate with (RSV) and “company with” KJV). The same Greek word is used in 2 Thess. 3:14, and is translated, “have nothing to do with him.” In his previous letter Paul intended his exhortation about dissociation from immoral people to be applied to any fellow Christian who was continuing, impenitently, in an immoral sexual relationship. That would undoubtedly apply as we shall observe later, to grossly impenitent and perverted sexual sinners in the heathen society as well. It seems, however, that the Corinthians inadvertently (or perhaps deliberately) misunderstood Paul. They assumed he meant they were to withdraw completely from any associations with their heathen neighbors. He did not mean completely. Such an idea would make the Gospel of Christ contradict itself. It certainly would make Paul’s actions contradict his words. The Gospel insists that Christians are to “make disciples of all the nations.” A Christian cannot “disciple” a non-Christian without some “association.”

Since all the citizens of Corinth would be idolaters, except Christians and Jews, and many of them would be guilty of sexual sins, and/or greedy, etc., it would have been nearly impossible for the Christians to reject all associations with the heathen. They could have made no purchases in the markets, made no appeals for civil justice, visited no neighbors and relatives, and made no evangelistic contacts with the lost. To dissociate from all heathen, the Corinthian Christians would have had to become monastics. Neither Jesus nor the apostles ever advocated asceticism or monasticism. New Testament Christianity is to be lived out in the midst of a sinful society so it may have a leavening (in the good sense) influence (Matt. 13:33; Lk. 13:20-21). Christians are the “salt of the earth” and “light of the world” (Matt. 5:13-16). Christians are to be “in the world but not of the world” (Jn. 17:15-19). As one writer has put it, Paul’s admonition here concerning the immoral of this world did not prohibit contact, but it did prohibit conformity.

Paul’s direction concerning an impenitent, immoral person who bears the name of brother is, “not even to eat with such an one” (1 Cor. 5:11). This does not refer merely to the Lord’s Supper—but also to dining together socially. Being a guest for a meal in another person’s home was considered in the ancient world to be a sign that the host was intimately associated with the guest and that the guest agreed with his host’s philosophical stand and life-style. The Pharisees were shocked that Jesus would eat with publicans and sinners (Matt. 9:10-11; 11:19; Lk. 19:7). It would be dangerous to both the faithful Christian and the impenitent brother for the faithful Christian to socialize with the impenitent (2 Thess. 3:6, 14; Titus 3:10-11; 2 Pet. 2:1-22; 2 John 10-11). First, it would give the impenitent brother the impression that he would be acceptable in the Christian fellowship whether he repented or not. Second, it would expose the faithful brother to temptations in a seductive atmosphere of geniality and acceptability. Third, it would make possible certain unwarranted conclusions from both the Christian community and the pagan society that the Church was not much different than the world in the matter of immorality.

The Church is not charged with the responsibility of disciplining (“judging”) outsiders

(non-Christians). Paul expected the Corinthian church to know that. As far as the unchurched sinners of society were concerned, the apostle allows for such contact as was necessary for the ongoing of life in the world. But, he permitted no contact at any intimate social level with an impenitent, incorrigible brother! This does not mean that all church members must be sinless. It does not mean that every church member who commits an unwitting sin or falls into a temptation, must be excommunicated. The crucial issue is flagrant, shameful, continued sin for which there is no apparent repentance (i.e., a change of mind issuing in a change of conduct). When such impenitence is reported and has been established by due scriptural process, discipline involving driving out (Gr. *exareite*, “expel, take out, remove from”) the evil one (Gr. *poneron*) from the fellowship of the church is demanded. It is the word of the Lord!

No! Impenitent sexual sin is NOT the only impenitent sin demanding disfellowship! It is not just those who are impenitently committing sexual incest from whom the Christians must withdraw fellowship. Paul has a long list of those with whom Christians are not to associate if they are impenitent, sinning brethren—fornicators, greedy, idolaters, slanderer, drunkard, or swindler. The Greek word  *pornos* translated “fornicator” KJV and “sexually immoral” NIV (“immorality” RSV) is more generic and is to be distinguished from the Greek words  *moichos*, “adulterer,” and  *arsenokoites*, “homosexual.” ARE THERE ANY IMPENITENT GREEDY CHURCH MEMBERS, OR IMPENITENT SLANDERERS OR IMPENITENT SWINDLERS, DRUNKARDS, OR IDOLATERS IN YOUR CONGREGATION? Paul also includes “those who create dissensions and difficulties in opposition to” the apostolic doctrine (Rom. 16:17-18) and those who are “factious” (i.e., contentious and quarrelsome) (Titus 3:10), and those who are “idlers” and “will not work” (1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6-15). They need to show they are repenting or the church needs to withdraw fellowship from them! It may be that the New Testament church today is not fulfilling the apostolic orders of 1 Cor. 5:9-13!

Clearly, many “Christian” congregations are NOT following the apostles instructions about church discipline TODAY! Such reticence to act with discipline could result in Christ “removing” such a church’s “lampstand” (Rev. 2:5) or Christ “warring against them” (Rev. 2:16) or Christ “throwing some into great tribulation” (Rev. 2:22) or Christ “blotting their names out of the book of life” (Rev. 3:3-5), or Christ “spewing them out of his mouth like vomit” (Rev. 3:16). WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO THE DEMAND FOR HOLINESS (SEPARATION FROM WORLDLY-MINDEDNESS AND WORLDLY BEHAVIOR) AS A REQUISITE FOR MEMBERSHIP IN CHRIST’S CHURCH? I don’t mean just the preaching about holiness of life—I mean the insistence of the leadership of the church (elders and evangelists, i.e., preachers) of withdrawal of fellowship from church members who are flagrantly guilty of, and impenitently continuing in, fornication, greed, worship of idols (whether they be statues or rock-stars or movie stars or any other “gods” of the 21st century), slander, drunkenness, or swindling. OF COURSE, DISSENSION, DIVISION, SCHISMATICS, HERESY, FALSE TEACHING, LAZINESS AND “FREE-LOADING” SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THIS LIST, TOO! Maybe the church would be more valuable to a world lost in sin if it were more holy itself! The leadership of the church is charged with “keeping watch over the souls” of the church members and they “shall give an account” for this charge (Heb. 13:17). It is the obligation of the whole congregation to see that every

member is believing and living the life of holiness taught by Jesus Christ and his apostles (Matt. 18:15-20). AND ANY CHURCH THAT ARROGANTLY ALLOWS IMPENITENT WICKEDNESS TO CONTINUE IN ONE OF ITS MEMBERS WILL SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE APOSTOLIC WARNINGS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT!



# TEACHER'S NOTES I CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 6:1-20

All Christians could settle some disputes they have with one another outside of civil courts! BUT NOT ALL DISPUTES! There are some legal conflicts that can be settled ONLY in civil court BECAUSE civil government demands they be settled there (especially deliberate, premeditated criminal violations of the government's criminal codes). If the government indicts or subpoenas any Christian (or non-Christian) under civil statute, that person must obey the authorities (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17) unless the civil authorities order a Christian to do or think something contrary to a specifically revealed commandment of God. In 1 Cor. ch. 5 Paul had dealt with judging and settling disputes which must be done within the kingdom of God and not in civil court—sexual misconduct by an impenitent church member. In chapter 6 the problem is Christians suing one another in pagan law-courts over matters they could have settled among themselves! The word “grievance” (RSV) and “dispute” (NIV) is in the Greek text, *pragma* and is frequently used in ancient Greek papyri as the technical term for “litigation.” The “disputes” or “grievances” between Christians in the 1st century church at Corinth were probably disputes over properties. By the middle of the 1st century Rome had saturated all her subjected provinces (which included Greece) with copious amounts of laws and regulations concerning every facet of human life (much like “big government” today)! Of all ancient peoples the Romans were the most prone to litigation. Any man could make himself a prosecutor in a Roman court. Each party to a litigation deposited with the magistrate a sum of money (called *sacramentum*), which was forfeited to the state religious system by the losing party. The defendant also had to give bail (*vadimonium*) as security for his subsequent appearances. The magistrate then turned over the dispute to a person qualified to act as a judge. If the defendant lost, his property—sometimes his person—could be seized by the plaintiff until the judgment was satisfied. Problems of ownership, obligation, exchange, contract, and debt took up by far the largest part of Roman law. Material possession was the very life of the Roman empire, and its provinces. This would be especially true in cosmopolitan and commercial Corinth. Ownership of property came by inheritance or acquisition. The making of valid wills was complicated with hundreds of legal restrictions. No heir might take any part of an estate without assuming all the debts and other legal obligations of the deceased. Acquisition came by transfer, or by legal conveyance resulting from a suit at law. Transfer (*mancipatio*, “Taking in hand”) was a formal gift or sale before witnesses and with scales struck by copper ingot as token of a sale. Without this ancient ritual no exchange had the sanction or protection of the law. “Obligation” was any compulsion by law to perform an act. It could arise by delict or by contract. Delicti or torts—non-contractual wrongs (breaches of contract or agreements which do not violate civil statute) committed against a person or his property—were in many cases punished by an “obligation” to pay the injured person a sum of money in compensation. Obviously, there would be many “grievances” which might arise between Christian brethren engaged in the multiple vocations and businesses which would be present in the huge, sophisticated metropolis called Corinth.

Christians could and should settle all grievances/disputes against one another outside any civil court whenever possible. All spiritually-mature Christians should be able to decide which “grievances” they can settle between themselves. Those who can’t make the distinction must surrender the process of deciding them to the elders of the congregation. Disputes between Christians should be few and far between, in the first place, and in the second place the love of Christ should “control” them (2 Cor. 5:14) so that the peace of Christ may be the arbiter or “ruler” or “umpire” (Col. 3:15-16) in every situation of the Christian life. The next question deals with HOW Christians should settle disputes with one another

In 1 Cor. 6:1 Paul uses the Greek word *tolma* translated “dare” in all versions but it means literally, presumption, audacity (2 Pet. 2:10). Paul is attempting to shame these Christians in Corinth because they were taking grievances between themselves to civil court which they could have settled without appealing to pagans to do it for them. They have presumed against the power of the word of Christ to settle their disputes. Christians are, at the 2nd coming of Christ, going to judge the heathen world, not vice versa—they are showing their unworthiness to be Christians by declaring their incompetence to judge their own disputes. In a sense, Christians are now judging the world. By proclaiming the gospel they pronounce judgment upon those who do not. Judgment upon the world as a consequence of proclaiming the gospel is inevitable—it can’t be any other way (Heb. 11:7; Rev. 14:6-7). If church members are incapable of acting like Christians toward one another and producing justice, are they not declaring themselves to be incompetent to fulfill their destiny to judge the world with justice? Shame upon them! Christians are going to judge angels! CAN THEY NOT SETTLE THE INSIGNIFICANT DISPUTES THEY HAVE WITH ONE ANOTHER IN A GOD-DIRECTED WAY?

At Philippi, Paul demanded his rights as a Roman citizen against ungodly and unjust treatment (Acts 16:37); he did the same before Festus (Acts 25:10). But Christian brethren should not have to bring civil suit against one another to obtain justice when there is a grievance. Let Christian brethren first do what is fair and honest and just; let them settle any dispute between themselves, then, if civil law requires it, let it be legally sanctioned in civil court. The law is for the ungodly—not for the godly (1 Tim. 1:8). Christians should never have to resort to civil law to arrive at what is fair, honest and just between themselves. Civil law should be resorted to only as a secondary sanction of the justice already accomplished between Christian brethren! And this is to apply in every area of Christian life—transfers of property, accidental harm done, services agreed upon, etc. In every circumstance the Christian’s first concern is not “What will it cost me?—Will I make a profit?—Shall I accept responsibility for my error?” The Christian’s first concern is “Have I been fair, honest, and just—Have I given what my brother rightly deserves?—Have I done to others as I would have them do unto me?” When two Christian antagonists cannot settle their grievance themselves, Paul’s first solution is (6:5) to find “a man among you wise enough to decided between members of the brotherhood.” Such a person would have to be well-trained in the Bible and apostolic doctrine; know what the Bible says about brotherly relationships; be old enough to have had much practical experience in the circumstances of life and interpersonal relationships; and logical enough to arbitrate and bring about reconciliation between disputing Christian brethren. Any wise Christian should be able to function in this capacity.

But Paul's second solution is the real "kicker!" He says in 6:7-8 that any Christian would be better off to allow himself to be defrauded by a brother than to quarrel over grievances to the point of bringing suit in a pagan civil court. When Christians take one another to a heathen judge it smacks of some underlying greed or spirit of retaliation. Whether that be the case or not, two Christians suing one another in civil court is taken by the world to mean that Christians are no different than greedy and spiteful heathen. Paul clearly states that for Christians to sue one another in pagan court is defeating (Greek *hettema*, "loss, detriment, overthrow")—it brings discredit on the church and the gospel. When Christians cannot settle a grievance between themselves, one of them should be willing to suffer personal abuse, injury or loss rather than let the church be defeated in its mission to bring men to Christ! THAT IS NOT EASY!—but that is what Christ, Himself, did! But whoever said being a Christian was easy! Nowhere does the New Testament say the Christian cannot appeal to the civil courts for redress and justice when he is wrongfully sued by an unbeliever. In fact, a number of scriptures (the clearest being Rom. 12:14—13:7) tells the Christian that when he has done all he can to be at peace with all men, if an unbeliever persists in an unjust action, the Christian is to leave the wrath (justice) of God up to the civil authorities for prosecution. Of course, we must define what "a Christian brother" is! A "Christian brother" is one who "is patient and kind...not jealous or boastful...not arrogant or rude...does not insist on his own way...is not irritable or resentful...does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right...bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Cor. 13:4-7). If a "Christian brother" is a Christian in name only, and a grievance cannot be alleviated between him and another "Christian brother"—then there is no recourse except civil court! All members of the kingdom of God are expected to think and act as regenerated, reborn people. They should act toward one another as Jesus taught in the Sermon on The Mount. While force and law is for the ungodly, the Sermon on The Mount characterizes the citizens of God's kingdom. The kind of brotherly love that would rather accept being defrauded by a Christian brother than to sue him in civil court is taught in a number of passages in the NT (Col. 3:12-13; Rom. 15:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:20; 3:8-15; Phil. 2:3-4). THIS IS AS RELEVANT TODAY AS IT WAS WHEN PAUL WROTE IT. The word of God abides forever!

Clearly, in context, Paul is classifying those who are incorrigibly taking Christian brethren to pagan court with their grievances are some of the "unrighteous" who shall not inherit the kingdom of God! The Greek word *adikoi* may be translated either unrighteous or unjust—the two English words mean the same. It is alarming to contemplate that those who would rather defraud a brother than be defrauded are categorized with the debauched of 6:9-11 but that is precisely what Paul has done here.

Those who defraud are as abominable to God as the sexually immoral, the idolatrous, the homosexual, the effeminate, the thief, the greedy, the drunkard, the reviler, and the robber. It is significant that Paul has somewhat repeated this list twice in a few paragraphs (5:9-13 and 6:9-11). The Greek word *malakos* is translated "effeminate" in KJV, and "male prostitutes" in NIV—it means "unmanly, sensuous, dissolute." The Greeks were fond of "male prostitutes" and kept many of them in their idol-temples. The Greek word *arsenokoitai* literally, "male coitus" is translated "homosexual" in this text and is the same Greek word in 1 Tim. 8:10, translated "them that defiles themselves with men" KJV, and

“perverts” in NIV. Why would the act of suing a Christian brother in a heathen court be counted such a serious crime by the apostle? Because it is a deliberate rejection of the very essence of God’s kingdom. It is a refusal of the principle of self-denial. Anyone who refuses to put self to death, allowing Christ to live in him, is not worthy of the kingdom (Lk. 12:13-31; 14:25-33; 16:10-15; Jn. 12:20-25; 15:12-14; Gal. 2:20; 5:13; 5:24-26, etc.). AND THE SAME IS TRUE OF CONTINUED, IMPENITENT FINANCIAL MISBEHAVIOR—greed, thievery, robbery, fraud. “The love of money is the root of all evils” (1 Tim. 6:10). One has only to read Paul’s instructions to various young “preacher-boys” (e.g. Timothy and Titus) about money and what they should preach about it to their Christian brethren to understand why greed, thievery, robbery and fraud are serious sins!

4. Homosexual behavior is NOT genetically predetermined and inescapable. We now have scientific proof that homosexual behavior is not genetically predetermined. In March, 2007, the director of the Human Genome Project, Dr. Francis Collins, said: “homosexuality is not hardwired. There is no gay gene. We mapped the human genome. We now know there is no genetic cause for homosexuality” (from *The Beacon*, Oct. 2008, a monthly publication of R. L. Beasley Ministries, P. O. Box 2862, Joplin, MO, 64803). Romans 1:18-32 proves that it was a deliberate choice of that generation of wicked people. Everything the Bible says about it indicates it is a chosen behavior. The Greek word *arsenokoites* is a combination of *arsen*, “male,” and *koite* (Eng. “coitus”), “sexual intercourse,” and is only correctly translated, “homosexual.” The Greek text also includes the word *malakoi*, literally meaning, “soft to the touch,” but used metaphorically in the NT to mean male-effeminacy in a practicing male prostitute. The word *malakoi* was used by classical Greek writers near the 1st century to denote catamites (men and boys who allowed themselves to be sexually misused). According to Suetonius in his *Lives of The Twelve Caesars*, Tiberius the Roman emperor when Jesus was crucified, kept hundreds of young boys on the Isle of Capri for sexual purposes. Homosexual behavior is not a sickness—it is a sin! Paul wrote to Timothy that homosexual behavior is a crime punishable by law (1 Tim. 1:8-11). Homosexual behavior is severely condemned throughout the Bible. In the OT it was a crime punishable by death (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Deut. 23:17,18). Homosexuality is perverse and unnatural—a crime against “nature.” It is an abomination in the social order! If homosexual behavior were “good” it should be able to be practiced universally. But homosexual behavior universalized would inexorably result in genocide—destruction of the human race! Thus, it is perverse, destructive, unreasonable and criminal. Homosexuality is unequivocally a crime against society (Rom. 1:26-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Tim. 1:8-11). And those charged with “using the law lawfully” (1 Tim. 1:8-11) are under divine mandate to legislate against it as a criminal offense, assessing and executing punishments commensurate with the crime. The criminality and destructiveness of sodomy and homosexual behavior are graphically documented in the history of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 13:13; 19:5-11; 1 Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7; Job. 36:14; Hosea 4:14). Homosexuals may change their behavior the same way adulterers and fornicators and thieves and robbers and liars change theirs! BY SURRENDERING THEIR THOUGHTS, URGES, “FEELINGS,” CHOICES, ACTIONS TO CONFORM THEM TO THE REVEALED WORD OF GOD THROUGH WHICH THE POWER OF GOD’S HOLY SPIRIT FLOWS INTO THE HEART OF ANY SINNER!

Any and all sin can be forgiven—both by God and by Christians! The Christian expression or “position” toward homosexuality should be what the Bible says—all the Bible! Christians must acknowledge that homosexual behavior is a sin. Even homosexual thought, just like adulterous, immoral thought, is sin (Matt. 5:27-28). Calling homosexual thinking and behavior “gay” does not make it any less a sin according to the divine revelation of God. Having said that, however, Christians must also have a merciful and compassionate heart toward all sinners—doing all they can to save the sinner’s soul (Jas. 5:19-20; Jude 22-23). **CHRISTIANS CANNOT CONDONE IMPENITENT SIN—NOT EVEN IN THEMSELVES** (Jn. 3:18-21; 8:42-47; Gal. 5:17-26; 6:1-5; Jas. 1:22-27; 2:10; 4:17; 1 Jn. 1:8-10; 2:4)—**BUT CHRISTIANS CAN, AND MUST, FORGIVE WHEN SINNERS (INCLUDING HOMOSEXUALS) REPENT OF THEIR SIN AND CHANGE THEIR BEHAVIOR!** Homosexuals can be “washed, sanctified, justified in the name (authority) of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” (1 Cor. 6:11). Christians can, and must, be kind, merciful, and evangelistic toward any and all human beings (including homosexuals)—but that does not mean any Christian has to show any kind of condescension or acceptance of homosexual behavior by anyone! God let his mind be known about impenitent homosexual behavior when he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone from heaven! And Romans 1:18-32 declares that those who stubbornly, impenitently and deliberately continue to practice sexual perversity, will be “given up on” by God so long as they continue in their impenitence!

Paul did not stop when he said, “All things are lawful...” He continued by saying, “...not all things are helpful...” and while all things are “lawful” he would “not be enslaved by anything.” Brotherly love acknowledges there is a lawful purpose for all things (including human sexuality) which God has created, however, using the body for immorality (including hatred, greed, and unChristian litigation) is perverting and downgrading that which God made to be the residence of the Holy Spirit. Yes! This last section of chapter 6 does connect to the beginning admonition concerning unChristian lawsuits. It teaches that Christians who become enslaved to their emotions and feelings and drag one another bodily before heathen tribunals for their ungodly purposes of greed and retaliation are “prostituting” themselves. When God created man and gave him a human body, it was intended that God’s Holy Spirit would dwell with each man in that body. The apostolic principle, “All things are lawful, but not all things are helpful (“expedient” in KJV)” must be understood in its context. When a Christian brother defrauds you, it is lawful (you have the right) to sue in a civil court—but such action is not always helpful (or, edifying). Christians are to live above (not outside) the plane of law within the kingdom of God’s grace (the church). Christians are not to seek their own good, but the good of their neighbors (Rom. 12:9-10; 15:1-21; Cor. 10:24; Phil. 2:3-4; 1 Pet. 1:22-25; 1 Jn. 3:14-18; 4:19-21; 5:1-3, etc.). Therefore, the Christian has the responsibility of denying any “right” he has in order to build people up in Christ, rather than perverting things and circumstances to destroy people.

Another element in the heathen culture of Greco-Roman society was the matter of religion and human behavior. Heathen gods were what human beings made them. Naturally, when they disavowed God’s true revelation of his infinitely holy character and exchanged that truth for a lie (Rom. 1:18-32), they supplied their own human characteristics to gods of their own making. Religion, to the heathen, was, and still is, a way to appease,

cajole, manipulate, and prevail against their gods until the gods are won over to the human's desire to do as he pleases. To the heathen, the human was relatively free to behave as he pleased so long as he did not anger the gods or the civil authorities. He could very easily appease the gods by making the right offerings and observing the superstitious rituals. So long as he paid his taxes, and did not participate in treason or revolution, he could please the civil authorities. The Christian doctrine of freedom limited by morality and self-sacrifice was in absolute opposition to heathen selfishness.

Paul clarifies the doctrine of Christian freedom as opposed to the philosophy and practice of heathen permissiveness. It is the teaching of Christ and his apostles that everything God has created is good (Gen. 1:10,18,25,31; Acts 10:15; 1 Cor. 10:26; 1 Tim. 4:1-5). However, everything created by God must be used according to the precepts and principles revealed in God's word. The longings and desires of the human being created for this earthly life are good—God made them all. However, they all have their limitations. They are created for the present world order. They are created by God in order to test, discipline and prepare human beings during this earthly probation for the heavenly, eternal existence in the next life. These Corinthian Christians, attempting to be "sophisticated" and follow popular Gnosticism, were holding to the idea that the appetite for sexual intercourse was merely a physical thing like the appetite for food. Paul makes it very clear that these two human functions do not belong in the same category. "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food" is correct, so long as man is not enslaved by food and becomes a glutton. What a man eats, so long as he is not obsessed with food, has no spiritual significance—even if it has been sacrificed to an idol, because an idol is not god (1 Cor. 8:1—10:33); food has no power in and of itself to make a man spiritually clean or unclean—it is the attitude of the heart that makes clean or unclean (Matt. 15:1-20; Mk. 7:14-23); human opinions as to which foods may be eaten and which may not is of no spiritual significance (Rom. 14:1-4; 1 Tim. 4:1-4; Col. 2:20-23). Foods have significance only when someone attempts to make abstinence or indulgence a test of Christian fellowship. The human function of eating and digesting food is purely a physical process and has no spiritual significance. It is for this life only. When this life is over neither food or the human stomach, as we know them now, will continue to exist. **BUT THE "BODY" IS DIFFERENT!**

Paul uses the word "body" (Greek, soma) in a sense intended to mean more than flesh and bone and blood and stomach. Sometimes the word soma stands, by synecdoche (i.e., a figure of speech wherein the part is put for the whole), for the complete human being (Matt. 5:29; 6:22; Rom. 12:1; Jas. 3:6; Rev. 18:13). Soma as Paul used it here means humanness in its total existence in this world. Human beings are more than bodies, but they are bodies! It is through the body that the personality, the spiritual man, functions and operates in relationship to God and his fellow man. Humans are both body and soul (or spirit). In the NT soul describes the human in his thinking, feeling, willing capacities; body describes the human as an acting, functioning, personality living in this world in relationship to his Creator and other creatures. The body is the extension of and instrument through which the soul is expressed.

Humans were not made for immorality. Humans, in their totality, were made for the Lord. God made humans to function and express their souls in this existence through their

bodies. Human beings were made body and soul to serve and exhibit truth, purity, holiness and goodness (the character of God). Humans were not made to abuse their bodies in selfish, hurtful, degrading and false practices. The stomach was made for food, but humans in their totality were made for God's purposes. The stomach was meant for food, but not for complete dietary abandon. Eating must be controlled. Gluttony is a perversion of the body and is a sin. But in eating there is no intimate spiritual involvement with another person. Human sexual organs were meant for sexual intercourse. But they were not made to be given over to complete sexual abandon. Sexuality must be controlled. Christians have given their bodies (selves, persons) to be united in mutuality with Christ. Christians are to be joined, spirit, soul and body (in totality) to Jesus Christ. They are married to him (Eh. 5:21-33). For the Christian to engage in sexual intercourse with someone to whom he/she is not married is not only unfaithfulness to the human spouse but also unfaithfulness to Christ! A Christian who joins intimately (sexually) with a prostitute has taken the body (person) purchased by the sinless blood of Christ, which has been intimately joined to Christ, made a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, and joined it in rebellion against the will of Christ and the desecration of Christ's glory. Other sins do not unite one person with another in such a life-affecting way as fornication, adultery, homosexuality and other sexually promiscuous behaviors (Prov. 5:8-11; 6:24-32; 7:24-27). A physical function of the body is temporary. It is of the flesh and will perish with the flesh. The use of some physical functions, however, is a spiritual matter. In some way, when a human being gives his/her body to sexual intimacy with another being, he/she gives it as a residence to the personality of that other person ("they are no longer two but one ..." Matt. 19:6). Repentance of sexual promiscuity of any kind is certainly possible. Paul indicates in this chapter of Corinthians that some of them had been, but were "washed and sanctified." Repentance means a Christ-mind-set, and a Christ-behavior-set.

Paul's final explanation of and argument for the purpose of humanness concerns the human self or person (the whole man) as a potential residence of the Holy Spirit of God Almighty. But just how does God's Holy Spirit take up residence in our bodies? First, be reminded what the "indwelling Spirit" IS NOT: (a) the power to perform miracles—the power of the Holy Spirit to do miracles was stated to be "the baptism in the Holy Spirit" and was promised only to apostles and passed on by the apostles to selected Christians of the 1st century only by the laying on of the hands of the apostles—some who were said to be "full of the Holy Spirit" never worked a miracle so far as we know (e.g. John the Baptist); (b) supernatural illumination enabling "selected" Christians to understand the scriptures—all humans are created with the capacity to read human language and understand it without divine illumination. The apostles were given, supernaturally, a revelation of the New will of God, but they delivered it to the whole human race in human language (see lesson on 1 Cor. 2). Thus, all sinners are expected to hear and read those apostolic words and believe before the Holy Spirit comes to abide in their hearts—"faith comes by hearing the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). There would be no point in preaching, no point in printing Bibles, if every non-Christian must wait until he has some subjective "experience" to be sure he has the Holy Spirit in him before he can understand the will of God. The Holy Spirit uses the instrumentality of his supernatural word (and the printed words we have in our Bibles are the words of God's Holy Spirit) as a "seed" planted (Lk. 8:15; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:22-25) in our hearts which grows slowly (Mk. 4:26-28) "from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor. 3:18;

Gal. 4:19) as we behold the glory of the Lord Jesus in those words and feed (Jn. 6:63) on them. The Bible clearly teaches that faithful and loving response to the commandments of God in any dispensation of time, will be acceptable as an invitation for the Holy Spirit to take up residence within a human being (Psa. 51:10-12; Isa. 63:11; 66:1-2; Ezek. 37:1-28; Jn. 14:15-24; 15:1-11; Acts 2:38; 5:32; Rom. 8:5; Eph. 3:17; 1 Jn. 3:24; 4:12, etc.). The way God's Spirit takes up residence in any person is by a person's intelligent, willing, loving submission to what God says by the Holy Spirit in the revealed Word so that what he thinks, determines, feels, and does is under the direction of the Spirit through the Word. This was true even of the apostles and other 1st century Christians who possessed power to do miracles! Judas, the betrayer of Christ, had power to work miracles (Matt. 10:1-4) but he did not have the Holy Spirit resident in his heart! God's Spirit does not reside within a person without participation (communion) in Christ's words. Christ "stands at the door and knocks"—he will not force his way in to "sup" (reside) with any who are not believing and repenting (Rev. 3:19-20). AND THE WAY WE KNOW WE HAVE GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT IN US IS WHEN WE KNOW WE ARE BELIEVING AND DOING CHRIST'S COMMANDMENTS (1 Jn. 2:24; 3:24; 5:2-3). Our knowledge that God's Spirit dwells in us is NOT through some existential, mystical, emotional or physical "feeling."

Paul uses the metaphor of ancient slavery to relate the intensity of a Christian's relationship to Jesus Christ. CHRISTIANS ARE "SLAVES"—BOUGHT WITH THE PRICE OF HIS SINLESS, INNOCENT, VICARIOUS DEATH IN OUR PLACE! We are not our own—we belong to Christ, mind, body, soul and spirit! In ancient times (and in ante-bellum America) the "slave" was chattel, purely and simply. Slaves were bought and sold as property, and masters held total sovereignty over them. Slaves gave total allegiance and obedience to their masters lest they be punished or slain without any appeal to civil courts of magistrates. The only purpose for a slave was to serve his master's will—TOTALLY! For slaves who were purchased by good and beneficent masters, this could mean protection, security, dignity and even happiness (see Paul's letter to Philemon). Christians who might have "owned" slaves in the 1st century were admonished that they would give account to God for the way they treated them (Eph. 6:9; Col. 4:1). Paul preached and wrote a great deal about the good and beneficent Master, Jesus Christ. He always considered himself, and all other Christians, as having yielded themselves and everything they "owned" in slavery to Christ (Rom. 6:15-23).

The person who yields himself to become a slave of Christ (a Christian) has no "rights" of his own. He does not belong to himself but to Christ. The only "rights" a Christian has are those granted him in the revealed will of his Master, Christ Jesus (and that is in the Bible). Any attitude or action not found in Christ's revealed will is not permissible for the Christian! We who have yielded to the redemption Christ has obtained for us are his "body" here on earth—the channels through which he works. We are "instruments" of Christ for accomplishing his righteousness in the earth. Instead of being limited to one physical body as when he was here on earth, Jesus now acts through the bodies of his people in whom he lives. You will always find in the Bible that God works through a human body in this world. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn. 1:1-18). The Son came in a human body to offer himself as a perfect sacrifice (Heb. 10:5-10). It was in a body that humans sinned; it was in a body that the Son of man came to earth and conquered sin which had conquered



human beings. It was in a body that he died and rose again and now, by his Spirit, he comes to live within the body of his people. Ironically, Satan, too, always works in this world through human bodies. The only way Satan can thwart God's purposes for redeeming the world is to get a body surrendered to his use, available for his diabolic power and ugly purposes. This is the question of choice in a human being's life. Shall he take that which has been purchased by Christ and use it as an instrument of righteousness and give it to some unworthy use? That body, the means through which God's will ought to be done—will it be taken and yielded to the rebellious purposes of Satan? Should the latter be the choice, the human becomes one with the devil. But if the human is yielded to the Lord's Spirit through the Lord's Word, he is one with Christ. The same Holy Spirit which enabled Jesus Christ to live day by day in a human body and never deviate from the will of God, never yield to all the tremendous temptations of the devil, will live in and through the Christian as Strengthener and Helper. Joined to Christ we are able to give proper rank (i.e., "glory") to God in our bodies. Joined to the devil, we will glorify sin in our bodies.

# TEACHER'S NOTES I CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-40

The Christians of Corinth had previously written to Paul asking questions about sexuality and marriage. These questions would have been provoked by their constant exposure to three conflicting ideologies in respect to sexuality and marriage: (a) Jewish-Christians in the Corinthian church would probably consider celibacy inimical to godliness—the idea of not marrying was so foreign to the Jewish mentality that the OT does not even have a word for “bachelor”—the godly life for a Jew meant not only marriage, but children; (b) apparently there was already some kind of Christian asceticism or monasticism among some Christians at Corinth—many Gentile-Christians believed that the most “spiritual” people were those who were celibates. Some were teaching that those who abstained from physical marriage were the holiest people, and if men and women insisted on marriage they should unite only in a “spiritual” marriage, a sort of Christian “brother-sister” platonic relationship. Such a marriage would not permit sexual intercourse. Paul warned Timothy that such a teaching was a “denial of the faith” and “demonic” in origin (1 Tim. 4:1-5). The same apostle wrote, “Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled...” (Heb. 13:4). He also wrote, “...let each one of you know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor...” (1 Thess. 4:4). One large segment of Christendom today teaches that celibacy is the holiest state of all and that those who minister the gospel (priests and nuns) must be unmarried, which according to the apostle Paul is apostasy!; (c) and finally, these Christians of Corinth were trying to practice the holiness of the gospel surrounded by the loose and wicked morals of Greco-Roman culture. Rape, fornication, homosexuality, adultery, incest, bestiality and other perversions were glorified in the theater and in the cultic religions of that world.

Paul’s statement, “It is well for a man not to touch a woman...” uses the Greek present, middle, infinitive *haptesthai* for the word “touch.” This word, in the middle voice, would be more accurately translated, “cling to, fasten oneself to, assimilate to oneself.” In other words, Paul is not stating that men should never have a tactile touch upon a woman at all. He was suggesting (because of stressful circumstances at the time he wrote) that the wisest thing for a man to do was not “fasten” himself to a woman in marriage. Paul’s suggestion, as is clear later in the context, hinges entirely on the circumstances Christians were about to face in the Roman persecutions (7:26).

But there is an even stronger stress that might override the dreadful separation of husband and wife by martyrdom. That stress would be the drive to fulfill the human sexual urge (7:2,5,9,36). God created the sexual drive in mankind, and it is good so long as it is fulfilled within biblically sanctioned marriage. So Paul writes, “But because of fornication (the word for temptation is not in the Greek text), each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.” Sexual immorality (fornication) was not only practiced almost universally in the 1st century Greco-Roman society, it was glorified in art and religion. Paul plainly states that one, (if not the one) primary reason for marriage is to guard against

succumbing to the temptation for illicit sexual intercourse! He reemphasizes this in verses 8-9. The Greek verb *echeto*, translated “have” is in the imperative mood, and means Paul is giving a command here—not simply making a suggestion. Now, of course, Paul did not think relaxation from the temptation to illicit sexual intercourse was the only basis upon which Christian marriage is founded. He certainly emphasizes *agape* (God-like love) in marriage, 1 Cor. 13:4-7; Eph. 5:22-23; Col. 3:18-19. The Bible also indicates that human marriage is to serve the even higher spiritual goal of exemplifying to the world the commitment and intimate relationship of believers to Christ (Eph. 5:22-33; Isa. 54:4-8; 62:1-5; Ezek. 16:1-34; Hosea 1:1—3:5). On the other hand, it may surprise even Christians to know that the Bible says little about a man and a woman “loving” one another as a prerequisite to marriage. The Bible says a great deal about love within marriage. In the OT marriages were most often arranged by godly parents. The young couple were betrothed (sometimes as young as 12-13) and then married, and learned to love (not merely be infatuated) one another during the marriage. Most of the ancients never went through the alleged experience we call in the 21st century, “falling in love” before marriage. Love is not an accident. No one “falls” into love. True love is from the mind and the will—it is a mental choice—not from the emotions. True love is caring and doing good for another even when one does not “feel” like caring. A man or woman must know what love is and how to love before marrying or the marriage will fail. Love doesn’t “happen”—it is not something one waits to experience—it is something done, something practiced. The apostle’s statement that “each” should have his “own” wife or husband incidentally eliminates polygamy as a Christian option. Paul did not mean that every man and woman must marry—he is only recommending celibacy as the best choice in light of 1st century circumstances (7:26).

First, (7:3) Paul reinforces his teaching that the pressure of sexual desire is the main reason to seek marriage. The Greek words Paul used to give directions about sexual needs in marriage are interesting. Literally, he would say, “to the wife let the husband pay the good affection due her, and likewise also the wife to the husband.” The Greek word *apodidoto* (“pay”) is an imperative verb and is therefore a command. The use of the word “pay” implies obligation. The word *eunoian* is a Greek word literally meaning, “well-minded” but is here used to connote (as v. 4 indicates) the conjugal duties involved in marriage. God instituted marriage as the state in which man and woman are privileged to fulfill sexual desires. But within that state there are also certain duties! When God created man he saw that it was not good for man to be alone so he created woman (Gen. 1:27-28; 2:18-25). It is clear from Paul’s instruction here that sexual intercourse within marriage is not sinful, and is not restricted to procreative purposes. Sexual intercourse, as befits a happy, godly and uninhibited marriage, is the God-ordained right of each partner in a marriage. Less than this (especially for a Christian) is to miss the mark of God’s will. Marriage is God’s practical way for men and women to enjoy their sexual desire in wisdom, health, holiness (both physical and psychological) and promote social order. Any other application of the human sexual drive results (as history verifies) in mental and physical sickness and social chaos. In verse 4 Paul states a principle which is at variance with modern “self-assertion” hucksters. J. B. Phillips translates, “The wife has no longer full rights over her own person, but shares them with her husband. In the same way the husband shares his personal rights with his wife.” The Greek word *exousiazei* is translated “power” KJV, “rule” RSV, and “belong” NIV, in 7:4, and literally means, “authority.” “Rule” as in the RSV is probably the best translation. In

marriage each partner surrenders to be ruled by the other. Paul specifies this, here, in regard to their bodies (Gr. somatas). But in other epistles he applies it to the whole realm of married life (Eph. 5:21ff; Col. 3:18-19). In marriage, both husband and wife give up exclusive rights to their own bodies (and lives), agreeing to share them fully and freely with their partner. The happiest marriages are those characterized by complete liberty, few inhibitions, and absence of any guilt complex about sexuality within the will of God. The cause of much marital trouble today is selfishness, not only, but certainly foremost, in the area of sexuality. The Greek word *exousiazetei* is in the present tense indicating that this reciprocal surrendering of husband and wife to one another is continuing and permanent relationship. The NT teaches that marriage was intended by God to be a permanent relationship between one man and one woman in which the two, by surrendering all personal rights to one another, become one. Paul's teaching here should convince anyone that he was not a "woman-hating" antagonist of marriage nor "Victorian" in his attitude toward sexuality in marriage.

The sexual drive or urge in human beings (especially in men) is extremely strong! The Bible plainly and unashamedly teaches that (Song of Solomon, 1 Cor. 7, etc.). IT IS ONE OF THE STRONGEST URGES OF THE MALE PHYSICAL BODY DURING EARLY AND MIDDLE MANHOOD! Men give love (security) for sex, women give sex for love (security)! In 7:5 Paul states one exception to the sexual responsibilities of Christian husbands and wives. But even in this one exception Paul is quick to limit sexual abstinence lest Satan tempt a man or a woman through lack of self control! Again, Paul emphasizes that marriage is God's primary provision for the controlled practice of the human sexual drive. The apostle's one exception is in case one of the partners in a marriage wants to devote himself/herself completely to prayer. But Paul warns against any lengthy abstinence even for prayer! The RSV translates the Greek word *apostereite*, "Do not refuse one another." The KJV translates it, "Defraud ye not one the other..." Actually, the Greek word is more emphatic than refuse—it is often translated, rob, despoil, defraud, leave destitute. The principle is that lengthy abstinence by one married partner in sexual intimacy will leave the other partner "robbed, defrauded, and destitute," and clearly vulnerable to Satan's temptation to illicit sexual gratification. This, too, is an apostolic command for the Greek verb *apostereite* is in the imperative mood. There may come times when a personal time for seeking the Lord comes before the one dearest on earth (one's spouse), but only for a limited time. Church work cannot be used as an excuse for neglecting one's marriage. What is accomplished for the kingdom of God if one's marriage partner is tempted and lost in sin?

Paul says in 7:6 precisely what the Lord said to the apostles in Perea (Matt. 19:1-12)—that the majority of the human race would never have the "gift" to remain celibate without being tempted to fornication. He was writing "with understanding" (Greek, *sungnomen*, "comprehend") of the fact and so, he declared, "I wish that all were as I myself (celibate) am. But each has his own special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another—and I do not say that celibacy is an absolute command of God." Jesus made plain the high ideal for human marriage (Matt. 19:3-9) and his disciples jumped to the hasty conclusion that every man should be celibate (Matt. 19:10-12). Jesus replied, "Not all men can receive this precept, but only those to whom it is given." Jesus pointed out that there were a few men who had to be celibate because of circumstances beyond their control; and a few who were able to remain celibate by their own choice for the sake of the kingdom of

God. But Jesus recognized that most men are not able to “receive” the condition of celibacy—celibacy is not a matter of divine commandment but a matter of capability. **AND MOST MEN ARE INCAPABLE OF CELIBACY...THEREFORE THEY SHOULD GET MARRIED!** Marriage, not fornication is the God-ordained status in which the human sexual drive is to be controlled! Modern “living-together” or non-married cohabitation (sometimes called “shacking-up”) **IS FORBIDDEN IN GOD’S REVEALED WORD!** Marriage is the only human relationship in which sexual intercourse is approved by God! The person who cannot sublimate sexual urges should get married. It should be noted that Paul advises marriage when it is apparent that a person is not able to control sexual urges—not after sexual experimentation has occurred! The Greek word in this text (7:9) is *gamesatosan* (“...they should marry”) and is in the imperative mood—it is more than a suggestion—it is an apostolic command! It is crucial to later instructions of Paul about “remarriage” that this command to marry be remembered.

The Greek word *agamos* is translated throughout this chapter as “unmarried.” It is generic in meaning, i.e., it simply means “someone who is not married.” Therefore, in the context of 1 Cor. 7 it must mean either or both—one who has never married and one who has been married before but is divorced from one’s spouse (see 1 Cor. 7:10-11). Paul gives apostolic directions to both the person who has never been married (7:8,25,32,35) and to the person who was married but whose spouse divorced him/her (7:10-24). God’s commandment has always been that each human marriage is to be permanent—until death separates one member of the marriage. That has been God’s will from the beginning of creation (Matt. 19:8). Marriage as an institution predates all other institutions. It was sanctioned by God before the Law of Moses or the Christian dispensation. God’s will is that marriage should be permanent, no matter who is involved.

Paul reinforces the divinely sanctioned permanency of marriage by stating, “To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord...” Paul uses the Greek word *parangello* which means, “a proclamation, a command or commandment...strictly used of commands received from a superior and transmitted to others (for usage see Acts 5:28; 16:24; 1 Thess. 4:2; 1 Tim. 1:5,18; Lk. 5:14; 8:56; 1 Tim. 6:13,17). So, Paul charges that the wife should not divorce her husband (which would also hold true of the husband). The RSV translates the Greek word *choristhenai* as “separate,” but it is the same Greek word used by Matthew in reporting (Matt. 19:6) Jesus’ statement about divorce. Paul is not talking here about separation without divorce. Throughout this context he is talking about divorce—the dissolution of a marriage.

Apparently in Corinth, new converts to Christ were leaving their believing partners, or unbelieving partners were leaving their believing partners, and completely dissolving the marriages by divorce. When Christians marry non-Christians, or when one unbeliever in a marriage becomes a believer and the other partner does not, there will always be difficulties! But, according to the apostle Paul, they are not insurmountable difficulties. The difficulties of such an “unequally yoked” marriage are not necessarily such as should call for divorce. The ideal situation, of course, is that both partners in a marriage be Christians. Christians who are contemplating marriage can and should choose Christian partners before the marriage. Love is not “blind.” Infatuation and emotionalism is blind. Love is not something one “falls

into” but is something one wills, decides and does, and does constantly in spite of emotions or circumstances.!

In the discretion of God there is no essential difference between a “Christian” marriage in a church and a pagan marriage in the living room of a justice of the peace. There is no differentiation in God’s will that some marriages be permanent until death and others not be permanent. Marriage is not “a sacrament of the church” performed exclusively by and for the church. Marriage is for the maintenance of human social structure. It is an institution established by God to be practiced by the entire human race. When a man and woman sincerely agree to become husband and wife, and obey the social and civil laws for marriage in their community, they are husband and wife regardless of their religion! The permanency and holiness of marriage can only become viable through unreserved faith in Jesus Christ by both partners. It can never be made permanent by civil law or force. If only civil law is relied upon to sanctify marriage, divorce is almost certain to take place. Jesus made that plain in Matthew 19:3-12. When people have “hard hearts” they will rebel against all that God has sanctified, including the permanence of marriage. The “law” is “laid down” for the lawless and disobedient (1 Tim. 1:8-9) and the civil state must legislate and enforce laws which will keep sinful and wicked people from destroying marriage and, in turn, destroy social order. Marriages in which at least one spouse is a Christian have a “sanctifying” power that a marriage of two non-Christians would not have. That is the Christian spouse’s power to “set apart” the circumstances of the union (including any children in it) from complete or total worldliness! Just because one spouse is a Christian does not, of course, mean other members of the household are automatically “born again.” Being a Christian is not inherited—it requires individual, personal choice to accept Jesus as Lord.

In a world like Corinth, and our modern world, where the majority of human beings are not Christians, God’s ideals for marriage are seldom considered. Sometimes a Christian will compromise principle and marry a non-Christian. Sometimes, after two non-Christians are married one becomes a Christian. What is the Lord’s will in such circumstances? God’s will is always for the permanence of marriage. In any circumstance that would threaten to dissolve a marriage, God’s will is for reconciliation (reunion, coming back together). While it is possible that a marriage might have to be dissolved for continued sexual unfaithfulness (Matt. 5:32; 19:9) or because of unsolicited desertion (1 Cor. 7:15) it is certainly not what God desires. He wants repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. Nor does the Lord desire that the conversion of one marriage partner precipitate the dissolution of a marriage (1 Cor. 7:13).

NOW, AS TO DIVORCE! Jesus sanctioned one cause for divorce—sexual unfaithfulness (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). Paul writes, “But if the unbelieving partner desires to divorce (“separate” RSV) let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound.” The Greek words *chorizetai* and *chorizestho* in verse 7:15 should be translated, “divorced.” There is no word in the Greek text for “desires”—that is supplied by the translators. And, as we have pointed out earlier, Matthew and Mark (Matt. 19:6; Mark. 10:9) both understood Jesus to say, “What, therefore, God has joined together, let no man put asunder” (i.e., divorce, not merely “separate” as “separate” is used today). There may be cases where one partner, not at all seeking to do God’s will, may dissolve the marriage (for any number of so-

called “reasons”) while the other partner may not be able to stop the dissolution. When the unbelieving partner in a marriage has a heart so hardened by sin he or she “puts asunder” or divorces the believing partner, then the believing partner (“brother” or “sister”) is not “bound.” What does Paul mean by, “not bound”? At least he means the Christian brother or sister is not bound to the divorcing-unbeliever as a spouse. Most civil societies (some with more latitude than others) have laws permitting divorce. When an unbeliever sues in civil court for dissolution of a marriage from a believer, and it is granted, there is nothing legal a believer can do to maintain the bonds of that marriage! Therefore, the believer is not bound to that marriage. But the big question is: since a believer is not bound to a marriage he or she was forced by civil law to dissolve (when the believer was unwilling to have it dissolved), may the divorced believer remarry?

Paul has already admitted the reality that there is a possibility of the dissolution of marriages even where one party does not want. The unbeliever who has caused the divorce has sinned. He or she must become a believer, repent and be immersed in water in order to be forgiven. If the one causing the divorce has already been immersed, to have the sin forgiven he/she must repent, i.e., change the mind about divorce, if possible reclaim the marriage, if not, pray for forgiveness. The question remains, however, does the NT absolutely and unequivocally forbid remarriage with a different partner after divorce? (see Matt. 5:31-32; 19:1-12; Mk. 10:2-12; Lk. 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:15,39; Rom. 7:3-4). Actually, there are no absolute or unequivocal directions in the matter of remarriage. What each Christian believes or practices he/she does so by his/her inference or deductions from certain principles. It is the opinion of this writer that remarriage is not only possible for those who have violated the will of God and dissolved marriages by divorce, but that God desires remarriage in such a case for both believer and unbeliever—for both the “guilty party” and the “innocent party.” The following deductions have brought this writer to his opinion:

God made marriage for the whole human race.

Divorce is a sin; marriage is not a sin.

Very few men or women have the “gift” to remain sexually celibate.

Paul emphatically states, more than once, that enforced sexual continence (celibacy) when a person does not have self-control is dangerous to one’s salvation (1 Cor. 7:2,5,9,36; 1 Thess. 4:3-8; 1 Tim. 5:14, etc.).

It is illogical to reason that a person who is divorced, when he/she is unwilling to be divorced, may be considered an adulterer or adulteress should they marry another partner. People cannot be made to be adulterers against their wills! Society may gossip and stigmatize an innocent person in a divorce situation, but he/she cannot be an adulterer unless he/she has an attitude of promiscuity—a heart that is against permanence in marriage.

When there is a divorce there is no longer a marriage, neither in God’s eyes nor in man’s eyes—THERE IS A SIN IN GOD’S EYES FOR WHICH SOMEONE MUST REPENT

(preferably a repentance resulting in remarriage to the same partner). But unless there is a reconciliation of the divorced persons, the marriage is over. They are no longer married to one another.

There are three circumstances preceding a divorce in which, I believe, God considers one party in the divorce innocent—sexual unfaithfulness, desertion (forced “divorce”), and unremitting physical violence. In both circumstances one party has to be unwilling to the dissolution of the marriage. It is, therefore, this writer’s opinion that the innocent party is most certainly free to remarry—guided by his/her knowledge of the revealed will of God about marriage and his/her own conscience.

Divorce is a sin forgivable by God, and thus must be forgivable by human beings! And how often did Jesus say we should forgive those who sin? “SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN” (Matt. 18:21-22). Divorce is a serious sin—there is no doubt about that. It is destructive of the home which is the fundamental fabric of social order. It causes severe trauma to the souls of those divorcing and any children in a broken marriage. Healing such trauma can only be done through the implanting of the healing word of Christ in broken hearts. BUT DIVORCE IS FORGIVABLE! People are not “living in sin” if they are remarried even though they may have been previously divorced from other spouses! Jesus confronted the “woman at the well” (Jn. 4:7-42) not because she had five previous “husbands” but because the one she was living with at that time was not her husband. Do we forgive a thief if he repents, then sins again, and again professes repentance? Yes! Peter had to be forgiven more than once himself for his attitude toward Gentiles (Gal. 2:11-21). Paul indicated that he may have had to be forgiven for committing the same sins again and again (Rom. 7:15-25). Forgiving divorce does not mean divorce has to be promoted! Forgiving thievery does not mean we promote thievery! But it does mean that we cannot know the heart of the one who says he/she is penitent. We can only know their actions. Would we accept that Christ would forgive a thief who gave a “death-bed” repentance (Lk. 23:39-43) and then tell a dying divorcee that he/she could not be forgiven? Of course, we must insist that those desiring forgiveness for the sin of divorce profess repentance—and help them to fulfill that profession as they live out their lives. But what if they divorce again! We must, upon a profession of repentance, forgive them again!

Forgiveness is often not easy! The fleshly nature of the human being (urged on by Satan) cries out for retaliation, for “justice” for “an eye for an eye.” This is especially true in divorce cases where one party has been unfaithful or abusive toward the other party. Abandonment, neglect, hatred, physical abuse, heartbreak, and other traumas of marriage cry out for avenging. But if forgiveness is to be accomplished, the offended party will have to bear the hurt without resorting to personal retaliation (even if civil court procedures are necessary). THIS IS HOW GOD HAS FORGIVEN A WORLD FULL OF SINNERS! HE BORE THE HURT IN HIS SON ON THE CROSS! We are to “welcome one another, as Christ has welcomed us” (Rom. 15:1-21). How did Christ welcome you? WITH FORGIVENESS, OF COURSE! AND HE STILL WELCOMES YOU EVERYDAY WITH FORGIVENESS WHEN YOU TELL HIM YOU REPENT, EVEN THOUGH YOU CATCH YOURSELF REPEATING YOUR SINS! Well, that is how we must forgive those who commit and suffer the sin of divorce!



It is also the opinion of this writer that God desires remarriage even for the “guilty” party in divorce rather than trying to force him/her to a life of celibacy which he/she may not be able to endure without “burning with passion.” I believe God and Christ are interested in producing the highest good in every person’s life and in society in general. That is the spirit behind any OT legislation or NT principle (for example. “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”).

For the maintenance of social order, if an unbeliever cannot be controlled from promiscuous sexual intercourse by self-control, he/she should be married according to the laws of human responsibility and to keep society from degenerating to the level of animals.

Paul points out in several places that while Christians are controlled by the highest principles of divine love, the non-Christian must be controlled by civil law, enforced by civil authorities (1 Tim. 1:8-11; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17).

What practical or ultimate good is going to be served by forcing those once divorced to remain celibate the rest of their lives? There really is no legislation to that effect anywhere in the Bible. There is certainly no civil law to that effect. If all Christians lived by the law of divine love, Christian husbands and wives would never divorce one another. But some “Christians” do not live on that plane—they fall—they divorce one another. Are they to be banned to a life of celibacy for the rest of their natural lives? Is that seeking their highest good? What if they do not have the “gift” of sexual self-control; should a minister of the gospel not also seek the highest good in every fallen person’s life?

Would enforced celibacy really heal the problems faced by children when divorce occurs? What if a husband or a wife is left with small children to rear? Who shall support them financially? Are they better served to be reared without a father or mother? Recent sociological and psychological trends and statistics in the U.S. respond with a resounding, NO!

Would enforced celibacy heal the results of divorce? Will the church be able to support both materially and psychologically, all broken homes? Should Christians leave the healing of divorce in Christian homes to the civil state?

Would enforced celibacy heal the problems of temptation and incontinence? (1 Cor. 7:2,5,9,36). Suppose we paraphrase Jesus thus, “Is it lawful to do good through the institution of marriage or to tempt to promiscuity through enforced celibacy? Marriage was made for man, not man for marriage!” Enforced celibacy in prison merely exacerbates sexual crimes! Christians who say those once divorced should never remarry need to look at what happens in prison among men and women separated from heterosexual marriage!

In no sense of the word do I condone divorce for any cause. I do not even condone loveless marriages whether the partners remain legally and outwardly married until they die. Both of these situations are certainly less than God’s ideal.

But, neither do I think a minister of the gospel is “partaking” of the sin of divorce by

officiating at marriages (since he is authorized by the civil authorities to do so) for couples who are unbelievers; for couples where one is a believer and another an unbeliever; for couples where either one or both parties have previously been divorced. God does not approve of divorce; I do not approve of divorce. God knows that all people do not have the gift of sexual self-control without “burning”; that is revealed truth and experiential truth. God does approve of marriage; I approve of marriage. As a minister, I have had nothing to do with their divorce; but I can have something to do with their remarriage, and, perhaps, repentance.

And, of some significance, in every marriage in which I officiate I may, in a positive way, be able to instruct and exemplify the Christian gospel—and in a negative sense I will not give anyone an opportunity to criticize the church for lack of compassion and understanding.

When I stand for marriage and the responsibilities that go with it, I am standing for law and order in the lives of unbelievers who will not be controlled by divine love but must be controlled by civil legislation.

Is divorce a sin for which there can be no repentance (and no forgiveness) and no restoration? If a person embezzles, is imprisoned, released and states that he is of a different attitude, is he never to be allowed to handle an employer’s money again? Should a divorced person never be allowed to “handle” marriage again?

Concerning the “unmarried” Paul gives his “opinion” (Greek *gnomen*, “mind, mentality, judgment, reasoning”). Paul states that what he is to say is not the Lord’s commandment, but the apostle’s rationale. In other words, Paul had no direct revelation (commandment) in this matter, nor is there one in the Gospel accounts. Paul’s reasoning about marriage is, first, those who were married were to make certain their first priority was serving the Lord; second, Christians must have the attitude that they will not mourn the loss of earthly things; third, Christians who might have occasion to rejoice in earthly circumstances should not do so, but should remember that worldly pleasures are transitory (see 2 Cor. 4:16-18; 1 Tim. 6:6-19); fourth, those who make purchases should not do so merely to accumulate things; fifth, let those who use this world, use it sparingly. The reason for these five admonitions is because this world (including human marriage, Matt. 22:30) is programmed for dissolution. Men and women should not get so attached to anything in this cosmic scheme of things, not even marriage, that they cannot serve God without compromise.

The pressures of marriage, especially in distressing times of social upheaval, might make some Christians deviate from giving first priority to the Lord’s will in their lives. In the first century, when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, Christians were being severely persecuted by both Jews and Gentiles (just read the book of Acts). Paul’s advice about celibacy is that the Corinthian Christians not yet married may keep themselves free from divided loyalties. The unmarried man separates his mind from other things and gives it to the things of the Lord. He is under no obligation to provide sustenance, safety and security for a wife and children. The unmarried man may concentrate all his faculties on being acceptable to the Lord. But the married man (7:32-33) separates (to some significant extent) his mind from the Lord’s

service in order to concentrate on physical things that he may acceptably fulfill his obligations to his wife and family (1 Tim. 5:8). And in times of severe persecution upon Christians this would intensify. The same is true of a woman.

So Paul's advice to these Corinthians, is, if they were presently unmarried (whether widowed, virginal, or divorced), do not seek to be married. Paul's advice was for their own benefit (7:35). He had nothing to gain from this advice. Neither did he intend to restrict their freedom to make their own choice by claiming any personal authority over these Corinthian Christians. God did not create human beings for marriage at any price. Consider how dangerous it would be to marry just for the sake of appearances someone whose idea of loyalty to Christ is not your own. Marriage customs of that century forbade the young maiden to make any arrangements for marrying a man. She could not even agree to marry a man without her father's approval. Paul is directing his trustworthy advice toward Christian fathers with daughters of marriageable age, who have reached sexual maturity and, perhaps, have shown signs of sexual desire about to get out of control (7:37). The RSV translation of the latter half of verse 7:36, "...if his passions are strong..." but the Greek text does not have a pronoun in this phrase—it has a 3rd person, singular present subjunctive form of the verb, "is," or, "to be." The pronoun is merely understood. It could just as well be understood to be her as it could be his. Thus, contextually, 7:36 should be translated, "If any father thinks he is behaving unsuitably toward his virgin daughter, if she is in (present tense verb in Greek) the age of sexual desire, and the father thinks she ought to marry, let the father do as he wishes; the father does not sin if he gives her to marry a man." The father who is firmly established in his mind is under no necessity, for his wishes in this matter are under his own authority. If the father decides in his own mind to keep his virgin daughter from marrying, he will do well. The Greek words *thelematos* in 7:37 and *exousian* should not be translated, as the RSV does, desire and control. The RSV implies in its translation that Paul is talking about a father's will or choice about sexual desires under control, but Paul is really talking about a father's will or choice about his marriageable daughter being within his own authority and not someone else's. In all he wrote here to the Corinthians, Paul claims to have the approval of the Holy Spirit. He wanted to assure the Corinthians that he was not speaking from human bias and prejudice. That this danger existed is proved by the number of modern Christians who have accused him of just this vice. Many have accused Paul of being a "woman-hater"—today he would be called a misogynist by the "women's-lib" movement. Paul is saying all the way through this: "The married life is the norm. Celibacy is the exception, and in no way superior to marriage. But if the immediate exigencies (dangers and perils) of the times are severe then the reasonable thing for a Christian to do is remain unmarried." Paul believed his advice had been given under the guidance of the Spirit of God. This does not mean that it was advice for all people in all times. Under other circumstances wise and spiritual people have differed radically from the advice given in this chapter. It does mean that his advice was best under the circumstances then existing in the 1st century. The one point of permanent validity must not be overlooked. The decisions of Christians in all spheres of life should be made in the light of their primary devotion to God in Christ Jesus. If Christians in all ages would make their decisions in view of that which would be most helpful for them in serving the Lord, there would be fewer mistakes to regret.

# TEACHER'S NOTES I CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-13

The Corinthian Christians should have known (but apparently some had difficulty acknowledging) that an idol “had no real existence” 8:4b (Greek, *oidamen hoti ouden eidolon en kosmos*, literally, “we know that an idol is nothing in the world...”). So, worshiping idols was out! But what about eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols? Apparently the Corinthians would face this issue in three circumstances: (a) in the proliferation of temples to idols—such pagan shrines were more numerous than they are in modern pagan countries; (b) in purchasing meat in the public markets—most of which had formerly been devoted to sacrifices made to idols; (c) in the homes of non-Christian friends and relatives when such meals were set before them. Some Christians had settled the issue in their own minds, “knowing that an idol was not a god”—so they ate it and looked down on those not eating.

Paul writes that the principle that should guide Christians in their conduct in this matter was: “knowledge” must be tempered with love. Love should control the Christian from acting according to his/her knowledge if it would cause a “weaker” brother to stumble (even if one’s “knowledge” is correct in its own right). When such action would tempt, alienate, or otherwise cause a brother to sin who does not see an issue as clearly or innocently as a “strong” Christian does, the Christian should defer to the scruples of the “weak” Christian brother (or prospective brother) and not eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols. Those who are weak are those whose scruples cause them to abstain. Those who are strong are those who could with a clear conscience, eat meat sacrificed to idols. “Weak” and “strong” does not refer to spirituality. Each could be spiritual or carnal according to their attitudes toward the other. “Weak” and “strong” refers to scruples (i.e., “misgivings, reservations, doubts, suspicions, even ignorance,” etc.).

So what are some articles and actions today sometimes associated with ungodliness which might be neutral in themselves but injurious to Some Christian’s scruples (misgivings, doubts, suspicions, ignorance). EVERY CHRISTIAN PROBABLY COULD MAKE UP A DIFFERENT LIST OF THINGS HE/SHE HAS SCRUPLES ABOUT. Some would have scruples against, playing cards, dancing, going to movies, watching television, spending money on what someone classifies as “frivolous” things, the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, wearing jewelry, braiding of women’s hair, modern so-called “Christian” music, listening to “worldly” music of any kind, eating in the church building, using musical instruments in worship, wearing shorts, drinking any kind or amount of alcoholic beverage, playing any kind of parlor game using dice, attending services in any other denominational church, synagogue, temple—hundreds of things could be listed. But the New Testament does not clearly prohibit any of the above! So what is any Christian (“strong” or “weak”) to do?

The issue is neither to “abstain” nor “not abstain” from those things not clearly prohibited in the New Testament—neither makes you, per se, more spiritual. The issue is:

how much do you love your brother! The issue is: we must be prepared to sacrifice any liberty we have in the area of “things” in order to “build up” (edify) a person! This is the basis for a Christian’s thinking and acting toward other people (especially Christian brethren) in ANY COUNTRY, including the United States!

Demanding Christian “liberty” to do as one pleases may destroy a person (and a Christian brother) in two ways: (a) it may lead a brother believe he has incurred guilt and destroy his union with Christ; (b) it may break down a brother’s resolve against practices that really are sinful. Paul deals with this issue more succinctly in Romans 14 and 15. He says Christians must “...not let what you eat (do) cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died, so do not let your good be spoken of as evil.” and, “...pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.” He concludes in Romans 15:1-13 that we must “bear with the failings of the weak, and not please ourselves” but we must “please our neighbor for his good, to edify him, etc.” In any country where idol-worship is an issue, the Christian must be careful not to give native-born Christian brethren (or anyone else) the idea that idols are “gods.” But at the same time a “strong” Christian must teach and edify those “weak” of that land that their scruples are not to be bound upon him/her as a test of salvation or Christian brotherhood.

The non-abstaining brother (i.e., the “strong” brother) is not obligated to give up his Christian liberty, (a) when someone tries to bind on him a tradition or an opinion as a commandment of God necessary for salvation; (b) or when someone tries to use his “weak” scruples against liberty in order to serve selfish, un-Christian ends. Christian judgment faces one of its most demanding tasks when the performance of some opinion harms someone, while its non-performance would harm someone else. When a brother (or someone else) is too scrupulous about something (making an opinion or tradition a test of fellowship or matter of salvation) the brother who is “strong” and has no scruples about the matter in question **MUST DEFEND HIS CHRISTIAN LIBERTY TO THINK AND ACT.** It must be done in a firm, but loving way—seeking to bring the “weaker” brother to the “knowledge” (from the Scriptures) that his “weaker scruples” have nothing to do with Christian brotherhood or salvation. Over-scrupulousness to the point of causing division in a congregation must not be tolerated! If a Christian brother’s actions are not prohibited in the New Testament it is a sin to cause division in a congregation over someone else’s scruples—just as it would be for a “strong” brother to cause division by insisting on his liberty to do as he pleases regardless of someone else’s scruples! That is why Paul wrote to the Romans, “do not, for the sake of food (or any other scruple) destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for any one to make others fall by what he eats (or does); it is right not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother stumble.” (Rom. 14:20-21). Paul concludes, saying, “The faith (read, “scruples”) you have, keep between yourself and God; happy is he who has no reason to judge himself for what he eats.” (Rom. 14:22). But Paul also adds, as we shall study later, “For why should my liberty be determined by another man’s scruples? If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?” (1 Cor. 10:29-30).

Paul uses the Greek word *exousia* in 8:9 and it is translated “liberty” RSV, and “freedom” in NIV. It is most commonly translated “authority, right, power.” The most common Greek word for “liberty” is *eleutheria* which is also often translated “freedom.” Paul

is evidently emphasizing the rights the knowledgeable (i.e., “strong”) Christian has because of a clearer understanding about the issue of opinion and tradition. Such a person has the “authority” or “right” or “liberty” to eat anything he pleases which the Lord has declared “good to eat” without guilt. The same principle applies to anything in the realm of “good” actions and associations for today’s Christian.

However, the Christian brother whose knowledge (cultural, experiential, or scriptural) permits him to be free of guilt in some matter of opinion, dare not practice it if it will cause another brother (who understands the practice from a different cultural or moral background) to stumble and fall in his spiritual journey. **JUST BECAUSE A “STRONG” BROTHER HAS THE “AUTHORITY” TO DO AS HE PLEASURES IN MATTERS OF OPINION DOES NOT MEAN HIS RIGHT TO DO SO CANNOT BE WILLINGLY SURRENDERED OUT OF LOVE FOR A “WEAKER” BROTHER!** That which one Christian may do with freedom from guilt may, because of the doing, produce a serious failure in another Christian who may be encouraged to do what he considers wrong.

**DO YOU CLASSIFY YOURSELF AS AN “EATER” OR AN “ABSTAINER”? DO YOU THINK OF YOURSELF AS A “STRONG” BROTHER OR A “WEAK” BROTHER?** Almost all of us would want to classify ourselves as “strong” but almost all of us are “weak” in some matters where others are “strong.” The big issue in the church among brethren right now is the matter of worship music! Where do you stand on that issue? Are you “strong” enough to “bear with what you classify as the failings of the weak” and “not please yourself, but please your neighbor for his good to edify him.” **CAN YOU TOLERATE THE “WEAK” MODERN “WORSHIP CHORUSES” ENOUGH TO KEEP FROM CAUSING DIVISION IN THE LORD’S BODY (THE CHURCH)?** You know, the New Testament does not legislate on this matter except to state that we are to admonish one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19).

We must teach the “insensitive” “strong Christian” that he/she must have the mind of Christ about a “weaker” brother’s scruples and surrender their “rights—freedoms” to keep from wounding the conscience of the “weaker brother.” What about movies? TV? Playing non-gambling card-games? dancing? drinking an occasional glass of wine?—do you think you are free to do any or all of these things? Is there only one style of clothing or dress suitable for Christians, especially at a worship service in the church building? Would you ask a Christian brother to have a small glass of wine at your Thanksgiving table? Would you feel alright about asking a Christian friend to go to the movies with you? Would you feel good about getting a Christian friend to play a game of “hearts” (cards) in your home? Would you feel right about feeding a Jewish-Christian pork? To lead someone by your liberty to do something he believes he is not free to do, may causes him to sin, to incur guilt, and destroy his union with Christ (8:10-11). The exercise of rights by the “strong” may destroy the fundamental moral resolve of a “weaker” brother against sinful practices so that he may be led to engage in practices clearly prohibited (drunkenness, gambling, pornography, etc.) in the scriptures. Paul wrote to Rome, “...it is wrong for anyone to make others fall by what he eats” (Rom. 14:20).

It is sinful to do anything that would cause anyone else to violate his own

conscience. It is a sin to carelessly flaunt one's Christian liberty and undermine the moral decisiveness of another. Too many think of their own "rights" first. Paul said we ought to endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ (1 Cor. 9:12). It is a sinful attitude that does not think first of pleasing one's brother for his good to build him up (Rom. 15:1-2) because the One we profess as Lord of our lives did not please himself (Rom. 15:3). These principles apply to things Christians may have every right to do; things the knowledgeable Christian is certain are not at all sinful in themselves; things the Christian may do without any guilt. If, through any right we may have, a brother may be morally injured we must suspend that right for his salvation. But the same principle applies to the "weaker" brother—he must be ready to sacrifice his scruples for the edification of the "stronger" brother when the "stronger" insists upon his liberties.

Any Christian should be ready to give up any "right" or "liberty" he has when another Christian actually, and realistically, would be caused to "stumble" (sin or incur guilt) as a result of the practice of a "right." HOWEVER, sincerity, actuality, reality, honesty, and factuality must be determined in the "weaker" brother's statement that he/she considers an action to be "sinful." LIBERTY IN CHRIST IS NOT TO BE SACRIFICED ON MERE WHIM OR REFUSAL TO GROW SPIRITUALLY! In other words, the "weaker" brother cannot be allowed to run "rough-shod" over a "stronger" brother's liberty on some superficial, selfish, power-hungry, childish, vengeful, malicious, spiteful, stupid, ignorant, eccentricity. Christian liberty must be protected and promoted! That was the battle the apostle Paul waged during his entire ministry against Judaizers in the church who wanted to enslave Christians to Jewish traditions and OT laws which had been superseded by the Gospel. Paul wrote, "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1; see also Gal. 2:11-21; Col. 2:8-23; Rom. 14:1-12, etc.).

TRUE CHRISTIAN LIBERTY IS NO THREAT TO CHRISTIAN UNITY! False Christian liberty, which is often nothing more than moral license, is a threat to Christian unity! Earlier (8:11) Paul said causing a weak brother to sin against his own true, honest conscience was to destroy the brother for whom Christ died. Now, (8:12-13) Paul emphasizes the seriousness of unloving, arrogant demands for liberty to do as one pleases. Causing a brother to "stumble" by what one does is actually a sin against Christ! Destroy another human being and you are actually attempting to destroy God! Paul warned the Romans, "Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God" (Rom. 14:20). Trample upon another human being's weaknesses and you are despising the work of God in that person's life—you are despising God! It is that serious! To have one's own way (even if that way is correct and guiltless in itself) at the expense of another person's relationship to Christ is to commit a grievous sin against the Lord. Arrogance and careless behavior has no place in the Christian or in the church. It destroys people—it destroys the church!

Paul use the double negative in the Greek text, *ou me*, to state emphatically that if eating meat would cause a brother to stumble (Greek, *skandalizei*, "be scandalized, trapped ensnared"), he would never, never eat meat again. The Greek text also includes the phrase, *eis ton aiona*, which would be translated, "unto the end of the age or world." In other words, Paul is saying, "I am ready to give up any practice of my life, even if it is harmless and enjoyable and may be done with my clear conscience, if it causes any brother to destroy his

relationship with Christ.” Only those who are willing to do the same are fit for the kingdom of God (Rom. 14:15-21).

The self-denial of the “strong” brother should, however, be allowed a proviso (i.e., a qualification). This will be amplified at more length in chapters 9 & 10. Suffice to say here, the non-abstaining brother is not obligated to give up his Christian liberty in some cases: (a) there are definite scriptural examples, as well as commands by both Jesus and Paul (Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-13; Gal. 2:3-5; Gal. 2:11-14; 5:1-12; Col. 2:16-23) that when certain “brethren” tried to bind on him (or other Christians) traditions and opinions as necessary for salvation, the Christian is obligated to resist; (b) there are people, minutely scrupulous (“nit-pickers”), who may try to use an appeal to their scruples against some area of Christian liberty to serve their own selfish ends. This is also wrong! Christian judgment faces one of its most demanding tasks when the performance of some opinion might injure a tender conscience, while its non-performance would be surrendering to pharisaic traditionalism and harm the cause of Christian liberty. This is sometimes the case in the Christian struggle to promote liberty and Christian unity at the same time. It would be fitting here to suggest some areas in modern society where the Christian love Paul is calling for may be practiced along with decisions to resist legalism: (a) entertainment, pastimes (movies, TV, games, hobbies); (b) foods (Jewish kosher foods; Roman Catholic taboos; use of alcoholic beverages—although the Bible does not command total abstinence, this principle of stumbling blocks would make total abstinence the safest practice); (c) cultural traditions (dress and grooming; worship traditions; some economic practices; political preferences); (d) vocations (if a Christian works at a vocation which might cause someone to stumble, shouldn’t the Christian find another vocation?)



# TEACHER'S NOTES I CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 9:1-27

Evidently, the Corinthians were trying to force some traditional Greek culture on Paul. It was customary in the Greek culture that teachers (or as they would classify them, philosophers) who were not financially dependent upon their followers were not “worth their salt.” Those who “worked for a living” and tried to be “philosophers” or teachers were considered to be only “rabble-rousers” (Acts 17:18; 1 Cor. 1:18-29; 2:1-5; 2 Cor. 11:1-33). God, through Christ, has set the Christian free from all hindrances and restraints that would keep him from reaching the highest possibility for which he was redeemed. God, through Christ, makes everything and everybody available for the Christian’s development (1 Cor. 3:21-23). It is not our surroundings or our circumstances that keep us from our highest God-ordained possibilities. Attitudes are what enslave us and hinder us—guilt, insecurity, rebellion against our Creator and his creation; rejecting the truth about what is real and enduring, fear of death, selfishness, etc. If these be conquered we will be free and reaching God’s potential for us no matter what our circumstances. The real issue is not physical liberation but spiritual liberation. Any man, anywhere, whether politically, socially or literally imprisoned or not, may be spiritually free if he trusts God’s Word concerning man’s true purpose and possibility. The apostle Paul was a man free in Christ, reaching for the highest good Christ intended him to have, even when he was imprisoned in Rome!

The apostle Paul claimed every right allowed him by God’s word. He refused to let any man, by making human rules where God never made any, to take away any right by which he might reach the goal Christ intended in him. Paul considered one of his primary “rights” was to work for a living and teach the gospel with the authority of an apostle! One part of Christ’s goal for Paul was his world-wide apostleship. In a series of rhetorical questions, Paul sets forth the logic of his freedom and its use. His first assertion of the logic of his rights is in his question, “Am I not an apostle?” He not only had the rights of a Christian but also the special rights of one particularly commissioned by the Lord to take the gospel to the whole world—the rights of an “apostle to the Gentiles.” He is not thinking here of his authority as an apostle, but of his right to financial support as one “sent” (an apostle). His second appeal to logic is in his question, “Are you not my workmanship in the Lord?” He claimed the right to support on the basis of their obligation to him as the one who brought them to Christ (Rom. 15:26-27); Gal. 6:6). The Greek word sphragis is translated seal and means, “to authenticate, to validate.” Their conversion to Christ certainly confirmed Paul’s apostleship and his right to expect them to give him financial support.

The Greek participle anakrinousin is present indicative, not subjunctive, and indicates some of the Christians at Corinth were examining or making judgments about his right to forego financial support for himself as he preached the gospel. YES, PAUL SAYS, I HAVE A RIGHT TO EXPECT SUPPORT FROM CHURCHES, BUT I ALSO HAVE A RIGHT TO FOREGO THAT SUPPORT AND STILL BE HEARD AS A TEACHER SENT FROM GOD. Paul apparently received financial support from the church at Antioch when he was

first “sent out” by that church (acts 13:1-3); he received some support from the church at Philippi (Phil. 4:14-18). But from the beginning of his second missionary journey he chose to support himself by working at his trade as a tentmaker (Acts 15:40; 18:1-4; 2 cor. 11:7; 1 Thess. 2:9; 4:11; 2 Thess. 3:8).

Paul’s third appeal to logic is in verse 7. He uses three analogies from the common life of that time to prove his point. In 2 Tim. 2:1-7, Paul has similar analogies to encourage Timothy to train a company of faithful, full-time evangelists, like himself, who will be devoting all their time to teaching others. They must not get “entangled in civilian pursuits.” This is evidently a statement of the “rights” of full-time Christian evangelists to be supported financially by other Christians. Now, in this letter to the Corinthians, he declares that a “soldier” of Christ, who has not entangled himself in civilian pursuits but has given full-time to the ministry of the Word, has a right or the freedom to expect to be supported financially by the “army” of the Lord, the church. Not only so, but the “soldier’s” wife and family also.

Paul examines the thinking of the Corinthians in the light of the Word of God. What do the Scriptures say about financial support for those who teach the word of God? I take the liberty of paraphrasing Paul here: “It is true,” he says, “the OT scriptures say you shall not muzzle the ox when it is treading out the grain—and that applies to human workers as well.” They should be supported by those who are employing them—and that is a principle by which all laborers in the Lord’s vineyard should be employed. **HOWEVER, PAUL CONTINUES, “I AM FREE TO DEFER THIS ‘RIGHT’ IF I CHOOSE TO DO SO, AND STILL BE LISTENED TO AS AN APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST!”** The ox has the “right” expect its employer to feed it, but the ox also has the “right” to not eat the grain if, for some reason known only to the ox, it so chooses. Paul claims his right to expect financial support **IN ORDER TO EMPHASIZE** his right to forego it for the benefit of other Christians and the church at Corinth. He is using all this to illustrate to the Corinthians that, even though he has a scriptural right to expect their financial support, he gives up his “right” for the sake of others—and that is what some of them should do about “meat sacrificed to idols.” Some of the “strong” Corinthian Christians may have the “right” to eat meat sacrificed to idols because they “know” that an idol is not a god. **BUT THEY SHOULD GIVE UP THEIR “RIGHT” FOR THE SAKE OF “WEAKER” CHRISTIAN BROTHERS IN THE CONGREGATION WHO MIGHT, SEE THE “STRONG” EATING IDOL-MEAT, ALSO EAT THE MEAT AND LATER HAVE A GUILTY CONSCIENCE ABOUT IT AND LOSE THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO CHRIST!** Jesus said, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (Jn. 8:31-32). **ATTAINMENT OF SPIRITUAL FREEDOM IS IN PROPORTION TO HOW MUCH ONE TRUSTS GOD’S WORD TO BE THE WHOLE TRUTH ABOUT MAN’S POTENTIAL AND HOW TO REACH IT!** A significant step in reaching that divine potential for a human being is his/her ability to “give up rights” for the sake of others! Paul defended the **RIGHT** of all Christians to choose what they understood to be **BEST** in reaching spiritual maturity in Christ!

Choosing to relinquish one’s rights in certain circumstances may be the Christian’s **BEST** way to progress toward his/her highest spiritual potential! **IT CAN BE DONE—JESUS DID IT—PAUL DID IT!** Doing so imitates Christ. Doing so exercises love, holiness, self-control and gives great satisfaction (contentment and peace). It wouldn’t be easy! **BUT**

WHOEVER SAID BEING A CHRISTIAN WAS EASY?! IF THERE IS ONE THING JESUS TAUGHT IN THE GOSPELS IT IS THAT BEING A DISCIPLE IS COSTLY! There is a price to pay—and giving up one's "rights" to save a soul is one of those costs! First, however, one should be certain that the "weaker" brother would actually be harmed by the exercise of one's freedom or "rights" in Christ! If not, then one would have to defend his/her Christian "freedom" just as Paul was doing here.

Now we're getting serious! The apostle Paul said of himself, "For I would rather die than have any one deprive me of my ground for boasting" (i.e., his "freedom" to forego financial support from the Corinthians) 9:15. JESUS DIED BY GIVING UP HIS "RIGHT" TO JUSTICE! Jesus was not guilty of any of the crimes alleged against him. He could have "appealed to Caesar" just as Paul later did (Acts 25:11-12). Jesus gave up all his rights to deity (Phil. 2:5-11) to become human and suffer as he did, and die a vicarious death in our place! AND ALL WE ARE ASKED TO "GIVE UP" OCCASIONALLY ARE SOME TRADITIONS AND OPINIONS WE HOLD DEAR! You didn't think being a Christian would go this far, did you? YOU SHOULD HAVE! Jesus said it over and over, in many different ways—"So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple" (Lk. 14:33), or, "Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple" (Lk. 14:27). Can you "renounce" one of your long-held opinions or traditions for the sake of another?

I'm not sure how far I, personally, could go in accommodating myself to someone else's culture. I suppose if I were younger it would be easier. After all, over 80 years of ingrained American culture would be difficult to overcome with another culture. I could accommodate myself, I think, to a number of cultural differences, but I would never know until I was put in circumstances which would demand it of me in order to preach the gospel. THINK OF HOW MUCH PAUL, THE FORMER JEWISH RABBI (Phil. 3:4-11) HAD TO "GIVE UP" TO LIVE AMONG AND PREACH THE GOSPEL TO GENTILES! No Gentile has any idea of the difficulty a Jew would have living among, eating with, rubbing elbows with, pagan-practicing Gentiles! Paul says in our text, "...I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." (9:22). If a Jew could become as a Gentile, it well behooves American Christians to take inventory of just how much of their cultural baggage they could "give up" to win sinners to Christ! Many American Christians refuse to give up the most trivial things to keep a brother from stumbling, let alone giving up "rights" in order to save someone!

We don't have to do what Christ says—we have a choice! We may choose to ignore Christ and the Bible and take our chances that what Christ and the Bible says is not true—we won't instantly go to Hell if we ignore him! BUT IN THE LIGHT OF ALL THE EVIDENCE THAT THE BIBLE IS HISTORICALLY TRUSTWORTHY, THAT WOULD BE THE MOST FOOLISH THING A HUMAN BEING COULD DO! No logically-thinking human being ignores the laws of his State and Nation against murder, bank-robbery, assault, treason, etc. If you do the crime, you'll do the time (or whatever the penalty is). And our civil governments can only kill the body! Our civil governments obtain our compliance through force or the threat of force! Jesus begs our compliance to his commandments through the power of the "blessings of the gospel" ("good news") (9:23). JESUS "CONSTRAINS" OR COMPELS US TO KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS OUT OF HIS GREAT LOVE FOR US IN

HIS VICARIOUS DEATH AND HISTORICAL RESURRECTION (2 Cor. 5:14; Jn. 14:23; 15:10, etc.). Paul threw all his cultural baggage on the garbage pile (Phil. 3:8-11) because of the great love Christ extended to him through his vicarious death to atone for Paul's sins! Paul didn't have to do that, he chose to do it! Paul was even willing to wish himself accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of his Jewish brethren (Rom. 9:3)—IS THAT MERE HYPERBOLE? NO! PAUL WAS SINCERE! THAT WAS THE KIND OF LOVE THAT PAUL IS TALKING ABOUT IN THESE THREE CHAPTERS (1 Cor. 8-9-10). It was this same apostle, Paul, who wrote, "Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!" (2 Cor. 9:15). If the love of Christ cannot compel us to do what he says—all the other forces in the world wouldn't be able to do it! The only alternative to the compulsion of love to do the will of Christ would be to take away human free will and choice. That would make human beings mere puppets, or robots, and what kind of glory would that be to God to have robots doing his will? NONE!

The Greek word *egkrateuetai* is translated "self-control" in 9:25. It is a "middle-deponent" verb meaning that whatever is done, is done by himself upon the subject of the sentence (i.e., "every agonizomenos, or "athlete"). Paul is using the metaphor of the Greek Olympic games here as an analogy of the Christian life. The Greek word *agonizomenos* literally means, "one who struggles, one who contends, one who agonizes." Our English word *agony* comes from this word. Jesus' struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane is called *agonia* (Lk. 22:44). Jude writes that Christians are to "contend earnestly" (Gr. *epagonizesthai*) for the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). Right relationship with God is a struggle—make no mistake about that! It involves agony and pressure. Christians are contenders, combatants, strugglers, warriors.

Every agonizer (athlete) must exercise self-control in all things in order to compete and win. Paul uses the Greek word *egkrateuetai* which is translated "temperate" in the KJV and "self-control" in the RSV and "strict training" in the NIV. Literally, the word means, "within-strength" or "inner-strength." Self-control is the fruit of the Spirit of God in the Christian (Gal. 5:23). Self-control is what the Christian must "make every effort to" add to his life as a supplement to faith, knowledge, virtue, etc. (2 Pet. 1:6). Self-control, through his written word, the Bible, is the primary work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian (Jn. 8:31-32; 8:37; 8:43; 24:23; 15:10; 16:8-11; 17:17, etc.)! Athletes in the Greek games had to endure, according to Horace, the regimen of obedience, sparse diet, and severe training for ten months before qualified to enter the actual games. Modern athletes spend weeks and months disciplining their minds and bodies in rigorous training and competition. Some modern professional golfers have been known to practice swinging their clubs and hitting balls until their hands are blistered and bleeding. These all submit to self-discipline in order to win a perishable trophy and money. Should not Christians, then, be willing and able to exercise self-control for the imperishable crown of eternal righteousness, glory and life? This is why Paul could say he would go to every length possible (not giving up truth) to understand all men (culturally, emotionally, mentally) so as to win them to Christ. NOW THAT'S SELF-CONTROL!—THAT'S STRENGTH OVER THE INNER-MAN! Paul was ready to lay aside every thing (regardless of his own freedom and rights to have it) which might keep him from becoming the best of which he was capable in order to win converts to Christ—ARE WE READY TO DO THAT? WE'D BETTER BE!

For Paul there was no uncertainty in his regimen of self-discipline. He did not run his race of life aimlessly (Greek *adelos*, un-evident, unclear, uncertain). He did not consider the Christian struggle a session in “shadow-boxing” or quixotic jousting with windmills. For him the Christian life was a contest to win, a war in which there was no substitute for victory (Eph. 6:10-23). It was a trial that demanded severe self-control. In 9:27 the Greek word *hupopiazō* is translated *pommel* and means literally, “to give a black eye by striking the face.” Metaphorically Paul is saying, “I beat my body black and blue...” to keep it under control. The other Greek word in 9:27 is *doulagōgō*, translated *subdue*, is literally, “lead as a slave.” Paul is saying that his mind controlled by the Spirit of Christ, as revealed in the Word of Christ, led his body as a slave. He articulated this with precision in Romans 6:12-23; 8:5-11; 12:1-8.

Athletes set goals. Their goal is always to win! They must be willing to give up any “freedom” or “right” which might be a hindrance to reaching that goal. The Christian’s goal is to be transformed in character into the image of Christ. Christians need to see the goal clearly. One of the most distressing things about modern man is the obvious aimlessness and distortion in setting this as a goal for life. If any Christian is not willing to give up whatever is necessary for him and others to attain the highest potential God has for them, that Christian will, at the end of the race, find himself rejected (Greek, *adokimos*, “disqualified”—a word from the ancient alchemist who was both a pharmacologist and a metallurgist, who tested metals in a crucible and cast aside those which were spurious, or false).

YES, YOU AND I ARE FREE IN CHRIST TO MAKE ALL OUR OWN CHOICES IN LIFE! If you don’t “feel” free to do so, you ought to! But, there is a risk in Christian freedom! The risk is that some Christians might become overconfident of their ability to participate in things to which they will become enslaved. But the alternative—taking away Christian freedom—is unacceptable. Righteousness and Christ-like character is developed by making choices. It cannot be forced or legislated. God through his Son and his Word, reveals what righteousness is. He also reveals his love and faithfulness to motivate us to choose righteousness. But we must make the choice. We are free to make all our own choices in life, but let us not become overconfident and make the wrong choices.

# TEACHER'S NOTES I CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-33

God was displeased with the Israelites in the wilderness because they were PRESUMPTUOUS! The Israelites were delivered from Egyptian bondage under the aegis of great, supernatural works. They were immersed (Gr. ebaptisanto) or surrounded by water in the cloud and the sea to protect them from the Egyptians. God gave them miraculous guidance in the unknown wilderness by a cloud and a pillar of fire. He sustained them by supernatural food and drink (Ex. 13:1—17:16). God chose them for a Messianic destiny. Since the Messiah was in their loins, God gave them the privileges of the Messiah's supernatural sustenance. It was the Anointed One of the Father who actually gave them the miraculous water in the wilderness. Jesus later made it plain that it was not Moses who gave them the bread from heaven, but God himself (Jn. 6:32-33), and man's life is perpetuated not by physical bread but by the supernatural bread—the Word of God, even Jesus Christ.

But the ancient Israelites PRESUMED these initial privileges meant God would surely continue to give them security without any need for an exercise of faith and holiness of life on their part. Hebrews 3:7-19 tells us why they became overconfident and presumptuous—pride and the deceitfulness of sin. Later Jews were so smug as to believe that as long as they had the Temple in their midst, God would not punish them for blatant sin (Jer. 7:4-11). The food and water they consumed was physical, to be sure, but its origin was supernatural. The supernatural Spirit of God was with the Israelites through their journey to the promised land (Isa. 59:21; 63:11-13). But God's Spirit was with them in an even more important way. He provided the Israelites with spiritual bread and drink through Moses' teachings about the Messiah (Deut. 8:3; 18:15). That "supernatural" Rock (the Christ) "followed" them in deed and word wherever they went in the wilderness. They were being sustained physically and spiritually by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God through Moses. If only they had taken seriously the words of Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."

The point Paul is emphasizing here is that divine privileges obligated the recipients to respond in holiness and love. The Israelites were privileged, by God's grace, to receive supernatural and spiritual fellowship with the Creator above and beyond all other people. BUT THEY WERE UNWILLING TO EXERCISE SELF-CONTROL, HOLINESS AND LOVE FOR THEIR BENEFACTOR, GOD. THEY "SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK AND ROSE UP TO DANCE." Paul is still talking about the privileges and responsibilities of Christian "freedom" and "rights" and illustrating the risk and danger of being presumptuous about them! Those who are Christians (including apostles) have privileges and liberties beyond anything the Israelites ever enjoyed. Most of the Israelites God destroyed in the wilderness (all of responsible age except Joshua and Caleb). They never went into the promised land! They failed because they used the freedom from bondage God gave them for occasion to indulge their own fleshly desires. They would not control themselves and sacrifice the fleshly

lusts for the greater Messianic goal set before them in the teaching of Moses. The Christians at Corinth had been baptized into Christ, set free, protected and sustained. They had heard Paul and other Christian teachers emphasize their freedom in Christ. They had been taught, and now believed, that an idol was nothing. They had been taught that all of God's creation was good and "everything belonged to them" (1 Cor. 3:21-22). Paul evidently felt the Corinthians (especially the "strong" brethren) were dangerously close to becoming as presumptuous as the fleshly-minded Israelites were after their release from bondage.

We repeat! There is a risk in Christian freedom. When people are made free they are, by the nature of freedom itself, made vulnerable to options. Free Christian people are autonomous (self-ruled) and may no longer be controlled by force of "law" and "fear" of justice. The only thing forced by freedom is responsibility. There is always the risk with freedom that people will "use their freedom as a pretext for evil" (1 Pet. 2:16). While there is a risk, the alternative (trying to produce righteousness and morality by law) is unacceptable. Righteousness cannot be wrought by force or law, it can only be produced in a matrix of freedom to choose, motivated through the compulsion of faith and love. Of course, God must reveal to human beings precisely what kind of thinking and acting constitutes righteousness, goodness and morality. Often God reveals to man what righteousness is by revealing and warning against unrighteousness. That is what Paul does in this dissertation. He warned that overconfidence (which is really a presumptive lack of faith in God) makes man vulnerable to the temptations of immorality, idolatry and insensitiveness.

YES! Idolatry and immorality are inseparably connected! Consistent, impenitent immoral behavior is ALWAYS the result of some form of idolatry (worship or reverence for "another god"). Idolatry itself is immoral! "Moral means, "that which is right" and "immoral" means, "that which is wrong." It is wrong and immoral to worship other gods. THOSE WHO DO NOT REVERE, WORSHIP, LOVE AND OBEY THE ONE TRUE GOD, JEHOVAH, WILL INEVITABLY WORSHIP "ANOTHER GOD" OF THEIR OWN MAKING! Romans 1:18-32 declares that to be a matter of logical fact! No man can serve two masters, but every human being will serve one master or another. Jesus said it this way, "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters" (Matt. 12:30). The first commandment of the Decalogue (i.e., "Ten Commandments") is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3; 20:23; Deut. 5:7). No object, thing, creature, human being, ideology, philosophy, view-point, angel or spirit (except the Holy Spirit of God) is to be revered, worshiped, adored, exalted, prayed to, trusted in, or looked to for moral guidance and eternal life. To do so is idolatry. American "idolatry" is primarily the theory of evolution or humanism! Much of America's educational system, political system, and commercial system is built squarely on its humanistic idolatry! That which a human being trusts and serves or puts first or gives the essence of his life to is his god. Americans do not "worship" icons or statues, but they worship "Mammon" (money) or humanism (i.e., that human beings originated from random chance collation of "pre-historic" gases and acids floating in a "soup" on the ocean—which evolved, by chance, first into sea-life, then amphibians, then apes, then humans). Humanism worships humanity which is exactly what that ancient world of the apostle Paul worshiped (Rom. 1:23). THINGS DON'T CHANGE MUCH IN 2100 YEARS, DO THEY?!

The Greek word *porneuomen* in 10:8 is translated, “fornication” in KJV and “immorality” in RSV, and “sexual immorality” in NIV. Paul is using the word in a metaphorical way as well as a literal way. The ancient Israelites committed spiritual fornication or immorality when they worshiped idols in the wilderness, and that led to literal fornication and sexual immorality. SPIRITUAL “FORNICATION” (i.e., IDOLATRY) IS THE “MOTHER” OF ALL SINS. It is as Fedor Dostoevsky makes the “priest” brother say in, *The Brothers Karamasov*, “If there is no God, everything is possible!” or, “If you were to destroy in mankind the belief in immortality, not only love but every living force maintaining the life of the world would at once be dried up.” THAT IS WHAT IS HAPPENING TO AMERICAN VALUES AND MORALS BECAUSE OF AMERICA’S HUMANISTIC-EVOLUTIONISTIC-IDOLATRY!

The Roman Empire (ca. A.D. 100-500) is characterized by the apostle John in his book of “Revelation.” John says explicitly (in highly symbolic language, of course) that Rome’s idolatry led to its immorality and eventually its destruction under the wrath of God. Rome is characterized under three names—the “beast” the “false prophet” and the “harlot.” Idolatry (the worship of another god, whether it be animal, human, or idea) inevitably results in beastly persecution, false religions, and fleshly-immorality. The same apostle John wrote in 1 Jn. 5:19 that the “whole world lieth with the evil one.” The Greek word translated, *lieth* is *keitai* from which we get the English word, *coitus*, which means “having sexual intercourse with.” In other words, John says that the whole non-Christian world “is in bed having intercourse with the devil.”—A RESULT OF IDOLATRY. It is no accident that John closes his first epistle with the warning, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols!” Evolutionary-humanism is an idol!

The unbelief of asking for “more” is immoral! Paul warns, “Do not put the Lord to the test.” The Greek word translated *test* is *ekpeiradzomen*, which is literally, over-test, or test beyond what is acceptable. God does not want us to put the promises he has revealed to us in his Word to the test—at least as far as reason and propriety will allow. He does want us to test his Word to confirm its historicity and accuracy and credibility. Once we have “tested” the Bible’s historicity and credibility, we are to test God’s word no farther—we are to trust it and obey it! To keep asking God to prove himself and his promises beyond the Word is to put him to the test! The Israelites did this when they asked for more proof than the Lord had already given of his presence among them (Ex. 17:7; Deut. 6:16; Num. 21:4-6; Heb. 3:7-19). This same unbelief seems to have been a problem with the Corinthian Christians. It was demonstrated by their clamoring for the continuance of miraculous gifts which were given exclusively to create belief and were to “pass away” when that belief had been established among them (1 Cor. chs. 12-14). At the same time the Corinthians shunned the gifts designed to edify and which were to abide. When the evidence is sufficient, demanding more from the Lord is to “put him to the test” and is immoral. Jesus warned the Jewish rulers who kept asking him for more “signs” that they were committing the unpardonable sin (Matt. 12:31-32; Mk. 3:28-29; Lk. 12:8-12). The Israelites in the wilderness had every opportunity and privilege God could offer to create faith and commitment in their hearts. But they asked for more. The Corinthians had every opportunity and privilege Christ could offer to give them liberty and freedom. They seemed to be demand more. Paul warns them they are putting the Lord to the test. The New Testament is Christ’s final and complete “Bill of Rights” for the church. Any Christian who presumes to demand more is putting the Lord to the test!



Christians today who demand more “signs,” more “evidence,” more “promises,” more “revelation” from the Lord are putting the Lord to the TEST! And that is unbelief, and it is immoral—i.e., wrong! God has given humanity its final, complete, perfect, living Word, revealed through prophets and apostles. **THOSE TODAY WHO CLAMOR FOR “EXTRA-BIBLICAL” REVELATIONS OR A “ANOTHER WORD FROM GOD” ARE WRONG!** They are “testing” God! God has said all he is going to say to human beings about salvation and sanctification—he has nothing more to say until the final judgment.

Christians are NOT to grumble! The Greek word *egongusan* (from which we get the English word, “gong”) is an onomatopoeic word, i.e., a word which represents the significance by the sound of the word, like the English word murmur. The constant complainer is like a gong being constantly pounded. In the papyri the word is used of an impudent person grumbling about a crew of workmen. The word is almost always used with the connotation of private or nearly inarticulate complaining. The Israelites were inveterate complainers (Num. 14:1-3; 17:27; 16:41; 17:5,10; 20:2-13; Matt. 20:11; Lk. 5:30; Jn. 6:41,43; 6:61; 7:32; Acts 6:1; Phil. 2:14; 1 Pet. 4:9). It often appears those most blessed and privileged are the most presumptuous and complaining. Ingratitude is the mother of all manner of wickedness (Rom 1:21ff). Moses warned the Israelites against ungrateful presumption (Deut. 8:11-20). Paul is here warning all Christians about presuming upon the Lord’s grace by complaining. **GRUMBLING IS IMMORAL!** In all circumstances, we are to give thanks to God (Phil. 4:10-14; 1 Thess. 5:15-19). Grumbling “quenches the Spirit.” Jeremiah, who had every excuse possible to complain, wrote, “Why should any living mortal, or any man, offer complaint in view of his sins?” Lam. 3:39, NAS. Samuel Johnson observed, “The usual fortune of complaint is to excite contempt more than pity.” And Julia Seton wrote, “We have no more right to put our discordant states of mind into the lives of those around us and rob them of their sunshine and brightness than we have to enter their houses and steal their silverware.” Edmund Burke, Irish Statesman wrote incisively, “To complain of the age we live in, to murmur at the present possessors of power, to lament the past, to conceive extravagant hopes of the future, are the common dispositions of the greatest part of mankind.” **BUT PAUL WARNS US IN 1 COR. 10:10...GRUMBLING AS THE ISRAELITES DID AND DEMANDING PRESUMPTUOUSLY THAT GOD GIVE MORE SIGNS OF HIS PRESENCE WILL BRING DESTRUCTION BY THE DESTROYER (GOD)!** It is as much an abomination to God for Christians to “grumble” as it is for them to “curse and swear.” As some anonymous wag said, “The wheel that squeaks the loudest is the first to be replaced.” Paul uses the Greek word *tupos*, “type or imprint” in refer to God’s historical dealings with the presumptuous Israelites. The RSV translates *tupos* as “warning” because bringing the Christian age into being was the ultimate purpose for God’s dealing with Israel as he did. The judgments and redemptions God worked upon Israel were recorded ultimately for the Bride of Christ—the New Testament Church. Paul says the history of Israel was written for our instruction. Our instruction is to be more than teaching, it is indoctrination—we are to have it put into our minds so that it becomes a part of our mentality or way of thinking and acting. It is important that Christians know the Old Testament—especially the Old Testament prophets!

The “end of the ages” came when the Christian dispensation began at Pentecost—we are IN the last “age” NOW! The Greek phrase, *eis hous ta tele ton aionon katenteken*

(10:11c) is translated RSV, "upon whom the end of the ages has come." NIV translation is more interpretative, "upon whom the fulfillment of the ages has come." There is no Greek word in this phrase that means "fulfillment." Nevertheless it is an extremely significant phrase because it is so decisive in stating apostolic eschatology in one declaration! This phrase undeniably teaches that the Christian age is the goal of all past ages and that it is the last age for this present world. The Greek word tele, translated "end" also means "goal." Heaven is God's ultimate goal for Christians. There will be no more ages on this earth after the Christian age. The Greek word katenteken is a perfect tense verb and may be translated, "has come down in the past with a continuing result." The decisive word in the whole phrase, however, is the Greek word tele, translated, end. It is the word from which we get the English prefix, tele, or telo, meaning, "ended, perfected, finalized, completed." The Greek word teleios means, 'having reached its end, finished, completed, perfected or finalized.' The Christian age, begun on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17ff), is the final age. There will be no more ages or eras or dispensations. The only great event in the framework of time yet to come is the end of time, at which point Jesus will come again visibly to deliver the faithful living and dead to glory and to judge and deliver the unfaithful living and dead to Hell. The church age is the kingdom age. There is no kingdom dispensation yet to come. Paul's use of the perfect tense verb katenteken and his use of the noun tele settles the issue of Christian eschatology once for all. All the previous dispensations or ages of history were pointing toward the Christian age as their goal. The coming of the Christian age means that the goal has been reached, the last phase of redemption has begun. So Paul is urging the Corinthians (and all subsequent readers of this epistle) that self-discipline is now imperative. God has no other plan of redemption than the one in the New Testament. God has no other revelation than that written down in the New Testament. God has no other time or age in which he will work with mankind than this age. "Behold, now (in the Christian age) is the acceptable time; behold now is the day (or age) of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:1-2).

NO! There are no temptations for which there is no escape! GOD HAS SAID SO! Right here in 1 Cor. 10:13. Paul's purpose in making his unequivocal statement about the Christian dispensation being the last of God's "dispensations" in time is to prove his argument about the necessity for Christian resistance to temptation in this earthly phase of life. There is no other probationary or proving-phase of life. We are becoming what we shall be. Therefore, let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. Let anyone who thinks privilege secures his standing before God, take heed lest he be indolent toward the responsibilities involved. The Corinthian Christians were prone to be slothful in exercising Christian charity and brotherhood toward "weaker brethren." They were arrogant in their liberty supposing such privileges secured their spiritual superiority. They presumed they "stood" while the weaker had "fallen." Some of the Corinthians clearly had rationalized their arrogant disregard for "weaker" brethren by claiming they were participating in things they just could not quit. They probably argued that their old habit of eating at the feasts honoring idols was just too ingrained to be given up. They plead—"Our temptation is unique—no one knows how strong this temptation is." Besides they knew an idol was no god so they were free to participate. They would opine, "Let the weaker brother look out for himself. He should get rid of his scruples and grow up to our level of spirituality." PAUL'S ANSWER WAS THAT ANY TEMPTATION MAY BE RESISTED—ANY TEST ENDURED!

The Bible says here (10:13) that every temptation is common to mankind. The devil may use different tools or agents in different cultural milieu or in different historical times, but his temptations to rebel against God generally fit into three or four general categories, (i.e., “the lust of the flesh---eyes---and pride of life” 1 Jn. 2:16). Jesus was tempted in the wilderness in essentially these 3 categories; Eve and Adam were tempted in Eden in these 3 categories (Gen. 3:1-7). No one can excuse their weaknesses by claiming their temptations were unique! But, praise God, every human being who wishes may have the help of God for every temptation faced. God will not permit any person to be tempted beyond the availability of help. Note: the Bible does not promise any person (especially Christians) that he will have NO temptations! Jesus said “For it is necessary that temptations (stumbling blocks) come....” (Matt. 18:7). As a matter of fact, temptation is one of God’s ways of disciplining his children. God does not want his children to do evil, nor does he push them in that direction (James 1:13-15). But God does want his children to develop spiritual maturity and strength and this can only be done, in this fallen world, as his children wrestle with and conquer temptation (Heb. 10:32-39; 12:1-17; James 1:2-11; 1 Cor. 1:3-11; 12:1-10). Jesus, fully human as he was fully divine, proved in the flesh that all temptation is common to mankind and that every temptation may be overcome if human beings will avail themselves, by total faith, of the help of God. Jesus never used his divinity nor his miraculous power to extricate himself from a temptation. He always relied on the word of God in total commitment to God’s faithfulness (Matt. 4:1-11).

With every temptation God allows he makes available an attendant way of escape. The Greek text has the definite article *ten* before the noun *ekbasin*. In other words, Paul says, “...with the temptation (God) will also provide the way of escape.” It is not a way of escape, but the way of escape. Every temptation has its own way of escape. The temptation and the way of escape come in tandem. God sees to it that one does not occur without the other. The way of escape may come as pain (as with the apostle Paul, 2 Cor. 12:7ff). As C. S. Lewis has said succinctly in his book, *The Problem of Pain*, “Pain plants the flag of truth in the fortress of the rebel soul.” Or it may come as some moment when the Word of God, read or heard, pierces the heart with remorse and the need to repent. No man can plead “not guilty” by saying the way of escape was not made available because Paul says God sends with every temptation the escape that you may be able to endure. If a Christian sins it is not because he did not have the way to escape it; it is because he did not avail himself of the way of escape. Sin cannot overpower a person unless the person allows it. God expects all people to resist temptation (Prov. 1:10; 4:14; Rom. 6:13; Eph. 6:13; 2 Pet. 3:17). God encourages all people to seek his help (Heb. 2:18; 2 Pet. 2:9; Heb. 4:14-16). Great men of faith have resisted (Abraham, Gen. 14:23; Joseph, Gen. 39:1-9; Job, Job 2:9-10; the Rechabites, Jer. 35:5-6; Daniel, Dan. 1:8; Christ, Matt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:1-13; Peter, Acts 8:20). **SPIRITUAL INDOLENCE IS INEXCUSABLE BEFORE GOD!**

This passage in no way teaches the idea that the emblems of the Lord’s Supper become the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ or Roman Catholic “transubstantiation” or Lutheran “consubstantiation.” Neither does it teach (as some “sacramentalists” in even in the Christian Church teach) that should we miss participation in the emblems due to circumstances beyond our control we lose contact with the blood of Christ. The death of Christ becomes efficacious to us through obedient faith, to be sure, but a person might have

perfect attendance at the Lord's Supper and still lose contact with the blood of Christ if he is trusting in the ritual to make him meritoriously fit for salvation. Paul is not teaching a lesson on Christian "communion" or the Lord's Supper in 10:14-22. He uses Christian communion as an analogy or an illustration of the principle of fellowship. It should be logically apparent to any thinking individual that the congeniality of dining and drinking with someone indicates the diners are like-minded, agreed in aims and purposes. This was certainly true in ancient cultures more than in modern American culture. People do not participate, continually, at meal-tables with their enemies; at least they are not that congenial with enemies by their own free choice. Paul says, "For example, when Christians eat and drink with Christ at his Supper they are testifying to all they are in fellowship or agreement with Christ and all he stands for." The real issue here is not the observance of the Lord's Supper, per se, but that of divided loyalty! A person cannot participate with Christ and participate (or indulge) with the devil at the same time. A person cannot serve two masters. A person cannot serve God and mammon! Trying to serve two masters may even be done while one is partaking of the Lord's Supper (as we shall see some of the Corinthians were doing, in 1 Cor. ch. 11). Another illustration is presented—(10:18). The priests of the Old covenant gave testimony to the fellowship they had with God when they participated in the ritual of offerings upon the altar of God. They did not partake, literally, of the altar—the altar itself was emblematic of the spiritual fellowship they had by faith. This meaning must be applied to all physical acts of NT Christianity. There is nothing supernatural or miraculous in the water in which a believer is immersed. The participation the believer has with the efficacious death of Christ is by faith. Immersion in water, in obedience to the command of Christ, is merely God's ordained way that faith is to be expressed. Refusal to be immersed would express disbelief and disobedience, to be sure, but there is nothing magical in the water or the act itself. We are not saved by works—any kind of works! We express our trust and love for Christ through works—all kinds of Biblically ordained works, but none of them nor all of them put together save us. Things such as water and grape juice and matza crackers are amoral. There is nothing efficacious in things. The efficaciousness of Christ's death is appropriated through the exercise of a person's faith. Proof that the altar itself contained no efficacy in which priests participated is clearly established by the prophets of the OT who denounce the unbelieving priesthood of their day as enemies of God all the while they were performing the rituals at the altar!

Extremely careful! With Christian liberty there is always an ever present danger that Christians ("weak" and "strong") will become selfishly concerned foremost about someone else's liberty or someone else's scruples. Thus Paul repeats the fundamental principle of Christian liberty—"All things are lawful..." qualifying it with, "...but not all things are helpful." He goes on to say, "All things are lawful, but not all things build up." Something may be "lawful" for any Christian to do, but it may not be constructive for the body of Christ and individual members thereof. Paul is not saying "All actions are lawful." When we read his statement that "All things are lawful" we must remember the context in which he is saying it. The context is the specific discussion of eating meat sacrificed to idols. Paul is declaring that Christ has set all Christians free from the legal restrictions of the Mosaic law concerning foods. If the law of Moses had not been superceded, no Christian could eat meat which had been butchered by a pagan lest he be ceremonially unclean. But the Mosaic restrictions no longer apply. Such food would not make a Christian "unclean." Paul is saying here what he

said to Timothy, All foods formerly prohibited by the Mosaic law are lawful (1 Tim. 4:1-5). But while all foods are lawful, the Christian might sin partaking even of lawful food if he should wound the conscience of a weaker brother by doing so.

Life can never be at a standstill. If it is not growing or developing toward the higher—if it is not being constructive—it is declining toward the lower. What is not used for growth will become atrophied and eventually be not only useless but will become dead. Christian freedom that is careless and unconcerned about helpfulness and growth, inevitably contributes to destruction. Paul expressed this principle graphically in Romans 14:19 “Let us then pursue what makes for peace and mutual up-building,” or, “let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to edify him” (Rom. 15:2). And now to the Corinthians, the shocking words, so diametrically opposed to modern, worldly “me-ism” Paul says, “Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.” (1 Cor. 10:24; see also Rom. 12:9-13; Phil. 2:3-4). Christians are not merely to help their neighbors if the opportunities to do so happen to present themselves. The Christian is to seek good for his neighbors. The Greek verb *zeteito* is present, imperfect, active, meaning the Christian is to go on and on and on seeking good for his neighbor. That is the Christian’s job. It may be of significance that Paul does not limit his exhortation to the Christian here to seek the good of a “brother.” He literally wrote, “Nothing of himself let him go on and on seeking, but the thing of the other.” The word other is the Greek word *heterou* which denotes generic distinction or difference in character. It is translated neighbor. Christians are to put to practice the constraints of love in Christian liberty toward all men.

The final sentence of 10:29, “For why should my liberty be determined by another man’s scruples?” is not a cry of rebellion on the part of the “stronger” brother. Verses 29b and 30 are rhetorical questions from the apostle Paul, in anticipation of the answer in verses 31,32, and 33. The Greek expression, *hinati gar he eleutheria mou krinetai* is stronger than most English translations present it. J. B. Phillips has it correctly translated in *The New Testament In Modern English*, “Now why should my freedom to eat be at the mercy of someone else’s conscience. Or why should any evil be said of me when I have eaten meat with thankfulness, and have thanked God for it. Because, whatever you do, eating or drinking or anything else, everything should be done to bring glory to God.” Why should the strong Christian brother be willing to make such sacrifices as to surrender his freedom to someone else’s conscience? Or, conversely, if what the strong Christian eats is something for which he is able to thank God, and he is upbraided for it, why is it proper that evil has been spoken of him? Because, any action that violates another man’s conscience does not bring glory to God; and that includes even an action for which a strong Christian may give thanks to God.

HOWEVER, Paul never compromised on matters that were essential to one’s belief in Jesus. He never compromised on matters of moral behavior clearly delineated in the scriptures. He would not even compromise on a matter of indifference (circumcision) when the Jews insisted that it was a matter of covenant relationship to Christ. So, those areas are not in the scope of his statement, “...just as I try to please all men in everything I do.” Paul did accommodate himself to the scruples of others in matters that were opinions and not essential to covenant terms with Christ. BUT PAUL DID NOT CURRY THE FAVOR OF

MEN! His primary goal in life was to please God (Gal. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:5-6). A better translation of the Greek word aresko would be "seems proper." Paul is saying, "...just as I try to behave as seems proper toward all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved." PAUL WOULD DO ANYTHING, SHORT OF APOSTASY AND IMMORALITY, TO SAVE A MAN. He would sacrifice any of his privileges or "rights" to win men to Christ. He imitated Christ. He commands (Gr. ginesthe, imperative mood, Be!) all Christians to be imitators of him as he is of Christ. Verse 1 of chapter 11 should be considered the closing statement of the discussion of chapter 10. May God grant us the power and the motivation to do everything possible to win men to Christ!

# TEACHER'S NOTES I CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 11:1-34

ORDERLINESS AND DISCRETION in worship is the fundamental issue Paul deals with in 1 Cor. 11. The attitude Paul focuses on is the issue of obedience to the revealed will of God as spoken by the apostles and evangelists (and latter written in the New Testament). The problem had manifested itself by two symptomatic actions in the public worship of the Corinthians; they are (a) the human gender (man-woman) relationship; (b) the Christian-brother relationship. The Corinthian Christians were “out of order” in both actions! Almighty God is a God of order! (Psa. 119:133; 1 Cor. 11:34; 14:40; Col. 2:5; 1 Tim. 3:15; Titus 1:5). God is abhorrent of disorder; he did not create this cosmos a chaotic mess of chance—he created it orderly (Isa. 45:18-19; 1 Cor. 14:33). It is all focused on **THE PROPER ATTITUDE AND DECORUM IN WORSHIPING GOD!** Order is discipline, method, design, pattern, correctness, decorum, properness, system, regulation. Order is all those things and those are things which are the very nature of God’s character! The God of the Bible is a God of law and order! Law and order exists in heaven as John saw it in his book of Revelation! Without order there can be no security, no peace, no society. Without order there can be no growth (“first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear” Mk. 4:28). “For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven” Eccl. 3:1. God has appointed a time for every matter, and for every work” Eccl. 3:17; 8:6. It is Christ who “gathers” (i.e., makes whole); it is the devil, and his cohorts, who “scatters” (i.e., promotes discord, disorder, fragmentation) Matt. 12:30. Christian Churches do not need to be ashamed of having an “order of worship” in their weekly services! **THERE’S NOTHING THAT PLEASES GOD MORE THAN ORDERLINESS!** Godly decorum and propriety must not be sacrificed for passing “fads” in worship-methods & services. **WHATEVER GOD HAS ORDAINED OR SET PRECEDENT FOR IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AS TO THE WORSHIP ORDER IN HIS CHURCH MUST BE FOLLOWED.** Any deviation from the NT would put the church today in company with those churches the apostles took to task in their epistles (and in Revelation chs. 2-3).

Female persons were created subordinate to male persons—and are to be subordinate to male leadership in the home and in the church (and probably in both civil government and business). **GOD ORDAINED IT THAT WAY AND CHRISTIANS MUST PRACTICE IT THAT WAY IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN THAT GOD HAS ORDAINED IT THAT WAY!** While it is true regarding salvation and grace that men and women are of equal worth to God, it is also true that God has ordered certain hierarchies of authority within this world and his kingdom so long as it is in the world. In the church there are “elders, evangelists, deacons, and teachers” to lead and shepherd the congregation. And as far as the NT goes (and no Christians should go beyond it) these 4 offices (places of service) should be filled by men (males). In the home the husband is the final authority under the authority of Christ and his word—that is the revelation of God from the Garden of Eden to the end of the New Testament. No one should usurp God’s ordained “order” in either of those social units. Evidently some of the Corinthian women misunderstood the

teaching, “In Christ there is neither male nor female...” Gal. 3:28. Some of them had cast off the cultural modes of ancient dress which particularly stressed and emphasized their femininity, hence their subordination to their husbands. While the primary focus of the apostle’s discussion is on woman’s subordination to man, the issue is not simply a wife’s obedience to her husband’s loving authority. It is much broader than that and covers attitudes of all women and men—married or unmarried. The broader issue is that women (and men, too) must not rebel against the divine order of femininity and masculinity!

Paul declares that the head of every male person (Greek andros instead of anthropos) is Christ. No man should wear a sign of subordination to other men or to women (by wearing long, female-like hair style, 1 Cor. 11:14) when he prays (or worships). There is only one mediator between man and God, himself man, Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5). In the same divine order, the head of a female person is a male person. This does not deny that Christ is the head of the woman also, nor does it mean that a female person is inferior or of less importance than the male. Paul is reinforcing God’s order as it was ordained from the beginning (Gen. 2:18) when the woman was created as a helper for man. The divine order of masculinity and femininity involves differing functions which require hierarchies of authority. Man functions as sire, leader, protector, provider; woman functions as mother, helper, adviser, supporter. This in no way means one is superior and the other inferior. It does not mean that the male person makes all the decisions arbitrarily and without consulting the wisdom of the female person. But Paul’s teaching (in harmony with the rest of Scripture) does mean that the husband is the final authority and the leader in the home. **THE MAN’S “HEADSHIP” OVER WOMAN WAS NEVER INTENDED BY GOD TO BE TYRANNICAL, ARBITRARY, UNREASONABLE, AND UNLOVING.** When the male fulfills his “leadership” role properly, and the female fulfills her “helping” role properly then there is order as God has planned it. When this order is disregarded and/or reversed, there is chaos, and society suffers miserably!

The general custom among Greeks (and Romans) was that slaves should cover their heads while free men went bareheaded. If a man wore a covering over his head in Paul’s day it signified he was acknowledging final loyalty to a human being. It is wrong for a man to dishonor his masculinity in any way. Incidentally, the modern practice of Jewish men to wear yarmulks (i.e., “skull caps”) or taliths (i.e., prayer shawls) over their heads is not legislated in the Mosaic law—it is a “custom” added to the OT by the ancient rabbis! God made man masculine. God made man to lead and be the final authority in the human order on the other hand, the general custom in the ancient Greco-Roman world was that women, who desired the honor and protection their femininity afforded them, wore veils in the public presence of men (much as many of the Muslims do today). Some of the Corinthian Christian women were apparently praying and attending public worship without being veiled. They were declaring their rejection of the divine order of human hierarch by casting aside the first century symbols of this divine order. In Paul’s day the veil worn by women probably covered the whole head with openings for the eyes and reached clear down to the feet. No respectable woman would go without a veil in public for if she did she would be in danger of being misjudged. The woman’s veil in those days was an important part of feminine dignity and gave her security and protection. Sir William Ramsay explains: “In Oriental lands the veil is the power and honor and dignity of the woman. With the veil on her head she can go



anywhere in security and profound respect. She is not seen and therefore not subject to male familiarities and crudities. It is a mark of thoroughly bad manners to become familiar with a veiled woman in the street. She is alone. The rest of the people around are non-existent in her, as she is to them. She is supreme in the crowd...But without the veil the woman is a thing of nought, whom anyone may insult...A woman's authority and dignity vanish along with the all-covering veil that she discards."

The veil was the woman's badge of honor and respect. It showed that she had a definite place as a person in God's order. Woman was not created to be simply a "thing" or an "object" to be exploited by any and all men. She is to be honored, protected, cherished, loved, served, and led by her husband because she is female.

Any man who prayed or prophesied with his head covered, dishonored Christ ("the head of the male"). A man worshiping in those days with his head covered symbolized he acknowledged some other human authority (a "master") before Christ. The male Christian who worshiped with uncovered head signified he was accountable only to Christ. But the woman who prayed or prophesied with her head unveiled dishonored her husband ("her head"). She would dishonor her husband just as if she had her head shaved. Shaving of the head in ancient times (as even now in most cultures, e.g., at the end of WWII the women who collaborated with the Nazis) was a signal of disgraceful and shameful conduct. Any woman in the civilized world of the apostle Paul, Greek Roman, Jew, or Syrian, would have felt terribly ashamed to have had her head shaved. Since that was the case, says Paul, the women of Corinth should have covered their heads in public—especially in the worship services of the church. For the Christian woman of Corinth to go with her head uncovered was to act the part of a shamed woman whether she was one or not. And that, in turn, brought shame upon her husband, and upon the church.

In verses 7 through 9 Paul gives us clear scriptural proof of the divinely ordained human hierarchy. Woman was made from man, not man from woman. Man was made first and then the woman was made from his body (Gen. 2:21-22). Man is first in the divine order. Furthermore, woman was made for man, not man for woman (Gen. 2:18). Man is first in divine purpose. Both the origin of woman and the reason for her being is found in man. There is no room for human speculations or rationalizations when we have both the creation account and the apostolic reiteration. No matter how much political and philosophical rhetoric, and no matter how practical and appropriate it may sound when some activists demand that females have, not only the right, but the obligation to reject the customary, Biblically-taught, function of femininity, and step into the world of maleness and function as any man, it is clearly not the revealed will of God! This does not degrade the woman! In subordinating herself to man she is actually taking her God-ordained place. She is filling the place of honor God created for her. If she honors God's place for her, God will honor her! Strange as it may seem to modern female activists, the woman's place of dignity is in her femininity. By God's word it is the woman's right to have the protection, dignity and honor that she alone can have in femininity. If she forfeits her femininity, she forfeits her rights! That is diametrically opposed to much modern feminist philosophy. Just because woman's divinely ordered place is in subordination to man does not mean that man can exist independently of woman. For as the woman was made out of the man (Gr. ek tou andros),

the man is born through woman (Gr. dia tes gunaikos). Men and women are equally dependent upon one another—but each in their own God-ordered place!

The man is not to arrogantly defy God and take the woman's place (i.e., wear long hair in cultures where it is not masculine to do so)! Rebels and fanatics defy God's created order: Christians obey it. IT IS UNNATURAL AND REBELLIOUS FOR MEN TO WEAR THEIR HAIR LONG LIKE WOMEN. NATURE ITSELF SHOWS THAT MAN, BEING SHORT-HAIRED, IS INTENDED BY THE GOD OF NATURE TO BE UNVEILED; WOMAN, BEING LONG-HAIRED, IS INTENDED BY THE SAME GOD TO BE VEILED. Generally speaking, in the more "refined and advanced" civilizations, men have always worn their hair short and women have worn theirs long. The venerable Bible commentator, Alfred Plummer writes, "At this period, civilized men, whether Jews, Greeks or Romans, wore their hair short" (p. 235 in I Corinthians, International Critical Commentary). "The long hair of the Greek fop or of the English cavalier was accepted by the people as an indication of effeminate and luxurious living. Suitable for women; it is unsuitable for men" (The Expositor's Greek New Testament, I Cor. 11:14). "Homer's warriors, it is true, wore long hair, a fashion retained at Sparta, but the Athenian youth cropped his head at eighteen, and it was a mark of foppery or effeminacy except for the aristocratic knights to let their hair afterwards grow long. This feeling prevailed in ancient times as it does in modern times" (TEGNT, *ibid*, I Cor. 11:14). According to Philip Vollmer's *Modern Student's Life of Christ*, archaeologists object to the conventional pictures of Christ with long hair because they are not true to history. A German painter, I. Fahremkrog, says Christ certainly never wore a beard and his hair was beyond doubt closely cut. For this we have historical, archaeological proofs. The oldest representations, going back to the first Christian centuries, and found chiefly in the catacombs of Rome, all picture Christ without a beard. All the pictures of Christ down to the beginning of the 4th century at least, and even later, are like this. Further proof that Christ must have, in his day worn short hair can be proved by the Scripture. Among the Jews none but the Nazarites wore long hair. Christ was indeed a Nazarene, but not a Nazarite. Then, like the rest of the Jews who had not taken a Nazarite vow, Jesus wore his hair short! Further evidence is furnished by Paul here in 1 Cor. 11:14, where he expressly declares that it is a DISHONOR for a man to wear his hair without having it cut, something that no apostle would have said had his Master worn it thus. One thing that Jesus did not do was dress in such a bizarre way as to attract undue attention to himself. He was so much a conformist in his appearance, apparently the soldiers had to ask which one he was when they went to arrest him in the Garden of Gethsemane!

Some have tried to equivocate over this passage and ask, "How long is long" or, "How long should a woman's hair be?" The point of Paul's instruction is that man is not to have what the woman is to have! Actually, the expression "long hair" in 11:14-15 is from the Greek word *komao* which means, "let the hair grow." The idea of length is not one of relativity here. It is not how long some woman's hair is in proportion to how short some man's hair is. Every man or woman with respect to their hair falls into one of two categories. Their hair is either natural length or it is not natural length. We either let our hair grow or we do not let it grow. We either cut it or we do not cut it. Paul's instruction might be translated, "If a man let his hair grow, it is a shame unto him. But if a woman lets her hair grow, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given her for a covering." The Greek word translated "nature" is

phusis and could be translated, “instinctively.” Instinctively, creation expects men to have short hair and women to have long hair. It is disgraceful in a man to be like a woman and in a woman to be like a man.

God expects those who trust him to keep the distinctions between maleness and femaleness, both outwardly and inwardly, clear and unequivocal. Deliberate effeminacy in men and masculinity in women has always been an abomination to God. Israelite men were not to wear women’s clothing, nor were women to wear men’s clothing Deut. 22:5). Homosexual behavior was a sin punishable by death in the OT (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Deut. 23:17-18). Effeminacy is prohibited in the NT (1 Cor. 6:9-10) along with homosexuality by either male or female (Rom. 1:24-27; 1 Tim. 1:8-11). Many of the heathen poets and philosophers of the Greek and Roman civilizations considered long hair in men a mark of effeminacy. Livy, Roman poet and historian, spoke strongly against the effeminacy of his age. Juvenal, disgusted by the sexual excesses and perversions of his day, spoke loathingly of the dandies whose manners, perfumes, and desire make them indistinguishable from women; and by the women who think that emancipation meant that they should be indistinguishable from men (see *The History of Civilization*, Vol. III, *Caesar and Christ*, by Will Durant, 1944, Simon & Schuster, pp. 132,215,251,438,442). In Zephaniah 1:8 God said that he would “punish the officials and the king’s sons and all who array themselves in foreign attire.” It has been thoroughly documented that the world-wide mania for long hair on men and hierarchical equality of women with men is fundamentally a rebellion against the divinely created and revealed order of God for the human race. When God’s people (the church), by their modes of dress, indicate they are more in harmony with the “foreign” (heathen) culture than they are with God’s standards, it is time to apply the teachings of the apostle here in 1 Cor. 11. Notice the words used by the apostle in this context: “dishonors, disgraceful, improper, and degrading.” For women (or men) to rebel against the place God has decreed for femininity or masculinity is serious sin. One cannot give acceptable worship to God in such rebellion. We repeat, the place God has ordered for femininity and masculinity is the basis of Paul’s instruction here. Male dignity (or place) is to lead in society, to protect the weaker gender (female), to provide for the basic unit of society (the family) and to discipline. Female dignity (or place) is to be a mother, to be a helper in many things (Prov. 31); to give sexual intimacy to her husband (1 Cor. 7), to help rear children (Eph. 6:1-4)—in essence, woman’s dignity is to be feminine! In 1 Cor. 11:16 Paul makes the matter of subverting masculinity and femininity as God has revealed it, a matter of disobedience to apostolic practice and that is disobedience to God. Paul does not mean by v. 16, “If anyone objects or wants to argue against what I have said, just forget about it because I didn’t mean it anyway.” Paul is saying that “if any man, after this clear statement from me, is disposed to dispute the divine order of masculinity and femininity, and appears to be contentious, we simply say that we (the apostles) disapprove of the disordering of the places of male and female, and so do the churches of God.” With any person who would dispute Paul’s instruction here, argument is useless. Authority is the only solution to the controversy. Apostolic authority is unquestionable. And no man is justified, except on clearly scriptural grounds, to reject the accepted and practiced customs of the local congregation of believers (see 1 Cor. chs. 8-10).

Yes! Some of the Christians were actually becoming inebriated (drunk) as they had their “Agape feast” and evidently were drunk when they partook of the Lord’s Supper. The

variety of social stations of the members of the Corinthian church evidently became a motive for many of its members to be clique-mongers! Jewish-Christians would be accustomed to rabbinic traditions, a dignified worship service, with women keeping silent (as formerly in their synagogues). Gentile-Christians would be accustomed to the idolatrous services associated with the raucous rites of Dionysus, god of intoxication and revelry—wild orgastic feast where food and wine were consumed in great quantities (see *First Corinthians*, by Paul T. Butler, 1992, College Press, Joplin, MO, pp. 209-212 for more complete notes on this). There were free-men and slaves, high-brow and low-brow, attending the same group-churches (in the 1st century there were no Christian church houses—people met in member's homes) The real problem Paul is dealing with is not drunkenness (although that is bad enough)—the real problem was the Corinthian Christians “choosing up sides” and excluding some from the Lord's Supper because they were not members of a particular “clique” or “social class.”

A serious problem arose about the observance of the Lord's Supper. Apparently there were cliques (small, exclusive groups) forming according to social and economic levels and separating from one another. It is clear that their worship service was preceded by a communal meal (a fellowship supper). Paul says in this very chapter that the worship service in Corinth observed such a meal before worship (11:20-22). By having this fellowship supper they may have thought they were making progress in the Christian commitment. But Paul says they were coming together not for the better but for the worse! They would have been better off not even to have come together to behave as they were. William Barclay writes, “The ancient world was in many ways a much more social world than ours. It was the regular custom for groups of people to meet together for common meals. There was, in particular, a certain kind of feast called an *eranos* in Greek language, to which each participant brought his own share of the food, and in which all the contributions were pooled to make a common feast. The early church had such a custom; they had a feast called the *Agape* or Love Feast. To it all the Christians came, bringing what they could, and when the resources of all were pooled, they sat down to a common meal. It was a lovely custom; and it is to our loss that the custom vanished.” This meal may have grown out of the fact that when Jesus first instituted the Lord's Supper it was in connection with the Passover meal he and his disciples had just eaten. But in the church at Corinth things had gone sadly wrong with the “Love” feast, and, as a consequence, it had defiled their act of partaking of the Lord's Supper. Paul treats this problem with one of the angriest outbursts in the whole epistle. He begins with sarcasm, “When you meet together, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat.”

Some in the Corinthian church began to eat before the others arrived, gorging themselves, consuming most of the provisions, and letting the others go hungry. The “drunken” were probably the wealthy who had the leisure to come early. They fed themselves full, and drank until they became inebriated. How shameful! The “hungry” were probably the slaves, common laborers, foundry workers, tired dockhands, and sick and disabled who were poverty stricken. Most of these would of necessity arrive late for the communal “love feast” in the evening because they had to work until the sun set; these needed the most and received the least. It is scandalous to become drunken at the worship service; it is even worse to be “drunk” with a false sense of superiority and an indifference to the needs of one's Christian brethren. What started as a “love” feast turned out to be an orgy of squabbling, hurt feelings and even drunkenness. This destroyed all possibility of

properly commemorating the Lord's sacrifice in the Lord's Supper. Paul insists that the prostitution of Christian fellowship destroys the true meaning and purpose of the Lord's Supper.

Paul is not prohibiting Christians from having "fellowship suppers" in the church building in 11:22. In the first place, so far as we know historically and archaeologically, there were no buildings built specifically as Christian church-buildings before A.D. 200. The 1st century Christians were meeting in synagogues, in people's private homes (1 Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:5) and school houses (Acts 19:9). Second, it is clear that what Paul condemned was the manner in which they were conducting themselves, not the place of the supper. Paul's suggestion is that if they are going to continue with their insensitive arrogance and gluttony to humiliate their brethren, they should stop the "love feast" and eat in their own homes. The place had nothing to do with their despising the church of God—it was their behavior. Again we read of actions so carnal and shameful in Christians at Corinth we wonder how Paul could call them "brethren." But with only a little soul-searching we all should acknowledge we are "ignorant" and "obstinate" brethren—in differing areas of behavior.

Every Christian is "locked-in" with Christ in a covenant! When a person becomes a Christian he/she takes a vow of discipleship to Christ ("following, learning, obeying"). There are no non-covenant Christians! So, in this text 11:23-26 Paul is emphasizing covenant, not ritual. Some would make the ritual the Christian's covenant. The Lord's Supper is not our covenant—it commemorates our covenant. Isaiah predicted our covenant (Isa. 42:6; 49:8). Isaiah's statement, "I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations," is unquestionably Messianic (Isa. 42:1-4; Matt. 12:18-21) in its context. Jesus Christ, himself, is our covenant. When we observe the Lord's Supper we are remembering that through faith we have appropriated him (Jesus) as our covenant. Of course, observance of the Supper is an act of faith on our part, but neither our faith nor the ritual is our covenant. It is through faith that we have been made partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:3-4). Jesus, himself, dying and atoning for our sins and rising from the dead to supply the new creation of his Spirit within us, is our covenant. How does one partake of a person as a covenant? Through assimilating his word (his Spirit, his will). We "eat the flesh and drink his blood" by believing and obeying his word (John 6:63). It would be of no profit to us even if we could engage in some ritual where we ate the actual, literal, physical flesh and blood of Jesus. It is his will, his personality, his mind-set, his values, and his actions he wants us to assimilate (to partake of, to have koinonia with). Our communion (participation) is in his person, his nature, and must be confined merely to rituals. Participation in the covenant-life of Christ may involve observance of clearly revealed ceremonies or actions specified by Christ or the apostles, but the ceremonies are not the covenant. A covenant is an oath. God's oath in the new dispensation was the Messiah himself (Heb. 6:17, "he interposed himself with an oath" and 2 Cor. 1:20, where Jesus is said to be God's oath of confirmation to all his promises). A covenant is a reconciliation and "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). The ceremony of the Lord's Supper is the weekly reminder that we share in a Divine Person—not a system of rituals.

"Discerning the body" means "to be aware of who and what" the body of Christ (the

church) is in the world at any given moment in time! Discerning the body means knowing and acting upon the Scriptural commandment that every Christian is a “brother” no matter how mature or immature! “Discerning the body” involves more than remembering the crucifixion scene. It involves remembering that “...one died, therefore all died” (2 Cor. 5:14). It involves remembering that “from now on...we regard no one from a human point of view...” (2 Cor. 5:14-21) but from Christ’s point of view! It involves remembering that we participate in the very life of Jesus Christ—that he controls, directs, and orders our lives. When Jesus died, we died—if we accept his death for us. I no longer direct me—Jesus does! Had this been the case in Corinth, one clique would not have arrogantly and greedily disregarded their brethren. They would have waited at the “love feast” for the poor, lower-class, late-comers and would have “counted them better than themselves” for this is the mind of Christ in which Christians are to participate (Phil. 2:3-8). This is the life we are to have in us, being lived out through us. This is being in covenant with Jesus. The Corinthians were faithfully gathering to observe the ritual, but they were not partaking of the covenant! Communion-time is a time for reflecting on (a) Christ’s sacrifice; (b) our own sins—“self-examination”; (c) being aware of and praying for the whole body of Christ—the church; (d) and anticipating his Second Coming with eager hope and love. Discerning the body means Christians, prompted by the Lord’s Supper, are to discern the “body” in its membership, in its koinonia (fellowship). Too often, we focus too much on ourselves, even at the Lord’s Supper. It is in keeping with the intent of Paul’s discussion of the Supper here to have the burdens and needs of other members of the church upon our minds and hearts as we observe it. The less we think of ourselves during the Supper, the more likely we are to observe it as Paul wanted the Corinthians to observe it.

A primary purpose of the Lord’s Supper is, on the basis of Christ’s loving atonement, to stimulate the Christian into an examination of himself and his relationship to the whole body of Christ. This is what Jesus used it for on the very night he instituted it. Non-Christians should not observe the Lord’s Supper. Every Christian who is in a penitent and brotherly-loving attitude should partake of the Lord’s Supper. While no Christian or congregation of Christians has the right to physically bar any individual in attendance from partaking, there should be some (more) explanation and instruction before each Sunday’s observance to those gathered in the church-house as to what the Lord’s Supper is all about and who should partake! We have geared our worship services to such fast-paced brevity in the 21st century that the significance of the Lord’s Supper is not impressed upon Christians attending the congregational meeting! Why shouldn’t non-Christians partake of the Lord’s Supper? (a) because they are not a part of the body of Christ; (b) because they haven’t the slightest understanding of Paul’s statements in places like 2 Cor. 5:14ff, “...the love of Christ controls us because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died; (c) because they will drink judgment upon themselves if they partake with a hostile, impenitent, non-Christian mind-set. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view...” No non-Christian is ever thinking in that frame of mind! No non-Christian ever “discerns the body” and to partake of the Lord’s Supper in such a state of mind means he/she “drinks judgment upon him/herself (1 Cor. 11:29). THE ONE WAY TO DRINK IT IN AN UNWORTHY MANNER IS TO ISOLATE ONESELF FROM THE REST OF THE BODY OF CHRIST IN ATTITUDE AND ACTION. The Greek word from

which we get the English word unworthy isanaxios. Axios is the Greek word from which we get axiom, axiology, and axiomatic. The word in both Greek and English means, “value, proper, good, right, and worth.” It is, therefore, possible to observe the Eucharist in an improper way. To do so makes a person guilty of the body and blood of the Lord—guilty as if the participant had crucified the Lord. The “Supper” should be observed by Christians who have sinned but who are repenting. Past sin should not keep a Christian away from the Communion—it should drive a penitent Christian to it so that he/she may get the right attitude. WHY IS THE CHURCH SO RELUCTANT TODAY TO PAY MORE ATTENTION TO PAUL’S WARNING HERE IN 1 COR. 11? WHY IS THE ACT OF PARTICIPATION IN THE “SUPPER” SO DE-EMPHASIZED TODAY? Seems to this writer, the proper way to observe it in an open congregational worship service would be to have it at the very last of the service and have an elder or the minister explain in some detail what was about to take place, and offer to excuse all those who were not Christians from the auditorium. Would that offend a few? Probably. But which is worse—offend them or have them drink judgment unto themselves.

# TEACHER'S NOTES I CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 12:1-31

Attitude toward “diversity” of talents and ministries is ALL important because MOTIVE for any relationship to Christ is ALL IMPORTANT! The main purpose of this 3-chapter-context (1 Cor. 12-13-14) is not to discuss the nature and possession of spiritual gifts. That some of the Christians at Corinth had supernatural, “spiritual,” gifts is ipse dixit (i.e., a “given”) with Paul. Paul’s primary purpose in these chapters is the correction of faulty attitudes these Christians had toward miraculous gifts. Since Paul is dealing with “diversity” within the body of Christ, these chapters are as relevant as today’s church affairs. Christians are still, today, expressing attitudes toward “diversity of talents and ministries”, and, toward alleged miraculous gifts, and by doing so, disrupting the unity of Christ’s church. Actually, the word “gifts” is not even in the first verse of chapter 12. The Greek text has only the word pneumatikon which should be translated “spiritual things, or matters.” Translators have supplied the word “gifts” in this first verse. It might very well have been translated, “Now concerning the attitude you have toward spiritual matters,” since that is clearly the main point of this whole chapter.

The primary purpose of miraculous gifts was evidential. Miraculous gifts were to confirm the deity of Jesus and to validate the message of the apostles as that of the Holy Spirit. Miracles were not granted to transform, convert or indicate the worker of such miracles had reached a higher phase of sanctification. In the infancy of the church, when congregations everywhere were compelled to depend upon the oral instruction of the apostles and other evangelists, God saw fit to confirm the heavenly origin of their message with miracles (see Heb. 2:3-4; 2 Cor. 12:12; Jn. 3:2; 20:37-38; 14:11; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 14:22, etc.). When the church was still a child, it spake as a child (dependent upon confirmation of its message by its Father); but when the church became a grown, integrated “man” it put away childish things. When the body of Christ (the church) was fully formed and permanently established (incorporating both Jew and Gentile) with elders, deacons, and evangelists, and when the Truth of the New and Final Testament of God in Christ was fully revealed and written down in human language (Greek) in the New Covenant Scriptures, then the miraculous support by which it was sustained in its infancy was no longer needed. Therefore, miraculous gifts passed away! This was according to the pre-ordained plan of God (1 Cor. 13:8-13).

Most certainly, the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were not given to the primitive church to be used as toys for amusement and entertainment. The possession of a miraculous gift was not a signal from God that the possessor was to be elevated in importance above any other Christian brother, gifted or non-gifted. Apparently there was wholesale discrimination and division going on in the Corinthian church over possession and non-possession of miraculous gifts from the Holy Spirit. Those few who had been given these gifts felt they were spiritually superior to those who had not received miraculous gifts. The “gifted” were even discriminating among themselves as to which “gifts” were more



important and which ones were of very little value. It wasn't that they had "gifts" or didn't have them—it was what they THOUGHT about them that mattered to Paul! Some of the "gifted" Corinthian Christians (and sad to say, some Christians 1000's of years later) were even declaring that those without miraculous gifts to exercise could not prove they had the Holy Spirit dwelling in them! YOU SEE HOW RELEVANT THESE CHAPTERS ARE FOR CHRISTIANITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY! No member of the body of Christ, however "ungifted, untalented, unable to minister," is insignificant. ALL "MINISTRIES" TO CHRIST, EVEN A CUP OF COLD WATER IN THE MASTER'S NAME, WILL NOT GO UNREWARDED AND IS AS SIGNIFICANT AS ANY OTHER MINISTRY!

If we are to accept the Bible as the final, complete, authoritative revelation of the Holy Spirit of God for salvation and sanctification, THEN WE MUST SAY THAT ANYONE TODAY WHO CLAIMS TO HAVE A MIRACULOUS GIFT BUT REJECTS OTHER APOSTOLIC DOCTRINE IS NOT REALLY SAYING THAT "JESUS IS LORD." In 12:1 Paul reminds the Corinthians how they were led astray to dumb idols by pagan priests who pretended to have miraculous gifts and divine revelations from "the gods." Archaeologists have found in the ancient city of Pompeii in the ruins of a pagan temple, a secret stair by which the pagan priest mounted to the back of the statue of Isis. The head of the statue shows the tube which went from the back of the head to the parted lips. Through this tube the priest concealed behind the statue spoke the "answers" of Isis. These pagan priests usually tried to prove that only they had the "spirits of the gods" in them by ecstatic trances, pseudo communication with the "gods" by uttering unintelligible muttering; by pretended "prophecies" and by claiming to communicate with the dead. These pagan priests often contradicted themselves and represented the "gods" as cursing what they had once blessed. Heathen priests also promoted hatred, revenge, envy and immorality as part of the religion of the mythical "gods."

The Corinthian Christians were having difficulty determining whether pagan priests possessed the Spirit of God and spoke divine revelations or not. And, further, they were being confused by the self-appointed "spiritual elite" within the church as to whether the non-gifted Christian had the Holy Spirit or not. Paul sets out to clear up the confusion. He takes three chapters (12-13-14) to do so. He begins by stating that "no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says, "Jesus be cursed." PAUL DOES NOT MEAN BY THIS NEGATIVE, A POSITIVE—i.e., HE DOES NOT MEAN THAT EVERY ONE WHO CLAIMS TO HAVE MIRACULOUS GIFTS HAS SUCH GIFTS, SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY DO NOT CURSE THE NAME OF JESUS! All heathen religions would "curse" Jesus, but the Holy Spirit would never contradict Himself, and curse the Son of God. The Corinthians were assured that no pagan priest spoke by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And, since the NT clearly says these gifts have "passed away" (1 Cor. 13:10) we may be assured that no one today speaks, extra-Biblically, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit!

On the other hand, any person who confesses "Jesus is Lord," and exhibits a life surrendered to the lordship of Jesus, does so in partnership with the Holy Spirit! Any person agreeing to be ruled by Christ has the Holy Spirit. One does not have to receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit to have God's Holy Spirit within them. It is only through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit (the written words of the NT) that any person is able to

confess Jesus as Lord. The lordship of Jesus is revealed by the Father through the Holy Spirit (Matt. 11:25-30; 16:17; Jn. 14:1—16:33; Rom. 8:1-17; 1 Jn. 4:1-6, etc.), and the Holy Spirit documents the lordship of Jesus through the written word—the Bible. The lordship of Jesus is not something which men may discover for themselves—it is something which God, in his grace, revealed to the world and is documented nowhere else except in the Bible!

Definitely—Christian unity would be better served by MORE reminders that Christians have absolutely nothing except what has been given them by God and more reminders that what has been given is to be used for the edification (up-building) of the whole body—the church—not just individuals. The word inspires in 12:6 is a translation of the Greek word *energon* which actually means, “energizing, working, or operating.” Paul emphatically declares to the Corinthians that it was the “same God” or “same Spirit” who energized or operated the miraculous gifts works a variety of gifts in other members of the same “body.” These special gifts all came from God and were, therefore, to be used to edify (build up) the church, not to divide and destroy its oneness. These gifts all had their source in the power of One Divine Person, so, there was one purpose (God’s) for their use. If it was the same God who was the Source of all the gifts, then they were all given for the common good (Greek *sumpheron*, literally, “together-profitng”). These gifts (and any other “gifts”—miraculous or non-miraculous) were not given to promote the superiority of those possessing them. They were given to serve every member, one way or another, in the body of Christ. No gift of God to man (talent, possession, etc.) is ever given to be used selfishly for the promotion of human pride or superiority. Gifts are given for service. It may not have been Paul’s intention to teach the doctrine of the Trinity, but the oneness of the threefold personage of the Godhead is certainly delineated when he states, “...the same Spirit...the same Lord...the same God.” Other members of “the body” (church) had non-miraculous gifts to be used to edify the church (see Rom. 12:3-8). Every Christian has a “functional gift.”

The criteria (plural) by which the Holy Spirit distributed (past tense) varieties of miraculous gifts is, as Paul wrote to the Hebrews, (a) “ACCORDING TO HIS OWN (THE HOLY SPIRIT’S) WILL” (see Rom. 12:6; Eph. 4:7; 1 Cor. 12:11; Heb. 2:4), (b) according to the variety of working (1 Cor. 12:5), (c) and according to the needs of the 1st century church, i.e., “the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7). The Holy Spirit did not distribute miraculous gifts simply because some individual Christian in the congregation wanted, and prayed for, a miraculous gift! That is the kind of dogma that is taught in many charismatic congregations today—but it is NOT BIBLICAL! God takes account of no human being’s aspirations or desires in distributing miraculous gifts. HE DOES IT ACCORDING AS HE HAS WILLED. Jesus even gave Judas (before Judas betrayed him) the power to heal and cast out demons (see Matt. 10:1-4).

The church is called the “body” of Christ (the church) because it is an organism, not an organization. The church is an organism, born by the living and abiding word of God on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1ff). That organism is to replicate itself by proclaiming and practicing the redemption attained by Christ in his physical body, until Jesus comes again! Of course the church (Christians) can never add a word, a thought, or a deed to the finished work of Christ’s vicarious death, and the Holy Spirit’s revelation of the NT scriptures. Jesus completed all that forever. But the Lord in that human body was not ending something, he

was beginning a great program which he, himself, in the limitations of a human body, could never complete (i.e., the task of world-wide proclamation of redemption, see Col. 1:24-27). When Jesus was here in his physical body there was no part of human life that his holy nature did not penetrate with the redemptive purpose of God; his incarnation was an invasion of holiness on all fronts and in every aspect of human need. He penetrated every level of life with righteousness; social, political, ecclesiastical, moral, educational and familial. That is the work his “body” the church is commissioned now to do.

An organism is defined: “As any highly complex thing or structure with parts so integrated that their relation to one another is governed by their relation to the whole.” An organism is something alive where the whole exists for the parts, and each part exists for the whole and for all other parts. That is precisely what Paul is saying to the Corinthians in these verses about the church. Albert Plummer writes, “The Church is neither a dead mass of similar particles, like a heap of sand, nor a living swarm of antagonistic individuals, like a cage of wild beasts; it has the unity of a living organism, in which no two parts are exactly alike, but all discharge different functions for the good of the whole. All men are not equal, and no individual can be independent of the rest; everywhere there is subordination and dependence.” Paul is saying that every individual in Christ’s church has some function to discharge, and all must work (Mark 13:34; Eph. 4:15-16) together for the common good. The all-important operation of an organism is unity in loving service. The church is an organic body of which all the parts are moved by a spirit of common interest and mutual affection.

1 Cor. 12:13 does not teach that a person must be “baptized in the Holy Spirit” in order to be saved! It teaches that a person must be “baptized by the command of the Holy Spirit in order to be saved. The Greek preposition *en* (translated “in”) used with the dative case *pneumati* (spirit) should be translated causally (see examples of *en* translated causally at Lk. 24:49; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2) when the context demands it. The Corinthians were not initially immersed in the Spirit. But by the revealed will and command of the Spirit through the apostles they were initially immersed in water unto the remission of sins (Acts 2:38 compared with Acts 18:8 and 22:16, etc.). Some of the Corinthians later received the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. But the possession of miraculous gifts did not necessitate the “immersion in the Holy Spirit.” The immersion (i.e., “baptism”) in the Holy Spirit was administered only by direct endowment of Christ (see Matt. 3:11-12; Lk. 24:48-49; Jn. 1:33; 20:22-23; Acts 2:1-21; 10:44—11:18). Miraculous gifts of the Spirit were incidentally imparted to those (the apostles and Cornelius’ family) who received the “immersion (baptism) in the Spirit.” All other Christians, except the foregoing, who received supernatural endowments, received them by the laying on of the hands of an apostles. Therefore, when Paul says *en heni pneumati*, or “by one Spirit,” he is indicating that all the Corinthians, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, were immersed in water in obedience to the revealed will of the same Spirit of God. His argument is that since they were all obedient to the will of the same Spirit, they are all members of the same body. Any person immersed in water in obedience to the revealed will of the Holy Spirit as preached and written in the NT, is a member of Christ’s body and equally important. Such a person is then personally responsible to the Head (Christ) of the body to use with humility and gratitude any and all endowments (functional gifts) he may have for the edification and increase of the whole “body of Christ.” All who have been immersed into Christ’s body by the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit

through the written word were made to “drink of one and the same Spirit of God” (see Jn. 7:37-39; Isa. 44:3; 55:1; 58:11; Jn. 4:10,13; 6:35; Rev. 21:6; 22:17). All Christians of all ages “drink” of the Holy Spirit without receiving the “baptism of the Holy Spirit.” The NT plainly teaches that “drinking of the Holy Spirit” is the same as “partaking of the Holy Spirit” (Heb. 6:4); as “partaking of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4); as having the abiding, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:23; 1 Jn. 2:24; 3:24); as “eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of God” (Jn. 6:35-63).

God, himself, is the epitome of diversity—although we can’t quite understand it, the “Trinity” (i.e., the three-person-Godhead of Father, Son and Holy Spirit), indicates the Divine Nature is the ultimate of diversity. Paul uses the human body, the physical body, to illustrate the wisdom of diversity. Every organism or body consists of more than one member or organ. And no one member or organ can supply every need the whole body must have to function as a whole. Proper functioning in order to bring about the common good of the whole body requires the contribution of what each member has. Picture what a human body would look like, and how it might function, if it were all ear or all eye! Not only would it be a monstrous looking thing, it would be a malfunctioning thing, perhaps even a dying thing. God made unity, but not uniformity. He did not reduce all human beings (or any of the rest of his creation) down to sameness. Every member cannot have the same function, and, while it may appear that some members have more important functions than others, it is not so. Because one member of the church in Corinth did not have the popular miraculous gift of speaking in a foreign language (or had no miraculous gift at all) he was not to be considered unimportant or unnecessary. If the Corinthian church had received only the miraculous gift of foreign language what a useless body it would have been!

Yes! Every member of Christ’s body (the church) has a function to fulfill! Jesus’ parables presuppose there will be diversity among his disciples, both here on earth and later in heaven (see Matt. 20:1-16; Lk. 19:11-27). In one of Jesus’ parables about his Second Coming to reward his servants, he said it would be “Like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work...” (Mk. 13:34). Since God arranged the organs in that body (the Corinthian church) as he chose, for Christians to rearrange the priorities and functions of the members was rebellion against God. Whatever gifts God gives (miraculous or non-miraculous) he gives not to please men but to fulfill his redemptive purposes for the world. God certainly did not create diversity of functions in the members of the human body to destroy human beings. Neither did Christ’s Spirit give diversity of miraculous and non-miraculous gifts to destroy his church. A body has to have many members to function properly. All members cannot have the same function. But the fulfillment of the body’s purpose must have each member functioning according to its part. The body cannot do without one of its members. The Corinthian church was dividing and destroying itself over the use and abuse of the different miraculous gifts, thinking some were important and some were not needed. Each Christian finds what his/her function is by “asking, seeking, knocking” (Matt. 7:7-8). To “ask” means to be dependent wholly on God’s revealed will (the Bible); to “seek” means to study the Bible comparing what it says with one’s own abilities and preferences and understand that any “gift” (see Rom. 12:6-8) exercised for Christ’s glory is acceptable with God; to “knock” means to persist in fulfilling that function or “gift” until the Lord calls him/her home.

The way to have unity in the midst of diversity is to believe the Scriptures. The very fact of diversity, sanctioned and encouraged by the New Testament scriptures, should preclude the possibility of discord in the body of Christ. Diversity is given by God in order that the members may care for one another. What one lacks another supplies. Where one cannot function, another functions. This text teaches that Christians ought to : (a) realize they need each other; (b) respect each other; (c) sympathize with one another. In the human body God has “adjusted” (Greek *sunekerasen*, lit., “blended” or “mingled together”) all organs and parts of the body in such a way that no organ can be considered inferior or useless or not needed. Those parts of the human body which seem to be weaker we find to be indispensable. One need only to lose the use of an arm, an eye, or even a finger to learn how indispensable each member is. Those parts of the human body we think are less honorable (Gr. *atimotera*), such as the organs of excretion, God invests with greater honor. Some human beings think the human sexual organs to be uncomely and dishonorable, but God has given them the great honor because they have the functions of procreation!

There can be no such thing as isolation in the church. In the body there is no question of relative importance. If any limb or organ ceases to function, the whole body is thrown out of order. This is even more true in the spiritual body (the church). When church members begin to think about their own superiority over one another, the possibility of the church functioning properly is destroyed. If any one member of the body suffers abuse, misuse or non-use, all the other members together suffer some malfunction or loss. If any one member of the body seems to have a more honored (Gr. *doxazetai*, “glorified”) function or gift, the whole body should rejoice together that this member is making his God-given contribution to the common good of the whole body, realizing that from God’s perspective his glorious function is of no more significance than someone else’s non-glorious function. It is not easy for human beings to have the divine perspective. It requires faith! It requires setting the human mind on the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5-17)! It requires the control of the love of Christ over our thoughts until we no longer regard anyone from a human point of view but only by Christ’s point of view (2 Cor. 5:14-21). Men tend to want to categorize, make themselves superior and others inferior, and lord it over one another—but it shall not be so among disciples (“followers”) of Christ (Matt. 20:2-28). The devil will always make the divine perspective concerning gifts, talents, abilities and functions to be impractical and unfair. So the Christian must surrender his evaluations and priorities totally to the direction of the Spirit of God in his word, the Bible. The Christian’s only option is to perceive and classify gifts as the Bible does. **THAT’S THE WAY TO CHRISTIAN UNITY IN THE MIDST OF DIVERSITY!** Paul will go on to say that “CHRIST-LIKE LOVE” is the way to have unity in the midst of diversity (1 Cor. 13:1-13).

# TEACHER'S NOTES I CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-13

Verse 31b of chapter 12 should be verse 1 of chapter 13! In 31b, the Greek word *hyperbole* (English, “hyperbole”) is translated “more excellent.” Literally, the Greek word means, “a throwing beyond—a surpassing.” Paul is going to delineate (in chapter 13) a way to unity in diversity that surpasses all other ways, and that way is *agape-love*. There are four words in the Greek language for love—*storge*, “affection” (e.g. familial love); *phileo*, friendship (e.g., fraternal); *eros*, passion, desire (e.g., sexual love), and *agape*, self-sacrificing, caring (God-like love). Only *phileo* and *agape* appear in the New Testament. Paul uses only *agape* in this chapter. *Agape-love* is not only commanded, but motivated by the love God and Christ, “We love because he first loved us...” (1 Jn. 4:10,19). “For the love of Christ constrains (compels) us...” (2 Cor. 5:14). God created human beings with intellect, will, and emotions. Humans have the ability or faculties to love with *agape*. God demonstrated love in Christ and while he commands us to love, he will not force us to love. Love is the only thing humans really have to “give.” *Agape-love* is a deliberate choice of the will. It is the concentration of every part of our being (intellect, will and emotions) in an obsession to care. It is definitely not physical or circumstantial. It is love which deliberately, by an act of will, chooses its object, and through all circumstances or in spite of them, goes on loving continually. C. S. Lewis says in his book, *The Four Loves*, that *agape-love* is a love that enables humans “to love what is not naturally lovable, lepers, criminals, enemies, morons, the sulky, the superior and the sneering.” It is a love that demands complete self-denial. It is always used when the will is involved. It is the word Jesus used when he commanded, “Thou shalt love thine enemy....” *Agape-love* is the one thing that is completely indestructible; while other things pass away, love lasts. It is not dependent on anything outside itself. If this love really grips our whole being, our Christian experience will be utterly revolutionized.

But why would Paul have to admonish these Christians at Corinth to have love? It is clear from Paul’s whole letter to them that they were acting like “spoiled brats” in a number of behavioral aberrations (i.e., division, sexual improprieties, self-centeredness, litigations, Christian liberties, etc. (1 Cor. chs. 1-11). Now, in chapters 12-14 Paul writes that they were gauging holiness by possession of miraculous gifts (especially by possession of the more spectacular gifts such as speaking in foreign languages), and not by the love expressed in practical living. They were behaving like “brats” just like the Judeans of Isaiah’s day and Paul will quote from Isaiah’s accusations in 1 Cor. 14:20-21 (we will give the exposition of that passage in the notes on 1 Cor. 14). No matter what gifts (miraculous or non-miraculous) a Christian has, the fruit of the Spirit lived out in his life, his spiritual character, is the real yardstick by which to measure his holiness. There is a direct correlation between one’s sanctification and the *agape-love* he/she expresses. There is no relationship between one’s sanctification and the possession of miraculous or non-miraculous gifts. Judas had miraculous powers granted him by Christ (Matt. 10:1ff). Further proof of the foregoing statement is in behavior of these Corinthians! They had all the miraculous gifts available (1

Cor. 1:7)—there were no more miraculous gifts God willed they should have! But still they ended up described as the most carnal church in the New Testament! Gifts serve their purpose only when they are governed by agape-love. It is character, not charisma that counts! It is goodness, not gifted-ness that really matters. God can give gifts to anyone (even to Judas, king Saul or Baalam), but God has so made his creatures that they may give or withhold their love. In the ultimate analysis, humans are free to love God or despise him, and, therefore, responsible for their own character. When time ends and Jesus comes again, men will go right on being in character what they have chosen to be, as John wrote in Revelation, “Let the evildoer still do evil and the righteous still do right...” (Rev. 22:10-11).

Even if a Christian had supernatural power to talk in the language of angels, predict the future, know and understand everything there is to know, have miraculous power to remove all obstacles, give away all his earthly goods and become a martyr, but did not have agape-love, what would he be? He would only be a noise (Gr. *chalkos echon e kumbalon alazon*, “brassy-hollow, tinkling cymbal”). Eloquence, erudition, and oratory may command admiration, but only love really communicates to the heart. Gifted (i.e., charismatic) human beings without love will only embitter the lives of other people because without love there is the inevitable self-centeredness which produces exploitation, cruelty, envy, hatred, and fighting. Love is the tie that binds all other virtues of the human personality together in harmony and stability. The loveless person is a spiritually unbalanced person. The church at Ephesus (ca. A.D. 100) was a shocking picture of busyness, patience, discernment, toil, endurance—but absolutely without the power to meet the “soon to come to pass” waves of persecution, tribulation, false teaching and carnality of the pagan Roman empire because it had left the love it had at first!

This (1 Cor. 13:4-7) is the most profound definition of love to be found in all of literature! It defines love from both its positive and negative aspects. Of course, the greatest expression of love to be found in all of history is the willing vicarious death of the sinless Jesus Christ on Calvary’s cross. This passage (1 Cor. 13:4-7) defines what Jesus did on that cross! Paul first defines agape-love negatively as: (a) not impatient; love suffers and waits. Love refuses to give way to anger and vindictiveness. Love waits, hoping for repentance. Love is not resentful when treated unjustly. Love is David with Saul—Christ with the Pharisees and his ignorant, insensitive early disciples. Love never gives up, never dies—it goes on and on; (b) not unkind. Some patiently endure wrong out of obstinacy, but to be kind to the person who has done the wrong is the victory of agape-love. Barclay says, “There is so much Christianity which is good but unkind.” The Greek word translated “kind” is *chresteuetai* which means literally, “serviceable, good, useable.” In other words, kindness means action, service, giving. The greatest good a Christian can ever do this side of heaven is to be kind to people (Lk. 10:29-37; Matt. 25:31-46). William Penn said, “I expect to pass through life but once. If therefore there is any kindness I can show or any good thing I can do to any fellow being let me do it now and not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.” (c) not jealous. Only agape-love can see all the inequalities of life and remain content with its own place. Paul learned contentment in whatever state he found himself (Phil. 4:11-13). Where there is no agape love, there will inevitably be envy, jealousy and hatred. Absence of agape-love left Cain open to envy and produced the first murder in human history. In its baser form, jealousy not only desires what others have, but being

unable to attain it, begrudges the good others have. It does not even care so much that it does not have these things as it wishes others had not gotten them. Agape-love rejoices when others have good fortune. (d) not boastful. The Greek word here is *perpereutai* and is used only in this one place in the NT. In classical Greek it means, “windbag” or “braggart” and Moffatt has translated it, “...does not make a parade of itself.” Love does not “show off.” Love is quiet, unassuming, and humble. When love does anything it does not do it for praise or the applause of others. Love is not conceited. (e) not arrogant. The Greek word for arrogant is *phusioutai*, literally, “puffed up.” Love is not contemptuous of others. Love is not the Pharisee who thanks God he is not like publicans (Lk. 18:9-14). Love is not obsessed with self-importance. Give a man a little earthly authority or position and one soon sees whether he has love or arrogance. (f) not rude. The Greek words are *ouk aschemonei*, meaning literally, “does not act unbecomingly, or, without graciousness.” There is the type of Christian who thinks really loyalty to the Bible means one must act bluntly, candidly, without tact and charm, almost brutally. There may be candidness there, but there is no winsomeness. Love is courteous, tactful, polite, and respectful without compromising truth. Love applies the “Golden Rule.” Love makes it possible to be right without being rude. (g) never insisting on its own way. The Greek reads: *ou zetei ta heautes*; love is willing to sacrifice its own interests for that of others. Love does not demand its own rights (even though it may have some) above those of others. Barclay writes: “In the last analysis, there are in this world only two kinds of people—those who are continually thinking of their rights and those who are continually thinking of their duties...those insisting on their privileges and those who are remembering their responsibilities.” There can never be true love where there is the “Me first” attitude (see Phil. 2:3-4). (h) not irritable. The Greek word is *paroxunetai*, from which we get the English word *paroxysm*, which means, “a fit, an attack, a convulsion of emotion.” The words “easily angered” as in NIV are not in the Greek text. Barclay translates, “Love never flies into a temper fit.” Having a paroxysm of exasperation is an indication of the absence of agape-love. (i) not resentful. The Greek phrase is, *ou logizetai to kakon*, literally, “...does not keep books or an account-ledger of evil.” Love will always keep a record of the many kindnesses it receives, but never a record of wrongs done to it. Love does not nurse grudges; it makes a concerted effort to forget all wrongs done to it. WE WILL DEAL WITH THE OTHER ATTRIBUTES OF THE DEFINITION OF LOVE IN SUCCEEDING QUESTIONS.

**YES! A CHRISTIAN NOT ONLY MAY BUT MUST LOVE WITHOUT “FEELING” LIKE DOING SO!** God loved us when we were unloving and unlovable (Rom. 5:6-11). We are to “welcome (i.e., love) one another...as Christ has welcomed us” (Rom. 15:7)—and which of us thinks that Christ “felt” like going to the cross? (see John 12:27; Lk. 12:49-50; Matt. 26:36-39). Agape-love can be commanded by Christ because he earned the right to command us to love like he did. The “love of God” is defined as “keeping God’s commandments” (1 Jn. 5:3). The very essence of agape-love is caring, helping, sacrificing self when one does not “feel” like it! **IF HUMAN BEINGS (INCLUDING CHRISTIANS) ALWAYS CARED AND HELPED OTHERS WHEN THEY “FELT” LIKE IT, VERY LITTLE AGAPE-LOVE WOULD BE DISPENSED!** Most of us can find a score of excuses as to why we can’t or shouldn’t lend a helping hand, etc., to our nearest neighbors when they are in difficulty! And why do we find it so much easier to “send money” across the ocean to help the needy when we have scores of “needy” living right in our own neighborhoods or towns?



CHRISTIANS MUST LEARN, LIKE THE “GOOD SAMARITAN,” TO HELP THOSE WHO NEED HELP RIGHT AT HAND! Yes! “Feelings” can be controlled by thoughts! Love can be commanded! Paul, the ex-Jewish-rabbi, had to control his “feelings” to preach to, eat with, and associate with Gentiles! WE CAN, TOO!

(j) is not rejoicing at wrong, but rejoicing in the right. The Greek word translated wrong is *adikia* and means, injustice. Moffatt translates, “Love is never glad when others go wrong; love is gladdened by goodness.” Love never rejoices when wrong or injustice has been done! Love doesn’t delight in exposing the weaknesses and sins of other people. Love will agonize over the sin and condemn the sin, but will always yearn to convert and protect the person who has sinned. Love wants all people to always do what is right and just. Some people get a certain malicious pleasure in hearing about someone else’s fall or trouble. Love does not do that. Love wants the truth. Love is brave enough to face the truth. Love wants justice done in matters on this earth. Love has nothing to conceal and is glad when the truth prevails. But love always uses the truth to build up society and individuals. Love will always stand for what is right. Love will sacrifice self for the right. Love will never compromise what is right even if it hurts self or someone else! Think about all the “feelings” that Jesus must have hurt when he said and did the truth (e.g., John 2:4; 7:6-8; 8:39-47; Matt. 12:39; 15:15; 15:26; 16:23; 23:1-39; Lk. 24:25-26, etc.). C. S. Lewis wrote, “To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy, or at least to the risk of tragedy, is damnation, the only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell.”

Love wants to believe all things! But agape-love is not blind gullibility. It does not follow every kind of doctrine. Love speaks the truth (Eph. 4:11-16). Love is discriminating and rejoices only in the truth. But love is not innately suspicious. Love strives to ascribe the best motives to others in their actions. Love looks for the best in everyone and everything. Love takes people at their word and always hopes in their trustworthiness, as long as it can, and then mourns over those who stumble and fall. True, agape-love, God-like love, cannot possibly believe what is manifestly false! True love wants the truth, it wants the facts, and WILL NOT BE CREDULOUS ABOUT EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE! Paul wrote, “...test everything; hold fast what is good, abstain from every form of evil.” 1 Thess. 5:21. The apostle John wrote, “Beloved, do not believe every Spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 Jn. 4:1ff). Jesus told his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves” (Matt. 7:15). EVEN JESUS DID NOT “BELIEVE” (TRUST) EVERYONE (Jn. 2:23-25). All alleged “revelations” from God outside the Bible are false! That is absolutely and unequivocally true, for the Bible says so! That would include the Koran, the book of Mormon, and all the so-called “revelations” from God by the alleged charismatic “tongues-speakers and prophets.” True love would not want to believe what God has called it false!

The text 13:8-12 clearly states that these miraculous gifts would stop! They would fulfill their purpose and cease to exist. The question is: when were these gifts to stop? Again, this text clearly says the first were “imperfect” (Greek, *merous*, “in part”). Verse 11 states the gifts were for an “infant” church (Gr. *nepios*, lit. “without the power of speech”—see Matt. 21:16; 11:25; Rom. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:1; Heb. 5:13). If we are to believe the Bible, miraculous gifts were never intended to be universal or perpetuated beyond the lifetime of the apostles. Miraculous gifts were never given to all believers. They were never to heal all believers, edify or deliver all believers. There are clear indications that Christians could be endowed with miraculous gifts only through the laying on of the hands of the apostles (Acts 8:14-24). The “infant” church had difficulty in two areas (a) in believing that Jews and Gentiles were acceptable to God on the same terms (faith, repentance and immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins), without the law of Moses. Judaizers constantly harassed the church insisting their message of circumcision and the Law was the true way to salvation. So the message of the gospel had to be confirmed by miracles before the church could ever be fully weaned from the infantilism of the Law to the manhood of the gospel (Gal. 3:23—4:7; Eph. 4:11-16; Heb. 5:11—6:12). When the church finally shed its immaturity (and when God destroyed the threat of Judaism by destroying Jerusalem and the Jewish nation at the hands of the Romans in A.D. 70) miracles were no longer needed; (b) the church of the 1st century had difficulty distinguishing between true apostolic doctrine and all the false doctrines circulating about the Messiah and his kingdom. Once the apostolic teaching was put on record (written in our New Testament books) and verified by miraculous manifestations, they could test, check, try all other “religious” claims to be from God against the writings of the New Testament. And the church of A.D. 100-500 would also be able to simply check the New Testament Scriptures during the proliferation of pagan cults in the Roman empire claiming to be “speaking divine revelations.” After the NT Scriptures were completed there was no longer any need for these miracles. Miracles evidently passed away as the generation of believers upon whom the apostles had laid their hands passed away, for there is no divine sanction for perpetuating miracles beyond the hands of the apostles. Paul uses the Greek word *katagethesontai* to declare the gifts of prophecy and knowledge will be abolished. The Greek word literally means, “reduced to inactivity.” When he says tongues will cease he uses the Greek word *pausontai*, meaning “to stop, to make an end.” They are strong, unequivocal words, predicting the cessation of miraculous gifts.

The miraculous gifts were partial (“imperfect”) and temporary (“will pass away”). When the perfect thing (Gr. *teleion*) came, the partial thing (Gr. *to ek merous*) was abolished (Gr. *katargethesetai*). The Greek word *teleion* is a noun in the neuter gender. It should not, therefore, be translated to mean, “when Christ comes again.” The word *teleion* is not referring, either grammatically or contextually, to a person, but to some “thing.” The word *teleion* means, “that object which has reached its goal; that which has matured or come to its fulfillment.” It does not mean that person (i.e., Christ) who is sinless! The “perfect thing” in this context is referring to the mature church; the church which no longer needs miraculous confirmation of the apostolic message. The perfected, matured church will have had enough miraculous confirmations and guidance to acknowledge that the Judaizers, Gnostics, Nicolaitans, and other aberrant religious teachings are false. The perfected, matured church will know that neither Gentiles nor Jews need to keep the Law of Moses to be members of Christ’s body. The church in its “manhood” will be able to eat and digest the strong “meat” of

the final, complete, New Testament scriptures. The mature church will realize that agape-love is the surpassing way to sanctification and evangelism—and that possession of miraculous gifts is not the way! When spiritual maturity came, with the completed, integrated church, from the completed apostolic revelation, from perfected Christ-like love, the church reasoned or thought (Gr. *elogizomen*) like a man (Gr. *gegona aner*) 13:11, abolishing the things of the infant (Gr. *katergeka ta tou nepiou*). As long as the church was spiritually immature, it spoke like an infant (Gr. *elaloun hos nepios*), it thought like an infant (Gr. *elogizomen hos nepios*).

As long as the church was infantile, unable to distinguish between true and false without miraculous guidance, it was not seeing the whole picture of redemption and sanctification. Paul says in 13:12, the infant church was then seeing only a dim reflection (Gr. *esoptrou*, “in a mirror). The Greek word *ainigmati* is translated “darkly” in the KJV and “dimly” in the RSV, but it is the word from which the English word “enigma” comes. Enigma means, “puzzling, perplexing, questionably, or obscurely.” As long as the infant church was eager for miraculous manifestations of the Spirit in preference to agape-love and the completed scriptures, they could never see themselves or circumstances as they really were. Minus the completed apostolic word of God, the early church saw only a dim reflection of the whole “picture” of redemption. That completed apostolic word was not in existence until the apostle John wrote his Gospel, his 3 epistles, and the book of Revelation—all not completed until approximately A.D. 90-100.

Paul is saying that as soon as the completed apostolic revelation had been written down, the church would see the whole scheme of redemption and sanctification—it would no longer be enigmatic—and the church would grow and mature through agape-love, and the temporary, partial manifestations of the Spirit would cease to exist for the church. When the faith was “once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) the church could distinguish true “spirits,” i.e., “apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers” from false ones by the completed apostolic word (see 1 Jn. 4:1-6). God granted to the church in his word all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:2-4). God has given in the completed scriptures everything the church needs to make the man of God complete, thoroughly furnished (equipped) for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The church in its mature manhood, without miraculous gifts of its infancy, may now look in the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere (Jas. 1:22-25). The church may now see the whole picture of redemption and sanctification—in the NT scriptures it lacks nothing that pertains to life and godliness. The aim of the apostolic message and ministry is not miraculous manifestations of the Spirit, but “love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith (1 Tim. 1:5).

**LOVE IS SUPERIOR TO FAITH AND HOPE BECAUSE IT WILL NEVER “FALL.”**  
The Greek word translated “fail” is *pipitei* and means, “fall.” Love never falls down—there is nothing temporary about love. Love never loses its strength and power—it is inexhaustible. Love never leaves its place—it is unassuming and immovable. Faith possesses the past by giving us a conviction of things not seen. Hope claims the future, and looks beyond to the glory not yet realized. But love is the goal God has for us for all eternity. And faith and hope are the means to the end which is love. Paul does not mean that love will outlast faith and hope. He does not mean that faith and hope will someday cease. Faith and hope and love

will all go on as long as our relationship to Christ lasts—for eternity. We will trust, put our hope in, and love God in heaven, forever. But love is the greatest. Faith and hope serve to develop godliness, but love IS godliness, for “God is love” (1 Jn. 4:16). Our possessions and “gifts” we leave behind us. Only godliness abides. At the gates of death we will lay down forever the various weapons and tools which God, in his marvelous grace, has put into our hands for this earthly pilgrimage. But we will carry through the pearly gates the moral and spiritual character which the Holy Spirit, through the conflicts and testings of life has developed within us through his word. Faith, hope and love abide—but the greatest is love. MAKE LOVE YOUR AIM (1 Cor. 14:1).

# TEACHER'S NOTES I CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 14:1-40

It will be profitable at the start of this chapter to reiterate the fundamental principles of Biblical interpretation: (1) the true interpretation is what the author intended to say; (2) the Bible is written in human language—if human language is to mean anything at all it must (granting differences in structure) mean the same thing to all human beings; (3) each passage must be understood in the light of its historical background, its grammatical structure, and parallel words of passages; (4) each word, paragraph, chapter, is to be understood according to its context; (5) and each passage is to be interpreted in the light of the whole scheme of redemption (the entire Bible)—remember, Paul expected all the Corinthians to understand him alike, and God expects all human beings to understand the Bible alike! Remember, also, the teaching of this chapter (along with chs. 12 & 13) was given to promote unity among Christians. Unity could only result when all the Christians at Corinth understood and obeyed the will of God as expressed in this teaching (and the same is true for the church today). Understanding and obeying the will of God revealed in the scriptures is still the only basis for Christian unity.

The Greek word *prophetes* (transliterated in English “prophecy”) is literally in Greek, “forth-speaking.” It can include predicting the future, but does not necessarily have to. In Rom. 12:6 it is clear from the context that the word *propheteian* must mean “preaching” and does not include the miraculous power to predict the future. In Rom. 12:6 it is a “functional” (Greek, *praxin*) gift along with serving, teaching, exhorting, contributing, giving aid, etc. In our context in 1 Cor. 14:1-40 *prophetes* clearly includes the miraculous power to predict or to reveal a message directly from God. Whether it was merely preaching and teaching, or predicting, or all, it was under the inerrant direction of the Holy Spirit in order to deliver to the 1st century church an infallible directions from God. Remember, the church in A. D. 50-51 when Paul was writing 1 Corinthians probably didn’t have the completed apostolic New Testament. If there were any hand-written copies of any of the Gospels in A. D. 50, they would have been so few that most congregations far away from Palestine wouldn’t have a written copy. Besides there were many false teachers circulating around, following the apostles wherever they went that it was an absolute necessity that Christian congregations have a few people who could teach and preach inerrantly and infallibly, the will of God directly from the Holy Spirit. When the apostles (esp. Paul) established a Christian congregation in a city or village, they didn’t stay there—they appointed and anointed certain people with miraculous powers to “discern” false teaching and to “prophecy” true teaching.

The Greek text of 14:1, like the Greek of 12:1, says, *zeloute de ta pneumatika, mallon de hina propheteuete*, literally, “be zealous for the spiritual things, and rather, in order that you may prophesy.” Once again, as in 12:1, the word “gifts” (Gr. *charismata*) is omitted. The most spiritual “thing” to want is the desire to edify others—that is done by teaching (i.e., prophesying). The apostle warns that speaking in a tongue (Gr. *glosse*, “a language”) usually resulted in utterance of a non-understandable message. The Greek word *musterion*,

transliterated “mystery” in 14:2 means, “that which is un-revealed,” and does not mean that which is un-knowable. A misterion would be knowable if revealed, or interpreted or translated. The word “unknown” (supplied in KJV) is not in any Greek text, and should not have been supplied since it is not stated anywhere in the NT that 1st century “tongues” were non-human, unknowable utterances!!! Of course, God knows all human languages, dialects, phonics or “tongues” (see Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 9:11; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 16:16; 17:15 where tongue or glosson, is used clearly to mean human languages). When one of the Corinthian Christians spoke with “OTHER tongues” (Gr. heterais glossais, Acts 2:4; and heteroglossois, 1 Cor. 14:21) he was, in reality, not talking to his fellow Christians because he was talking in a foreign human language, but he was talking with God since God understands all languages. When a Christian in the Corinthian church spoke in an “other tongue (language)” he was not even speaking to himself—unless there was someone present who had the miraculous gift of interpreting that language! Paul emphatically admonishes Christian women to keep silent and not teach in the church (1 Cor. 4:34; 1 Tim. 2:11-12). There would have been no apostolically authorized women with the gift of “tongues” (miraculous foreign languages), or “prophecy.” Very much in contrast with all the alleged women “tongues speakers” and “prophets” in some modern churches! The only way a Christian in Corinth (“speaker” or “listener” could learn anything from an “other tongue (language)” was if the message was interpreted. When an interpreter was not present, the “gift” of speaking in another (foreign, human) language, the speaker exercised his/her “gift” only for God’s benefit (since it had not been translated and could not be understood by no one else— not even the speaker). When there was no translator present, speaking in a language foreign to the speaker resulted, for the speaker, in a purely subjective experience. The “gift” of “tongues” was experiential only for the speaker—and that only in a limited sense if he did not have the gift of interpretation. Paul is pointing in this context, to the superiority of the gift of prophesying over the gift of speaking in a foreign tongue—THUS TO SPEAK ONLY FOR PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IS TO ABUSE THE GIFT! Contrary to the very limited, often self-centered, profitableness of speaking foreign languages by miracle, the gift of prophecy, since spoken in the vernacular of the audience, speaks to all for edification, encouragement and consolation. Prophecy did not need a translator; it could be understood by all!

Paul was willing that the gift of “languages” be practiced by all the male Corinthian Christians as he would qualify their use in 14:6-34. However, the Greek word thelo (14:5) translated “I would, I wish, or I want” is a present active indicative verb and is better translated, “I am willing.” He was “willing” that tongues be spoken only if translated (“interpreted”). But he was “more” (Gr. mallon, “rather”) willing that the gift of prophecy be exercised. The one who prophesied was greater than the one who spoke in untranslated, foreign language, because prophecy edified everyone. If the untranslated language was translated, then the church was edified. And, we note, the words “some one” in the RSV are not in the Greek text. The “one” who speaks in the untranslated language is to be interpreted (Greek ektos ei me diermaneun, “except unless he interprets”). The moment language was translated and understood by the whole church it became, in essence, a prophecy (a revelation, a teaching). What, then, was the need for speaking in foreign languages? As we shall see in another section, this gift was primarily and exclusively to be used as a sign for unbelievers and the spiritually immature.

We know Paul is talking about knowable, human languages because of Acts 2:1-13! Please be advised that the same Greek words Paul used (i.e., glossais “tongues or languages” and phones “sounds”) in 1 Cor. 14 are the exact same words used of the apostles “speaking in tongues” in Acts 2:1-13. AND IN ACTS 2:1-13 WE ARE TOLD THAT THEIR AUDIENCE WAS “BEWILDERED BECAUSE EACH ONE HEARD THEM SPEAKING IN HIS OWN LANGUAGE” (RSV). As a matter of fact, the Greek text of Acts 2:1-13 uses the Greek words, idia dialekto to explain they were hearing “tongues” (foreign languages) in their own dialect! There were people in that audience in Jerusalem from Parthia, Media (Persia), Elam, Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, Pontius, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya, Cyrene, visitors from Rome, Cretians, Arabians. The audience repeated three times their amazement that the apostles were speaking in languages and dialects they could understand! Second, Paul uses the Greek word phthongos (translated “words” in RSV & NIV and “sound” in KJV) in Rom. 10:18 to describe the fact that the message of God had gone, in words (human languages) able to be understood, unto the ends of the earth. Paul uses the same Greek word phthongos in 1 Cor. 14:7 when he is discussing “speaking in tongues.” We have already mentioned the many uses of the Greek word glosson, etc., by John the apostle in Revelation when he is clearly referring to foreign languages (Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 9:11; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 16:16; 17:15). We have already mentioned, also, the fact that there is no Greek word in the entire text of 1 Corinthians chapter 14 that might possibly be translated “unknown.” The Greek word that is always used with glosson is hetero which means, “other” and “other” for Paul in Corinth would mean “other” than Greek, Latin or Hebrew—it would mean all those “foreign languages” mentioned in Acts 2:1-13 and probably many “others.” GOD DOES NOT COMMUNICATE TO HUMAN BEINGS IN NON-HUMAN LANGUAGES! HE DOES NOT COMMUNICATE IN “UNINTELLIGIBLE” SOUNDS. THAT’S THE WHOLE POINT OF PAUL’S USE OF THE METAPHORS, “BUGLES, FLUTES, AND HARPS” GIVING UNINTELLIGIBLE SOUNDS!

Reasons the modern phenomenon called glossolalia “speaking in tongues” is not the miraculous speaking in “tongues” of the 1st century church:

Scriptural reasons cited above.

Today’s phenomenon is not received by the laying on of the hands of an apostle.

Ecstatic, esoteric glossolalia similar to alleged Christian glossolalia has been practiced, and is being practiced, by pagans in ancient and modern times (Hittites, Phoenicians, Egyptians, Greeks, East Africans, Islamics, American Indians, Caribbean voodoo practitioners, and many others).

Ecstatic gibberish has been practiced by a multitude of different religious groups who have fundamental doctrinal aberrations when compared with the Bible (Roman Catholics, Mormons, Jews, cultists of all varieties). The Spirit of God would not contradict his apostolic word, nor would he give credence by miraculous manifestations to these apostate religious groups.

Writings of the early church “fathers” (immediately after the 1st century) indicate

Biblical “tongues” were not manifested in their time (Irenaeus, Origen, Chrysostom, Augustine of Hippo—see *The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues*, by John P. Kildahl, 1972, Harper & Row, pp. 14-15).

In the history of modern, so-called “tongues” of the alleged “charismatic-movement” there are no scientifically confirmed recordings of anyone speaking in a foreign language which he had never learned (Kildahl, *op.cit.* p. 39).

Dr. Kildahl, in order to investigate “interpretations” played a taped example of tongues-speech privately for several different “interpreters.” In no instance was there any similarity in the several “interpretations.” (Kildahl, *op.cit.* p. 63).

Kildahl writes of a man reared in Africa, of missionary parents, who decided to test the “interpretation of tongues.” He attended a tongues-speaking meeting where he was a complete stranger. At the appropriate moment, he rose and spoke the Lord’s Prayer in the African dialect he had learned in his youth. When he sat down, an “interpreter of tongues” at once offered the meaning of what he had said. He “interpreted” it as a message about the imminent second coming of Christ!

Personal friends of mine, of the so-called “charismatic” persuasion, and books in my personal library from “charismatic” practitioners, offer instruction on how one may learn by human means, the act of tongues-speaking. How does one learn that which is miraculous?

Much modern, so-called, tongues-speaking of the “charismatic movement” is allegedly not under conscious control of the person who allegedly speaks and yet this very chapter (1 Cor. 14:26-33) says speaking in a “foreign language” must be under the control of the person doing the speaking so that such a one may “keep silent” when another is speaking and they may determine who is to speak and when they are to speak..

According to one former member of a tongues-speaking denomination, 85% of modern, so-called tongues-speaking is done in the public assemblies, by women. Yet Paul directs (14:33-36) that women should be silent in the public assemblies.

Reading 1 Cor. 14 one might think Paul’s main subject is “tongues”—but it is the superiority of prophecy. In these verses the apostle illustrates and explains further the inferiority of tongues to prophecy. Some Bible readers forget the main issue here and assume the emphasis is on tongues. Speaking in “tongues” (yes, foreign languages) never edifies anyone unless they understand the “tongue” (foreign language)! Paul could have spoken to the Corinthians, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in a multitude of foreign languages (1 Cor. 14:18) but evidently he did not have the power to translate these “tongues.” Even though he could speak in more tongues than any of them, he would have benefitted no one except himself, subjectively, and God, unless the tongues could have been translated into a revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching. Paul’s instruction is that five words spoken in a language all hearers could understand with their minds were worth more than 10,000 words which were unintelligible to the hearers, although spoken by direct miracle from God.



Imagine a Japanese Army bugle call for “chow” being blown even by an American soldier at an American Army camp! Such a bugle call would be an enigma (remember! Paul used this word enigma in 13:12 to characterize these miraculous gifts). Musical instruments which do not give distinct, recognizable notes (i.e., Greek, phthongois) and bugles which do not give recognizable calls (Greek, phonen, from which the English word “phonetics” comes) are not only useless, they are confusing and thus harmful. Paul uses the Greek word diastolen, “distinct,” to characterize the function of musical instruments. It is the word from which we get the English word stole, and literally means, “a vestment worn by someone to distinguish them from others.” He uses the word adelon to characterize misuse of a bugle and the word means, “indistinct, not obvious, uncertain.” THE WHOLE POINT OF THIS IS THAT “TONGUES” NOT TRANSLATED ARE INDISTINGUISHABLE! Thus they cannot edify! In 14:9 Paul suggests that those with the gift of “tongues” not speak in the public assembly unless they may specifically speak a clear word (Greek, eusemon logon, literally, “a word well-signified”). Foreign languages without interpretation are not clear signals—they are undistinguishable sounds.

Those Corinthian Christians who clamored for the gift of tongues because it was spectacular, were abdicating the only means of building Christ’s church— intelligible communication. The Greek word here for “tongues” is glossa; the Greek word for “speaking” is lalon. Modern “charismatics” have combined the two words into one, glossolalia, to denote modern alleged, “tongues-speaking.” But, we repeat, the word glossolalia is not found in the New Testament! There is a distinct difference, literally, between the three Greek NT words ho lalon glosse and the modern word glossolalia, and there is also a difference in the connotations implied. Needless to say, then, there is a distinct difference between what was practiced in the 1st century and alleged today. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint, or LXX), the word glossa is used for (a) the human organ of speech, the tongue; and (b) the language of a known people, but never for some ecstatic, esoteric babble. The same is true of the NT in Acts 2:8. The Greek word gene refers to a “family” or genre (genealogy) of glossa (14:10). This indicates that the tongues being spoken by the Corinthians were clearly distinguishable one from another and were not unknowable, but one family or genre of human language or another.

The Greek word hermeneuo (used in 14:5,13,26,27, etc.) is not used in the Bible to mean the interpretation of an unknowable language into a known language. The word hermeneuo always means to translate words from one knowable language into another knowable language (cf. John 1:38,42; 9:7; see also Ezra 4:7) so that there may be an understanding (see also Matt. 1:23; Mark. 5:41; 15:22,34; Acts 9:36; 13:8; Heb. 7:2; 2 Pet. 1:20). When the word hermeneuo is translated, “translate,” we see clearly that Paul is talking about knowable languages being translated into other knowable languages, and not about alleged “unknown” and unknowable gibberish. Paul warns, “Therefore, he who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to translate.”

Paul explains in this text that even the bona fide speaking in foreign languages by miraculous gift is unfruitful as far as intelligent communication is concerned, unless there is a translator present. When a Corinthian Christian prayed in a foreign language he did not know, his spirit might receive some emotional, subjective excitation, but there would be

nothing by which his mental, spiritual growth (edification) could proceed. Speaking in a foreign language without a translator did not bring the mind into play, and anything said would bear no edifying fruit to the congregation. The same principle is true of all singing in congregational worship. Singing is a means of instructing the congregation unto edification (see Eph. 5:19 with 1 Cor. 14:15-16). If the singing is unintelligible, for any reason, it is foolish to say, “Amen,” because no instruction or edification has taken place. Edification cannot take place without instruction!

Paul quotes Isaiah 28:11-12 in this discussion (14:20-15) to accentuate the spiritual immaturity of those seeking “tongues.” Not only did the obsession for the spectacular gift of tongues-speaking (untranslated) show these Corinthians would abdicate intelligent communication, it also accentuated their spiritual immaturity (see 1 Cor. 3:1ff). To speak in a language without translating, only for the speaker’s glory, and to elevate egotism over “line upon line, precept upon precept” processes of instruction is not only immature, it is a sign of unbelief! So, Paul starts this paragraph with an admonition for the Corinthian Christians to “grow up”! They were not to have a child’s “show-off” mentality. He did want them to be infant-like (Gr. nepiazete) in evil, but he wanted them at the same time, to be “mature” (Gr. teleioi, “perfected, complete, matured, reach-the-goal”) in phresin, or mentality.

It is significant that Paul quotes from the prophet Isaiah (14:21) and calls it “the law.” He is emphasizing that prophecy in the OT was just as authoritative as the law of Moses! But the significance of Isaiah’s prophecy here is the context from which it came. Paul’s quotation of Isaiah 28:11-12 comes from the prophet’s reproach of his Hebrew contemporaries (750-700 B.C.) who kept asking for miraculous signs that Jehovah was going to deal with them in judgment as the prophets kept insisting he was. Isaiah’s people were, for the most part, “unbelievers.” The covenant people would not (except for a small remnant) accept the “line upon line, precept upon precept” teaching of the prophets. They scoffed at that kind of repetitive instruction as fit only for babies. And they were angry that the prophets inferred they were babies. They considered themselves sophisticated and mature. God said through Isaiah, in effect, “You are wrong: line upon line, precept upon precept is not for babies, but for the mature. The spectacular is for babies, and I am going to show you something spectacular since that is the only way some of you will believe. I am going to deliver you into captivity and you will hear foreign languages. Your hearing foreign languages will be evidence that the ‘line upon line’ teachings of the prophets were for spiritual maturation.” Isaiah was talking to “inside unbelievers” when he wrote to the Jews in 700 B.C., and that is precisely why Paul quotes Isaiah here. Isaiah was talking about spiritual maturity as opposed to childish “unbelief,” and that is the very purpose Paul had in quoting it here to these childish, unbelieving Corinthian Christians. **THIS APPLIES TO MODERN, ALLEGED, “CHARISMATIC” SPEAKING IN TONGUES—IT IS A CLEAR SIGN OF SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY—AND MODERN “TONGUES” ARE NOT MIRACULOUS FOREIGN LANGUAGES AS IN PAUL’S DAY!**

There were two kinds of people in the Corinthian church. There were the believers who welcomed “line upon line” teaching. They believed the repeated messages of the “apostles and prophets” and did not need continual miracles to remain steadfast in the faith. Then there were the “unbelievers” inside the church who had to have miracles at every public

worship or they did not think they could maintain their faith. God was displeased even with the Old Dispensation people who put him to the test beyond what they should have (see 1 Cor. 10:9; Exodus 17:7, and Heb. 3:7-19). Jesus called the Jews who kept on asking for miraculous signs, “an evil and adulterous generation” (Matt. 12:39; 16:4). So, “tongues” were a sign for the immature, the “unbelievers,” even the “unbelievers” within the membership of the church, as well as for unbelievers outside the membership. The spiritually immature were “unbelievers” inside the church membership and “unbelievers” outside of the church membership! Speaking miraculously in a foreign language (i.e., “tongues”) served as a sign that there was a divine presence, that the one, true God was speaking to the world through the apostles’ doctrine and other “gifted” messengers (i.e., “prophets”) of Christ’s church.

But, if the whole church did nothing but speak in tongues, that would be as far as outsiders and unbelievers would get. They would not be instructed—only amazed. And, if the whole church did nothing but speak in tongues the outsider and unbeliever would probably say (1 Cor. 14:23) the tongues-speakers were all “out of their minds” (Gr. mainesthe, “insane, out of control, mentally). The outsiders and unbelievers would not be caused to worship God if the whole assembly spoke in tongues. The miraculous does not really convert outsiders and unbelievers without extensive, logical, direct, communication of the teachings of God. “Prophecy” (i.e., teaching the revealed word of God) makes believers out of unbelievers and edifies immature believers. Tongues were merely to signal the divine presence; “prophecy” (teaching) was for outsiders and immature-believers to convict and convince them to humbly worship God and acknowledge God’s presence in the church. The Corinthian church needed a lot less of the tongues (and these were miraculous tongues), and a lot more of the prophecy.

These are the apostolic rules for the exercise of miraculous gifts (14:26-32):

If any are to speak miraculously, in a foreign language, there must be only 2, or at most 3, and each in turn (Gr. kai ana meros, the word moeros means to “divide up, to allot, to distribute”). One at a time!

Those with the gift of “other tongues” were permitted to speak only if they knew there was a translator (Gr. hermeneuto) present. If there was no translator present, they were to keep silent! Any so-called “private” exercise would be misuse!

If any prophesied, only 2 or 3 were to prophesy. And, they were told, prophesying would be each in turn—one at a time (14:30-31).

Those with the gift of “prophecy” were to exercise their gift only when there were “others” present to discern (Gr. diakrinesosan, the word from which the English words, “critique, criticize, critic come, meaning, “to judge, to discriminate, to decide”). The “discerner” had the miraculous power to decide (not interpret) whether a prophet spoke from God or not.

Women were not to “speak in foreign languages” or to “prophecy—teach.”

Evidently, no one prophet had all the truth to proclaim. One by one they were to teach at each corporate assembly of the church. And all, even those who taught, were to do some learning at one time or another (14:31).

All gifts were to be kept under these controls, “for the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets” (and so were the spirits of the language-speakers). Every apostolic command here by Paul presupposes that these gifts could be, and were to be, exercised under their control. Paul would not have insisted on the gifts being exercised by only 2 or 3, and one at a time, had they not been controllable. No tongues-speaker, or prophet, was to jump up and being to exercise a gift when another was doing so. No one was to claim he could not help himself—that it was the Holy Spirit forcing him to exercise his gift. These gifts were not exercised spontaneously!

“...the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.” God would never produce disorder and confusion (14:33)! God brings order out of chaos (Isa. 45:18). God does not produce fragmentation—he creates wholeness (Matt. 12:30). The Greek word *akatastasia*, translated, confusion, means, “instability, anarchy, revolution,” and from it we get the English words, “catastasis, catastrophe, and catatonia.” God did not give miraculous gifts to the ancients (1st century church) to create “confusion”—he gave them to bring ORDER to the churches. **AND THAT ORDER COULD BEST BE ACCOMPLISHED BY TEACHING THE WORD OF GOD BY THE “PROPHETS.”**

The church today, though not possessing miraculous gifts, will do well to learn a lesson from the fundamental principle Paul teaches here. The principle is decorum, orderliness. Worship does not, in fact, should not, have to be spontaneous, to be worship! Of course, worship must come from the heart. And, simply following a regimen of worship ceremonies does not insure that worship is being done. But neither does spontaneity! Paul is saying to these Corinthians (and to all Christians) that God is not pleased with any worship service that is disorderly and confusing. The worship of God must be intelligent, instructive, maturing, and orderly (according to a design, with regularity). If spontaneity must suffer, then let it suffer. This is true of “youth sessions” as much, or more, than “adult sessions.” How can Christians learn to “order” their lives if they are taught that the worship of God is some exercise in spontaneity, impulsiveness, and confusion?

Is it indecent for a woman to speak in church? The instruction concerning women in the public assembly, in this context, must have involved the misuse of miraculous gifts. We really do not know what the problem was, specifically, but it was probably one of the following situations: (a) some women were apparently attempting to “prophesy”(teach) in the public assembly which, in that culture especially, was an indecent usurpation of male leadership (see 1 Cor. 11) in the public assemblies; the dignity of man and woman is preserved only if the place God has ordained for each is maintained; or (b) some of the women, who did not have miraculous gifts, were prodding and agitating their husbands or others who did have gifts to use them contrary to the apostolic guidelines; this also was indecent behavior for women; or, (c) some of the women who did not have miraculous gifts were insisting they were going to teach in the public assemblies without gifts.

The point is, women in the Corinthian church were not to teach in the public assemblies! This certainly is not the case with most of the so-called “charismatic” assemblies in modern times! Paul reiterates a teaching he has made in other places in the NT. He says, “...women should be subordinate, as even the law says.” The same Greek word *hypotassesthosan* (“be subjected, subordinate”) is used in Eph. 5:21ff and in Col. 3:18. The woman was created by God subordinate to her husband. Male chauvinism has nothing to do with it—it is divinely ordained.

Paul anticipated there would be those who would not agree with his teaching about women in the public assembly, but he reminded them that the word of God did not originate with them, nor did it come to them alone. Actually, Paul says, “did the word of God go forth from you...or are you the only people who have and know the word of God?” The Greek word is *exelthen*, “go forth.” In other words, the word of God is not subject to the whims of the Corinthians—the Corinthians are to be subject to the word of God. Furthermore, Paul speaks the word of God. Any member of the Corinthian church who would disobey the apostle’s instructions about the use and misuse of miraculous gifts in this letter is not possessed of God’s truth, nor is he spiritually-minded. This warning is as relevant for the church today as it was for the first century church!

When all is said and done, it comes down to this: “Earnestly desire to prophesy,” because that is what converts and edifies. “But do not forbid any man who has the miraculous gift of speaking in a foreign language to do so” for God had a purpose for the exercise of all the miraculous gifts. “But let all things be done decently and in order.” The word *decently* is a translation of the Greek word *euschemonos*, and means literally, “well-schematized,” or, “with good schematics.” Any worship of God that does not follow God’s schematic (plan, blueprint, order, arrangement) is not decent. The words “in order” are translated from the Greek words, *kata taxin*; the word *taxin* is related to the Greek word *tagma*, and both are used to signify “to arrange something in order, especially in a military order.” It would not therefore, be altogether unscriptural to say that the worship of God in the church’s corporate assemblies, should be regimented!

9. WELL, WHAT DO YOU THINK—REMEMBER, WHAT YOU THINK, AS A CHRISTIAN, MUST COME TO ACCORD WITH WHAT THE SCRIPTURES (ESPECIALLY, THE NT) SAY SHOULD BE THOUGHT ABOUT ANY AND ALL SUBJECTS!

The Scriptures, and the Scriptures alone, must be the Christian’s guide about miracles and the possession of “spiritual gifts.” THE GUIDE ABOUT POSSESSION OF “SPIRITUAL GIFTS” CANNOT BE OPINION OR SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCES! An excerpt from an unpublished essay by Seth Wilson, Academic Dean Emeritus of Ozark Christian College, is in order here. Dean Wilson has spent more than 60 years researching this subject and counseling individuals and congregations who are “plagued” by this problem of alleged “speaking in tongues.” Wilson says that the modern-day tongues-speaker who says, “You cannot understand or give any true judgment about a gift from God which you have not experienced and do not believe in,” is saying, in effect, that it is not subject to critical examination in the light of Scripture. An error which grows out of this is the belief that one cannot understand the Bible unless he has been “baptized in the Holy Spirit.” To say that

only the believer in the tongues experience is qualified to comment on it commits the logical fallacy of ipse dixit or, "begging the question." To make such a presupposition dogmatizes that it is always from God puts the subjective (inward and personal feeling) above the Scripture as a source of truth. This takes the attitude that tongues speaking is something that is beyond the realm of reasonable evidence or factual investigation.

# TEACHER'S NOTES I CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-58

The Greek verb (present tense, active indicative) *gnorizo* at the very beginning of 15:1 literally translated would read, “I am making perceptible to you, brothers.....” Paul is about to remind the Corinthians about the subject of resurrection, most importantly the resurrection of Jesus, in unequivocal, plain, perceivable words (Greek, *tini logoi*, “the very words”). Paul is going to recall for them the euangelion (i.e., “gospel”) with which he euangelisamen (i.e., “gospelized to, or preached to”) them when he was there establishing the church (see Acts 18:1-18). Evidently, the Corinthians were being “plagued” with a problem about the content of the Gospel. Someone was in the church preaching that Christ had not risen from the dead and thus there would be no resurrection of believers from the dead! **THAT WAS THE MAJOR PROBLEM THAT PLAGUED THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH!!! ALL THEIR OTHER PROBLEMS STEMMED FROM THIS ONE!** That is true of the whole world today (including large segments of Christendom!)—**DENIAL OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST IS THE WORLD’S PRIMARY PROBLEM!** Fix that, and everything else gets fixed in the home, in politics, in international relations, economics, education, etc., etc., etc. Paul wants the Corinthians (and all the subsequent generations of humankind) to understand clearly that the Gospel was something which he objectively delivered to them in words; they did not have it within themselves, subjectively. While they would be responsible to decide for themselves what to do about the logical, spiritual and moral demands of the preached-Gospel, their decisions would not determine whether the events had happened or not (as the existentialist and post-modern philosophers today would have it!). The Gospel of the vicarious death and bodily resurrection from the dead of Jesus Christ of Nazareth is factual, whether men decide subjectively one way or another what they shall do about it. The Gospel originated in a Person (Jesus Christ) and in deeds he did which were prophesied long before in “the scriptures” (i.e., Old Testament). There are clues all the way through 1 Corinthians to substantiate the proposition that the Corinthians were taking an existential (i.e., subjective) approach to the gospel: (a) ch. 1, their decision to follow certain teachers based on their own “feelings”; (b) ch. 1, their toying with the idea that the doctrine of the “cross” was foolishness; (c) ch. 2, their inability to accept the idea of “revelation” in human words; (d) chs. 12-14, their constant infatuation with the spectacular, ego-inflating miraculous gifts; (e) ch. 15, their ignorant, humanistic skepticism concerning the nature of a resurrected body, etc.

Their steadfastness in the faith, indeed, their salvation, is conditioned upon their holding fast (Gr. *ei katechete*, “if you hold fast”—the particle *ei* is conditional) the gospel in the precise terms (“words”) it was preached to them by the apostles. The gospel is conditional—it has to be “latched on to, retained” or it will not save! The gospel is the only philosophical position upon which (i.e., “world-view”) the human mind and heart may stand (Greek, *estekate*, “hold your ground, become established”) against the storms of life. The “terms” (i.e. *tini logoi*) or “words” of the Gospel which Paul had preached to the Corinthians, and “which they had received” were their empirical historicity. Paul did not preach to the

Corinthians some “eloquent human philosophy” (1 Cor. 1:18-25; 2:1-13). HE PREACHED WHAT GOD HAD REVEALED—THE FACTS OF CHRIST’S REDEMPTIVE WORK (THE CROSS AND THE RESURRECTION) AND WHAT IT MEANS!

Paul delivered to the Corinthian, in objective facts, the fundamental essence (Greek, *protois*, “first things”) of the gospel. Paul appealed to eye-witnessed testimony to establish the fact of the resurrection of Christ! Christian faith in Jesus Christ rests solely on the historicity of his resurrection, for if that is not an empirical fact, everything else he claimed, and is claimed for him, is open to suspicion of deliberate fraud or ignorant mythology. Whether he rose from the dead or not, rests solely upon the authenticity, credibility, and accuracy of the texts of the Bible. The gospel is not true because it works—it works because it is true! Simon Greenleaf (1783-1853), one of the greatest legal minds in U.S. history, former head of the Harvard Law School, said, “To establish the historicity of the facts of Christianity, nothing more is demanded than is readily conceded to every branch of human science. Christianity does not profess to convince the perverse and headstrong, to bring irresistible evidence, to vanquish every question. All it professes is to propose such evidence as may satisfy the disciplined, teachable, honest, serious searcher.” Professor Greenleaf set forth the following rules of evidence in his book, *The Testimony of The Evangelists*, Baker Book House, pp. 1-54:

The foundation of Christianity is based on facts. These facts are testified to as having occurred within the personal knowledge of the Gospel writers. Christianity, then, rests upon the credibility of these witnesses.

A proposition of fact is proved, when its truth is established by competent and satisfactory evidence beyond reasonable doubt.

In the absence of circumstances which generate suspicion, every witness is to be presumed to be credible, until the contrary is shown...the burden of impeaching his credibility lies upon the objector.

All witnesses are entitled to the benefit of the axiom that men ordinarily speak the truth (are honest) when they have no prevailing motive or inducement to the contrary.

The ability of a witness to speak the truth depends on the opportunities he has had for observing the facts, the accuracy of his powers of observing and the trustworthiness of his memory. The authors of the Gospels can be granted at least the abilities of most human witnesses until the contrary is shown.

There must be enough disparity in the number and consistency of the witnesses to show there is no room for collusion, yet enough agreement to show they were independent recorders of the same events.

The testimony of the witness must conform in general with the experiences of others concerning similar circumstances or subject matter.



THE GOSPELS ARE ACCURATE RECORDS. ANY HONEST RESEARCHER SHOULD, WITH THE ACCEPTED "RULES OF EVIDENCE," DECLARE THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE GOSPELS AS UNIMPEACHABLE. Evidences for the authenticity, competence, credibility of the four Gospels are impeccable.

Altogether there were 12 appearances of the resurrected Jesus (and 13 if one counts the "guards who ran away from the tomb at his resurrection" Matt. 28:2-4). Paul named only half of those—Cephas (Peter), the twelve (apostles), more than 500 brethren at once most of whom were still alive when he wrote First Corinthians, James, all the apostles, and last of all to him (Paul) "as to one untimely born." The question before the Corinthians (and all subsequent readers of his epistle) is—could they believe the testimony of the eye-witnesses named by the apostle Paul (for much more detailed analysis of Christ's resurrection read, *The Gospel of Luke*, by Paul T. Butler, College Press, 1981, pp. 576-605). The Corinthians (and everyone) must decide (a) were these eye-witnesses competent—capable of knowing, in a position to have known; (b) were they people who would lie—were they honest or dishonest; (c) were they so few as to give reasonable doubt to their testimony; (d) was (or, is) there any empirical historical, scientific evidence to the contrary? There have been many theories over the centuries, suggesting alternatives to accepting Christ's resurrection as a fact; but there has been no alternative evidence presented—for over 2000 years!

First, there is the absence of any contradictory document, or historical record worth considering (in light of the rules of evidence). No one for 2000 years has ever been able to produce a document, meeting all the rules of evidence, that would prove beyond any reasonable doubt that Jesus did not arise from the dead!

Second, there is the statement by Matthew that the Jews bribed the soldiers who "guarded" Jesus's tomb to lie and say that Jesus's disciples stole the body while they were asleep! Now, just how far would that go in a judicial procedure—"We know his disciples stole his body, because they did it while we were asleep!" Gimme a break!

Third, Paul refers to fulfilled prophecy as evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ when he says that "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures..." Blaise Pascal (A.D. 1623-1662), venerable philosopher, scientist and Christian, wrote these meaningful words, "The greatest of the proofs of Jesus Christ are the prophecies. They are also what God has most provided for, for the event which has fulfilled them is a miracle of God." There are over 300 prophecies concerning the Messiah, including the exact village of his birth, the exact year of his birth, the miraculous nature of his conception, all the main events of his life and ministry, his death, even his words on the cross, and his resurrection.

Fourth, and perhaps the greatest proof of Christ's resurrection, is Paul, himself. Paul saw the risen, ascended Lord (Acts 9:27; 26:16; 1 Cor. 9:1). Jesus appeared, visually, (not mystically) to him as he journeyed on the road to Damascus. Even those accompanying Paul "heard" Jesus' voice (Acts 9:7). If ever there was a person set against the proposition that Jesus of Nazareth arose from the dead it would be Paul (formerly called, Saul of

Tarsus)! If ever there was a person who would have demanded visible, empirical evidence before becoming a believer in Jesus, it would have been Paul! He was thoroughly convinced to do everything he could to oppose Jesus of Nazareth and his disciples (Acts 22:3-5; 26:9-11). In all good conscience, he actually believed he was serving God by opposing Christ and executing Christ's followers (1 Tim. 1:13). If ever there was a person with the best opportunities and capabilities to prove that Jesus of Nazareth had not arisen from the tomb, it would be Paul! So, how do we account for the greatest enemy Jesus and the Church ever had, becoming the greatest apostle, persuader of others, and missionary the Church ever had? And the list of enemies converted does not stop with Saul of Tarsus (Paul). There were 3000 converted Jews on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), some of whom had probably been at Passover, crying, "Crucify him, crucify him." There was "a great company of Hebrew priests" who became obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7). Some of Caesar's Praetorian Guard surely became Christians (Phil. 1:13) and some of Caesar's own "household" were converted (Phil. 4:22). IF THERE HAD BEEN ANY GOOD EVIDENCE TO CONTRADICT THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST, SOME OF THESE PEOPLE WOULD HAVE KNOWN IT AND WOULD HAVE BROUGHT IT FORWARD FOR THE WHOLE WORLD OF THAT DAY TO ACKNOWLEDGE.

NONE, WHATEVER! If Christ was not raised from the dead, there is no logical, practical, or emotional point in being a Christian. Paul essentially says in this section (15:12-28), "You can't have the hope if you don't have the history!" If Christ was not raised from the dead, then hoping in him for anything else is vain. If Christ is not raised, and if there is no resurrection for those who are "following" him, then the whole Christian religion is in vain.

(a) Apostolic (Biblical) preaching would be in vain if there is no resurrection. All Christian preaching for 2000 years would be vain if Christ is not historically, actually, factually raised from the dead. Why, then, do men who do not believe the historical resurrection of Christ preach the Christian religion? For money! Remember, Jesus predicted there would be "Christian" hirelings (Jn. 10:10-13), so did Paul (Acts 20:29-30). Some may do it for power or fame—there are those who love the praise of humans more than the praise of God

(b) All faith would be meaningless without the resurrection. The French existential philosopher Alfred Camus (1913-1960) said, "Life is never more absurd than at the grave." He did not believe Jesus arose bodily from death. Faith in God, Christ, the Bible, faith that truth is better than falsehood, faith that goodness and love is to be preferred over evil and hate, faith in today and tomorrow, faith that life is worth living—all would be useless if there is no life beyond the grave, no heaven, no eternity, no absolute truth, no God.

(c) The apostles were false witnesses and the most despicable charlatans or ignorant dupes who ever lived if the resurrection of Christ is not historically valid. But are we to believe those apostles have gotten by with such a monstrous hoax, having duped millions of the best minds for almost 2000 years? Could what their testimony produced (benevolence, mercy, education, morality, justice—America) for all these centuries have been produced by the cruelest, most preposterous lie ever perpetrated upon the human race?

(d) Most crucial, if Christ has not been raised, those who have believed in him are not forgiven—they are still IN their sins. The cross, the vicarious atonement of Christ's death, is invalid without the resurrection. The only hope we have that Christ did what he promised to do by the cross is his resurrection (2 Cor. 1:20; 5:14-21; 1 Pet. 1:3-5; Lk. 24:44-48). The apostles never preached the death of Christ without preaching his resurrection (check the book of Acts and the Epistles). Too much modern preaching is depending upon the sentimentalism aroused by portraying the shocking violence of Jesus' death. The mental decisiveness brought about by the persuading evidence of the resurrection, without which there is no true conversion, is seldom made the focus of either edification or evangelism in preaching. If we are going to "restore" the church of the New Testament, we must restore the gospel of the New Testament!

(e) If Christ is not raised, then those who have "fallen asleep" (died) have perished! Are we to believe that all the millions of Christians who have poured out their lives upon the altars of love, usefulness and goodness have perished and will not be raised from the dead? That includes some of my very dear ones, and yours! Will faith, and love, and goodness perish, and wickedness, falsehood and dissolution win, after all? Is there no wiping out of defilement? No forgiveness of sin? No vindication of faith? Without the resurrection of Christ, there is NONE! If a person's hope in Christ and his teachings is to be restricted to this life on earth only, he is, of a people, most pitiful. The Greek word *eleeinoterai*, is from the word *eleos* (mercy, pity), is translated in the KJV as "miserable." It means, "to be pitied." If this life is all there is, Christians are pitiful fools to be hoping in Christ. They would be better off to abandon the teachings of Jesus which insist on "counting others better than self," or "turning the other cheek," or "not pleasing oneself, but pleasing one's neighbor, for his good," or giving up one's liberty and rights for the sake of others. If this life is all there is, Christians would be better off following Buddha or Mohammed, or Darwin, or Marx, or no one but themselves! Certainly, if there is no resurrection, and Christ is not who he claims he is, and this is all the life there is, those who still maintain allegiance to the Christian faith are either "putting us on" or self-deceived, living in a dream world of their own creation! **WITHOUT CHRIST'S RESURRECTION, BETTER WE SHOULD EAT AND DRINK AND COPULATE LIKE ANIMALS, FOR TOMORROW WE DIE!**

Only by the power of the historical resurrection of Christ and faith in him will humanity be able to preserve moral goodness. Only those who hope to be welcomed to heaven and become as Jesus will have the power to desire holiness (1 Jn. 3:1-3). The bodily resurrection from death is the absolutely crucial doctrine of the Christian religion. Christian theology, Christian evangelism, and Christian ethics are vain without it. Frighteningly, even some "evangelical" Christianity (the existential-feelings-first kind) dismisses the critical necessity of the bodily resurrection in its proclamation and practice. One of the "new Christian songs" is a classic example. In a popular song by Andrae Crouch, entitled, *If Heaven Never Was Promised to Me*, these are the lyrics:

"You may ask me why I serve the Lord, Is it just for heaven's gain, Or to walk those mighty streets of gold and to hear the angels sing? Is it just to drink from the fountain That never shall run dry, Or just to live forever and ever In that sweet old by and by?"

But if heaven never was promised to me, neither God's promise to live eternally, It's been worth just having the Lord in my life, Livin' in a world of darkness, He brought me the light.

If there were never any streets of gold, Neither a land where we'll never grow old; It's been worth just having the Lord in my life, Livin' in a world of darkness, He brought me the light."

Dear Christian, this may have a lovely tune, it may well have "soul," it may have "the beat," and pragmatically, it may draw crowds of people to a religious concert, but its lyrics deny the very cardinal focal, fundamental issue Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians 15! If heaven never was promised to you, neither God's promise to live eternally, then you are, of all men, most to be pitied if you are practicing the Christian gospel. You should eat and drink, for tomorrow you will die and perish. If my hope is "just having the Lord in my life" here, in this existence, I am a fool for thinking I am walking in "light"! If there is no bodily resurrection and heaven, we should be writing "Christian" songs with lyrics like these:

"Brief and powerless is man's life; on him and on his race the slow sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for man condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little days..." —Bertrand Russell in his, *Autobiography*

"Life has become in that total perspective which is philosophy, a fitful pullulation of human insects on the earth, a planetary eczema that may soon be cured; nothing is certain in it except defeat and death—a sleep from which, it seems, there is no awakening..." —Will Durant in his book, *The History of Philosophy*

"In spite of all my desperation to a brave looking optimism, I perceive that now the universe is bored with him (man), is turning a hard face to him, and I see him being carried less and less intelligently and more and more rapidly, suffering as every ill-adapted creature must suffer in gross and detail, along the stream of fate to degradation, suffering and death." —H. G. Wells, author of *The Outline of History*, and, *The War of The Worlds*

The moral muscle of the gospel rests ultimately in the preaching of the historicity of the bodily resurrection. Paul quotes the Greek poet, Meander, in 15:33. The KJV translates it, "Evil communications corrupt good manners," the RSV translates it, "Bad company ruins good morals." The Greek word *homiliai*, is the word from which the English words *homiletics* and *homily* come. The word is most often used to mean, "communication, conversation, discourse, talk." Certainly in this context Paul is talking about some of the Corinthian Christians who were "saying that there is no resurrection" (15:12). Evil preaching and teaching corrupts good morals. Teaching that there is no bodily resurrection is evil teaching! The entire second epistle of Peter is a treatise on the fact that false teaching about the Lord Jesus and his deity is the source of the corruption of morality. When Paul wrote "good" morals, he did not use the most common Greek word for "good" which is *agathos*; he used the word *chresta*. *Chresta* means "good" in the sense of "that which is right because it

produces usefully-good results. Matthew used chrestia in recording Jesus' "Great Invitation" Matt. 11:30 and it is translated "easy" in English versions. Paul says in 15:33 that evil, anti-resurrection preaching is morally impractical—it produces only evil results!

To sin, in light of the historicity of the resurrection, is insane! So, Paul says in 15:34, "Come to your right mind, and sin no more!" The Greek word Paul uses is *eknepsate*, and means, literally, "to sober up." A world in sin must shake off the seductive intellectual and moral stupor into which it has fallen like people who are drunken by believing those who are saying there is no resurrection. False teaching about the resurrection has confounded humanity's mental abilities like drunkenness confounds the brain. The non-Christian world is not thinking correctly and clearly. It is philosophically, schizophrenic. It is not facing reality. No matter how much it repudiates the resurrection, the resurrection is an historical fact and thus every human being is going to eventually face the awful judgment of God. The Greek word *eknepsate* is in the imperative mood and thus it is a command for Christians, at least, to start thinking as they should! False thinking is a sin! Christians are not permitted the insanity of deliberately ignoring the facts (Jn. 8:31-32; 8:43,45,46,47; 2 Thess. 2:9-12; 2 Pet. 3:5). Christians must constantly guard against the tendency to subvert clear, logical thinking by the selfish desire to follow feelings and urges of the flesh. **FACT—TESTIMONY—FAITH—FEELING**, that's the order that Christianity properly takes up residence in the heart of a human being!

People who have a problem with a bodily resurrection almost always have it because they say they can't believe something they have never seen! Wasn't that the disciple Thomas' same problem (Jn. 20:24-31)? Dr. William E. Brown, President of Bryan College in Dayton, TN, wrote in his editorial of the Bryan Life, Summer 2001 (College newsletter) of a conversation he had a number of years ago in the USSR with a Soviet atheist educator. "So you don't believe in God? I asked him. "No," he answered, "It is impossible for God to exist." "Why is that?" He leaned forward with an air of finality. "Anything that is true must have physical proof before I will believe it." "Oh," I replied. "And what is the physical proof that the statement you just made is true?" He sat back and looked perplexed. He realized he had just revealed his own faith—faith in the narrow confines of a materialistic world as the starting point for all truth. **WE ALL BELIEVE THINGS WE'VE NEVER SEEN—EVERY DAY—EVERY HOUR!** We accept many things as true on the basis of the testimony of those who have seen such things! But people, even Christians, want to know how human bodies that have died and returned to dust, have been consumed by fire, or eaten by animals, which in turn have died and dissolved, may be raised from the dead!

First, and most important, we must accept the revelation of God that he can manage it! "When God reveals, by special enlightenment through his Spirit, things which eye has not seen (1 Cor. 2:6-16), it is folly and irreverence to try to prove whether God told the truth. It is unreasonable to expect the scope of human experience and reason to provide the proof of things reaching so far beyond both reason and experience. No method of science or of philosophy can prove some statements which are of central importance in the Bible. These must be accepted upon the authority or reliability of the one who says it is so. The demand that all Bible statements must be discovered by scientific method, proved by rational processes, or confirmed by results in practice, before they can be regarded as authoritative

or established truth, is simply a demand that God must not be greater than man and must not reveal anything man could not find out for himself with his own closely limited, earthbound senses.” —Seth Wilson, in, “Reflections” Christian Standard, June 17, 1984

Second, in light of all the evidence of resurrection in the “natural” creation around him, it is foolish for man to question the manage-ability of it. Paul uses the Greek word *aphron*, literally, “mindless, without sense.” Those who cannot believe in a resurrection of the human body because it dissolves back into dust after death are not very observant! The miracle of resurrection occurs every time a seed falls into the ground, dissolves, and produces a new green plant. It is no accident that the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ took place in the Spring season of the earth.

Third, God is not locked into managing only one kind of body. God has created, as nature well attests, many different kinds of bodies. Scientists know there is such a difference they are able to tell whether a single cell comes from a human, an animal, a bird, or a fish! How did Paul know this before modern science “discovered” it? Paul knew it directly from the Creator, by revelation. Furthermore, God is not limited to just four or even four-million kinds of bodies. He “gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.” There is a correspondence between what the body looks like and what the entity inside is like. If we trust God, we will be satisfied with what we look like, both now and in the resurrection!

Fourth, there are two major divisions of bodies; there are celestial (heavenly) bodies, and terrestrial (earthly) bodies. Celestial bodies have a different glory, a different purpose, than terrestrial ones. God managed to create and managed to sustain bodies as different in time, space, size and function as the human mind is able to imagine. Paul says each of the “celestial” bodies (sun, moon, stars, planets, comets, etc., etc.) are different! And how many stars are there? And God manages each of them! Assuredly, then, God can manage the resurrection of human bodies and even give each human a different body in the resurrection if he wishes!

We have seen this demonstrated in the Lord Jesus Christ himself, “the first-fruit” of the resurrection from the dead! He was in a different body after his resurrection—yet it was similar to the old body that had died and been buried. It retained some of its old essence while also having new attributes. In its new form it was not subject to the old limitations of time and space—not touched by exhaustion and pain. But he was the same pure, true, loving Jesus. And they recognized him. Even though bodily, he could go through walls of a building, materialize and dematerialize.

Bob Chambers writes in his book, *Heaven*, College Press, 1991, p. 181, “Paul fully expected to be able to recognize his converts at Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:19-20) and to be recognized by them at the second coming. How could he rejoice over the souls he had won to Christ when he stands before Christ if he did not know them?” Chambers adds, “Surely God did not create man to merely live a few years and then be buried in a black hole with memory, intellect and imagination forever obliterated. It is unthinkable that we would be real people in Heaven rubbing elbows for eternity with our loved ones and yet not knowing them.”

The Bible says that people in heaven are alive, their life is a full, conscious life, with full consciousness of personal identity, that they remember the things of the old earth life, that they love one another, that they can have communication with one another (Luke 16:19-31). In this life, and even in the next, according to the Bible, each person has his own identity and is recognized as an individual by God and man. Jesus said God was the “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” (Matt. 22:30-32). Angels are distinguishable by—Gabriel is not Michael and Michael is not Gabriel. If the redeemed are less limited in heaven than they are on earth, surely that will include an unlimited knowledge of one another. In the OT when a person died he was said to be “gathered to his people” (Gen 49:33). That speaks of recognition beyond the grave. David’s first child born to Bathsheba died. Heartbroken, David cried, “Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me” (2 Sam. 12:3b). There would be little comfort in this knowledge of heaven to David if he knew he would never recognize his son when he got there. At the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-4) Moses was still Moses, Elijah was still Elijah, although both their earthly bodies had long since been planted in the earth at death. If God could do that before the resurrection, surely he can give us recognizable bodies after the resurrection. If Peter, James and John knew Moses and Elijah, doesn’t it indicate that we will know not only the people we are now acquainted with, but also those we do not now know? Martin Luther believed we would know one another in heaven because when Eve was created Adam immediately knew her by divine revelation. Jesus told us to use worldly wealth to gain “friends” for ourselves, so when wealth and life on earth is gone we will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. Christians use their “wealth” to make friends on earth they will never see on earth. But they will see and know them in heaven! It was to reassure the saints at Thessalonica, where many of their loved ones had passed on, that Paul wrote of that great reunion in the air (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

Someone will say, “How can we be happy in heaven if we realized that some of our loved ones on earth are not there? God will wipe away every tear! (Rev. 7:17; 21:4). Jesus is happy in heaven now even though multitude he loves will not be with him in eternity. If Jesus can be happy under these conditions, we certainly will be able to be happy, too! Chambers, op.cit., writes, “Perhaps the unsaved as far as Heaven is concerned will be as the unborn as far as earth is concerned. You never missed someone that was never born. We get into the human family by means of birth, we get into God’s family by means of a new birth. If you never miss the person that was never born, then maybe you will never miss in the heavenly family the person that was never born again. In the Father’s house they may be as if they had never been.”

The resurrection is the impetus for abounding in the work of the Lord. That’s all that we shall take with us (actually, we’re laying it up in heaven’s bank ahead of our arrival)—Matt. 6:19-21. Preaching is work! Evangelism is work! Shepherding the flock is work! Teaching the saints is work! Learning God’s word is work! Loving is work! Being a “good Samaritan” is work! Believing is work (Jn. 6:29); repenting is work (Rev. 2:5). To be a Christian a person must exhaust himself, his talents, his resources, his time, his soul and his body in the work of the Lord (Eph. 4:12; 2 Thess. 1:11; 2 Tim. 4:5; Jn. 9:4). Let’s face it, there are times when the devil will tempt us to perceive doing the will of God as a chore, or worse, repressive and futile. Even Jesus cried, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” But Jesus, in his moments of temptation and depression, “offered up prayers and

supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him out of death, and he was heard for his godly fear” (Heb. 5:7). Jesus did the work of God through the power of trusting in the resurrection. So, Paul writes here, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”

There is nothing which will bring to the human soul the feeling of security and satisfaction as completely as the knowledge that one’s labor is not in vain! So very much of everything written, painted, built, said, done, applauded, acquired, attained in this world is doomed to disappear. Only that which has been done in the name of Christ will be transferable (in different form) into the kingdom of God to come in heaven. Everything else has perished, is perishing, or shall perish. “Vanity of vanity, all is vanity” “under the sun” (Eccl. 1:2). The Christian whose hope is in the resurrection is the only person in this world who can find true, complete, abiding satisfaction and fulfillment. His labor is not in vain in the Lord. When he passes from this life to the next, his works follow with him (Rev. 14:13). If a man believes in God and his Son, his prayers and alms go up before God as a “memorial” (Acts 10:4). Every act of kindness in the name of Jesus and for his sake (even a cup of cold water) is remembered and will be rewarded by the Lord (Matt. 25:31-45). Our character, our good works, our faith, our obedience, our gratitude, our love—these are the only part of us we will take into the next world! So, let us lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven where they are eternally secure and fulfilling!



# TEACHER'S NOTES I CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 16:1-24

The Corinthian church had a problem with “giving.” Paul apparently wrote to them in an earlier communication (not available in its totality) mentioning the need for a contribution to relieve the suffering of their brethren in Judea. Now he writes (in 1 Corinthians) to set forth apostolic directions on how to best collect that contribution. Evidently, between this letter (1 Cor.) and 4 or 5 months later in A. D. 57 when he wrote (2 Cor.), the Corinthians had some misunderstandings and misgivings about this collection for the saints. Paul’s admonition to them was about “something counted in a financial ledger” (i.e., Greek *logeias*, translated, “contribution”). He told them that each of them was to “do” (Greek, *poiesate*, 1 aor. pl. imperative verb, a command also) what he had previously “directed” (Greek, *dietaxa*, “command, order”) them earlier! This is not merely an apostolic suggestion or practice—it’s an order. They were to take up a weekly offering and set it aside to be given later to their suffering, starving, persecuted brothers in Christ in Judea. They had started to do what he ordered in the first instance (2 Cor. 8:10) but then they stopped. So he wrote in 2 Corinthians (chs. 8-9) holding before them the example of the Macedonians (their Greek neighbors to the north) and telling them they must not give as if it were an exaction. Jesus taught his stewardship (giving) lessons under the same two principles. First, Jesus is the Master, our King. He has every right to give his servants orders about the conduct of their stewardship. On the other hand, the obedience of the servant is to be done under an attitude of willingness and cheerfulness. If obedience has to be coerced and is resented, their service to Christ is no better than the “elder brother” who stayed home but hated every minute of it (Luke 15:25-32).

Giving is not optional for the Christian. Every place Paul established a congregation of believers he taught them the must give. Jesus taught that to be his followers a person must be willing to give when one has hardly anything at all (i.e., the poor widow with two mites, Lk. 21:1-4; Mk. 12:41-44) and to give all when one has everything (the rich young ruler, Lk. 18:18-30; Matt. 19:16-22; Mk. 10:17-22). Giving is the very essence and breath of Christianity. It is instructive to note the different Greek words the apostle Paul uses to describe this “contribution”: (a) *logeias*—a thing that has been counted, a collection (1 Cor. 16:1); (b) *charin*—a gracious gift (1 Cor. 16:3); (c) *koinonia*—a taking part, a fellowship, a communion (2 Cor. 8:4-; 9:13); (d) *diakonia*—a ministry, a deaconship (2 Cor. 8:4); (e) *hadroteti*—a bountiful, liberal gift (2 Cor. 8:20); (f) *eulogian*—a well-counted, blessed-counting (2 Cor. 9:5); (g) *leitourgia*—a serviceable gift, a gift to serve, a liturgy (2 Cor. 9:12); (h) *eleemosune*—alms, a gift of mercy for the poor (Acts 24:17); (i) *prosphora*—a sacrificial offering (Acts 24:17). From all these synonyms we get a picture of Christian giving as systematic, liberal, willing, compassionate and purposeful.

Every Christian is under orders from King Jesus and his “princes” (the apostles) to “store up, deposit” or set-aside REGULARLY from their “goods or living” so as to be able to GIVE to the work of the kingdom (whatever and wherever the kingdom may have a need).

Giving is to be: (a) a universal Christian practice; (b) a celebration of Christ's resurrection on the first day of the week; (c) by each Christian; (d) with regularity and planning; (e) not to be measured by amount but by motive; (f) done without special pressure; (g) applied faithfully and honestly to that for which it has been given. These are principles delineated in 1 Cor. 16 and 2 Cor. 8 & 9. The Greek syntax of 16:2 is interesting: *kata mian sabbatou hekastos humon par heauto totheto thesaurizon ho ti ean euodotai*, or translated literally, "Upon the first of the week each of you, by himself, is to deposit the things being stored up however he is prospered." You see, they were storing up their offerings constantly—every day—then on Sunday they took their personal collection and deposited it in the congregational offering. In the culture of the 1st century, most people were paid at the end of every day for their labor (Matt. 20:8). Every day they "stored up" part of their daily wages, according to how much they were paid, and deposited it on the Lord's Day (first day of the week). This is clearly an assertion that in the 1st century church there was a time (first day of the week) and a responsible administering (deposit) for money given by Christians to the Lord's work. It is also a clear indication that the early Christians met on the first day of the week to worship and share in the Lord's work.

There are lots of reasons for systematic giving: (a) we expect the Lord to be "systematic" in giving to us—we wouldn't want the Lord to be unsystematic in his providing for our sustenance; (b) giving should be as habitual and regular and orderly as observing the Lord's supper, prayer, singing, or any other act of worship; (c) Jehovah is a God of order and covenant relationship—covenants are systematic arrangements; (d) the whole world of finance, supply & demand, commerce, trade, business (with which the church must cooperate) is operated in a systematic way—in other words, the church has to pay its bills systematically; (e) giving is a "proof of our love" for God and his people (2 Cor. 8:24) and a "proof of our obedience" to the gospel (2 Cor. 9:13)—Christians should "prove" these things regularly, systematically, repeatedly, and as often as possible! (f) clearly from the OT law God expects his NT people to bring their "sacrifices" (see Heb. 13:15-16) with regularity and systematically. Perhaps you can think of many more reasons for systematic giving.

Our congregation has never used "pressure tactics" to get contributions from its members and/or attendees. It has, to my knowledge always used scriptural teaching, "admonishing one another to love and good works" to fulfill its budgeted expenditures (both for missions and for its own outreach). THAT'S AS IT SHOULD BE! There is no sanction in the NT for any use of coercion, trickery, gimmicks, pressure or threats to get Christians to "give" to the work of the Lord. There is, in fact, apostolic command that such methods NOT BE USED! (2 Cor. chs. 8-9). Any congregation that would violate the apostolic orders of 2 Cor. 8-9 to get money from its members would be an abomination before God! The Greek word translated "prosper" in 16:2 is *euodotai* and is a compound word from *eu*, meaning "well or good," and *hodos*, meaning "road or journey." Christians are to give according to "the goodness of the road" they travel. If God has given a man a "hard row to hoe" (i.e., hard times and poverty) he should give whatever he is able to give. He must give something, but it may be very little compared to what others have to give. But that is all right with God. It does not need to be a tithe (10 per cent). There is nowhere in the New Testament that tithing is commanded for the Christian. The Christian's relationship is on a much higher level than tithing. The expectation for a Christian is loving, self-sacrificing, responsible

stewardship of 100 per cent of all with which he has been entrusted. He will give as he believes the Lord has given to him, and what he retains he will not consider his own but he will use it wisely and frugally to serve Christ in the best manner possible and bring glory to Christ's name.

OF COURSE, IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN THE METHODS A CONGREGATION USES TO FULFILL ITS FINANCIAL BUDGET! For the church to use the ways of the world (coercion, trickery, gimmicks, pressure and threats) to get the income it needs would be the most contemptible and crass "witness" it could make to an unbelieving world! The church cannot, must not, conduct itself and its "business" on the basis of Satanic pragmatism—(i.e., "whatever works is good and ethical"). The church must conduct its worship, its evangelism, its missions outreach, its scriptural edification programs, its "business" and finances strictly based on the principles delineated in the New Testament! Any "giving" of one's finances to the Lord's work for any motive or rationale other than "the love of Christ controlling us" (2 Cor. 5:14ff) is unacceptable to the Lord and useless. Even if the church received a million dollar offering from a member or donor for some motive other than his love for Christ, it would not be acceptable to Christ and would do the church not one iota of good (see Acts 5:1-16 & 2 Cor. chs. 8-9). No one can give more than he has. God knows that (2 Cor. 8:12), and accepts it. God is singularly interested in the "readiness" of mind and heart to give. With God, motive is all important (see Matt. 6:2-21). Great sums of money may be given (Lk. 21:1-4; Mk. 12:41-44) but if the motive is self-righteousness, it is an abomination with God (see Isa. :10-17; Micah 6:6-8). Paul anxiously guarded against exacting contributions for the Lord's work through special pressures. He said, "...so that contributions need not be made when I come..." He really said, in Greek, hina me hotan eltho tote logeiai ginontai, literally, "...lest whenever I come then collections there are." Why this instruction? Ray C. Stedman writes, "Because the apostle knew that when he was personally present he had a tremendous impact on people. He did not want their giving to be because they were moved by his preaching or by his stories of what God had done, or in any other way to be pressured. No professional fund raisers would have been permitted in the early churches. Paul says, in effect, 'Do not bring out the thermometer; do not put on a three-ring circus, with people running down the aisle bringing pledges to meet a predetermined goal, I do not want that.' Your giving is to come out of a heart that has been moved by the grace of God. God does not want giving on any terms other than those. Giving must be without special pressure."

Paul advised the church (16:3-9) of its responsibility to insure that the collection for the needy gets to Judea as intended. The apostle offers to help deliver the money if he is needed, but he will let the Corinthian congregation decide who the messengers delivering the offerings will be. Paul was extremely careful with the handling of the Lord's money. He always made sure trustworthy and acceptable Christians were directed to this important ministry (see 2 Cor. 8:16-24). Paul always surrounded himself and his work with other Christians (2 Cor. 12:14-18) especially in matters concerning financial contributions to the preaching of the gospel (1 Thess. 2:3-12; 2 Thess. 3:6-15, etc.) so that not the slightest criticism of his handling of money given to him for the work of benevolence and ministry could be sustained. It well behooves the leadership of the church today to be "squeaky-clean" in where the money comes from to the church for its ministry, and where and how and why the money given to the church is disbursed! EVERYTHING DEALING WITH THE

## FINANCES OF THE CHURCH SHOULD BE MADE PUBLIC AND OPEN TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF ALL THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE CONGREGATION!

Clearly, the New Testament of Christ teaches that those who devote their full-time (i.e., make it their life's vocation) to preach and teach the gospel should be paid. Paul expressed this as the "law" of Christ equally binding with the "law" of God in the OT. He quoted from the OT in saying, "Do I say this (support of preachers) on human authority? Does not the law say the same? For it is written in the law of Moses, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain.' Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of a share in the crop. If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits? If others share this rightful claim upon you, do not we still more?" (see 1 Cor. 9:3-12). Paul went on to write, "...the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel." (1 Cor. 9:14). Paul wrote the Galatians, "Let him who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches." (Gal. 6:6). Paul received financial aid from the Philippian Christians (Phil. 4:15-16). He regretted that he had not taken financial aid from the Corinthians, for their own sake (2 Cor. 12:13). **THOSE WHO MAKE THEIR LIVING IN VOCATIONS OTHER THAN GOSPEL PREACHING & TEACHING NEED TO GIVE TO SUPPORT THOSE WHO DO MAKE THEIR LIFE'S VOCATION THAT OF GOSPEL PREACHING!** It is a primary opportunity for the secularly employed to "share" in the "fruit" of gospel preaching that accrues to those who are devoting their full time to preaching (Phil. 4:17).

When Jesus sent 70 of his disciples out, two by two, to preach the gospel (Lk. 10:1-12) he expected those who received their preaching to support the disciples and Jesus quoted the OT, "...for the laborer deserves his wages..." (see Deut. 24:14-15). Paul quoted the same OT scripture in 1 Tim. 5:17-18 when he ordered that "especially those who labor in preaching and teaching" were worthy of "double honor" (Greek, *diples times*, i.e., literally, "twice the salary"). No preacher or Bible college teacher should receive a salary double that, say, of the President of the United States, or of some CEO of a huge American industry. However, every preacher and Bible college teacher is worthy of being paid a salary commensurate with his/her needs (not "wants") to sustain their ministry, their family, their future (i.e., retirement), and their home to such an extent "that they may command the respect of outsiders, and be dependent on nobody" (1 Thess. 4:10-12; 1 Tim. 5:7-8). These "laborers" in the Lord's vineyard spend more hours, suffer more stress, expend their own resources, and give more of themselves to others than any person in another vocation! They have spent as much time and money in college preparing for their work as nearly all the other professions of life. Their phone, their home, their automobile, their family members are always at the disposal of the church. **THINK ABOUT IT!** Not even physicians, lawyers, and CEOs have as many demands put upon them today as preachers!

Perhaps the most significant ways to support the full-time, vocational, laborers in the Lord's vineyard (the church) are all outlined in 1 Cor. 16:10-20—(a) "put them at ease...do not despise them...speed them on their way in peace"—keep down all factors as much as possible that would bring stress to preachers & teachers & do not be contemptuous of them because they "don't have a real job" as some people think of them & make things as

peaceful as possible for them so they may do their work efficiently; (b) “be subject to such men and to every fellow worker and laborer”—elders, preachers, teachers doing the Lord’s work deserve the respect and subordination of those who are their “spiritual fathers or leaders” in their attempts to “keep watch over the souls” of God’s flock (e.g. Heb. 13:7, 17); (c) “Give recognition to such men”—they should be praised and rewarded, publicly, and regularly, with recognition when they do their job as their Master, Jesus, has commanded them. It is a shame to pay a preacher a salary (with numerous “perks”) and think that he should be gratified and satisfied with just money. He needs the psychological, spiritual, verbal, tangible emotional and mental support of every member of the congregation—REGULARLY! After all, he is a person with feelings, psychological needs, and yearnings, just like you and I. One only has to read Paul’s letters to the churches to know that he, an apostle, yearned more for their brotherly love, verbalized and recognized, than he did for their money!

How can any Christian disagree with this apostolic statement? The Greek sentence in 16:22 is *ei tis ou philei ton kurion eto anathema*. The Greek verb *eto* is imperfect, present, active, which would literally be translated, “If any one does not love the Lord, he is being anathema.” It is not that Paul made the judgment of the one not loving the Lord—the judgment is already made by the Lord that he is in a state of “anathema” (accursedness). The apostle John documented much the same “self-incurred” judgment on the unbeliever when he wrote, “He that believeth on the son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (KJV). John’s simple and straight-forward Greek text says in the last phrase, *all’ he orge tou theou menei ep’ auton*, and the Greek verb *menei* is present, indicative, active, meaning, is abiding. In other words, whoever is not believing on the Son of God, Jesus, continues to have the wrath of God abiding on him/her. The only way to escape the wrath of God is to believe on Jesus Christ, God’s Son. **AND EVERY CHRISTIAN OUGHT TO KNOW WHAT “BELIEVING” IN JESUS INVOLVES!**

### Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

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