



KINGDOM PROBLEMS

Forty Daily Devotions
from the Book of 1 Corinthians
(Based on the NKJV)

Introduction

Paul founded the church at Corinth on his second missionary journey. Early in the first chapter, we learn that many of the people in this church considered Paul to be their favorite preacher! Because of the time that Paul invested into these people (he wrote them two letters and visited them often), we can assume that he returned the love that these young Christians displayed for him. However, there were some profoundly serious problems within this church that had to be addressed. No doubt, many of these problems were hangovers from the Greek culture from which these people had been saved. No church letter, by any writer, addresses more problems than 1 Corinthians. Some writers have referred to this letter as “Christianity 101.” No book addresses the “basics” of church life more than 1 Corinthians.

Daily Reading Schedule

Day	Scripture Reading	Date
1	1 Corinthians 1:1-13	10/04/24
2	1 Corinthians 1:14-31	10/05/24
3	1 Corinthians 2:1-10	10/06/24
4	1 Corinthians 2:11-3:4	10/07/24
5	1 Corinthians 3:5-17	10/08/24
6	1 Corinthians 3:18-4:7	10/09/24
7	1 Corinthians 4:8-21	10/10/24
8	1 Corinthians 5:1-13	10/11/24
9	1 Corinthians 6:1-10	10/12/24
10	1 Corinthians 6:11-20	10/13/24
11	1 Corinthians 7:1-9	10/14/24
12	1 Corinthians 7:10-20	10/15/24
13	1 Corinthians 7:21-31	10/16/24
14	1 Corinthians 7:32-40	10/17/24
15	1 Corinthians 8:1-13	10/18/24
16	1 Corinthians 9:1-8	10/19/24
17	1 Corinthians 9:9-18	10/20/24
18	1 Corinthians 9:19-27	10/21/24
19	1 Corinthians 10:1-10	10/22/24
20	1 Corinthians 10:11-20	10/23/24

Day	Scripture Reading	Date
21	1 Corinthians 10:21-30	10/24/24
22	1 Corinthians 10:31-11:7	10/25/24
23	1 Corinthians 11:8-16	10/26/24
24	1 Corinthians 11:17-27	10/27/24
25	1 Corinthians 11:28-12:3	10/28/24
26	1 Corinthians 12:4-13	10/29/24
27	1 Corinthians 12:14-23	10/30/24
28	1 Corinthians 12:24-31	10/31/24
29	1 Corinthians 13:1-13	11/01/24
30	1 Corinthians 14:1-9	11/02/24
31	1 Corinthians 14:10-20	11/03/24
32	1 Corinthians 14:21-30	11/04/24
33	1 Corinthians 14:31-40	11/05/24
34	1 Corinthians 15:1-15	11/06/24
35	1 Corinthians 15:16-30	11/07/24
36	1 Corinthians 15:31-40	11/08/24
37	1 Corinthians 15:41-50	11/09/24
38	1 Corinthians 15:51-58	11/10/24
39	1 Corinthians 16:1-11	11/11/24
40	1 Corinthians 16:12-24	11/12/24

Day 1: 1 Corinthians 1:1-13

“For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you.” (1 Corinthians 1:11)

“Divisions”

While the opening verses of this letter contain a salutation and then an expression of appreciation, one of the main issues within the church at Corinth, division, is dealt with immediately (v. 10). Paul appealed to the “brethren” (Christians) that they seek unity within their church. A careful look will reveal that we see the name “Christ” 12 times in the first 13 verses of this letter. He appealed to them in the name of Jesus Christ, with verses five and 11 being the only verses in that group that do not contain that name. In the gospels, the word Christ usually appeared with the article “the” preceding it and was used more as a title for Jesus. In the letters of Paul, this word was used without the article and as another name for Jesus. Someone from the household of Chloe reported to Paul that there was division among the believers at Corinth. As a result, Paul appealed to individual believers to surrender to the authority of Christ. In doing so, all divisive issues could be quickly and completely resolved in a way that everyone could feel like they “won.” It is clear that Paul believed Christians should pledge their allegiance to Christ and Christ alone!

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom Problems, such as divisions, exist in all churches. **Reaffirm** your allegiance to Christ alone and **encourage** others to be faithful to look to Him for the strength that is necessary to serve God on a day-to-day basis. **Commit** your life to His service and encourage your fellow believers to do the same.

Day 2: 1 Corinthians 1:14-31

“Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” (1 Corinthians 1:20)

The Wisdom of God

Today’s focus verse is filled with questions. Paul wanted to know how the wisdom of man compares to the wisdom of God. In placing too much faith in other men, no matter how noble and committed they might be, these early believers were making a fatal error and exercising poor judgment. Compared to the wisdom of God, the wisdom of even the wisest men seemed foolish. Just as it did for the original Corinthian Christians who read this letter, verse 21 directs our attention from human wisdom to the wisdom of God. God’s wisdom allowed Paul to preach Christ crucified and to call people to open their hearts in faith and believe the gospel. He asked each listener to review their own spiritual qualifications and come to one conclusion: No one can boast of anything but God’s wonderful love and grace that has been revealed to them in Christ Jesus. In other words, no one is saved because of who they are or what they have done. All who receive salvation do so entirely because of what Christ has done and because of who He is! It is through Christ alone that believers can be made righteous before God.

Prayer Emphasis: Humble yourself before God as you walk through this day. **Look** at others around you and **realize** that the only difference in the life of the most wretched, fallen person you see today and yourself is Christ! **Praise** Him for your salvation! **Reserve** all your glorying and boasting for the Lord!

Day 3: 1 Corinthians 2:1-10

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:1)

“The Testimony of God”

Paul wanted the Christians at Corinth to know one thing: He was not writing to them trying to appear wise or scholarly but to clearly declare God’s truth to them. He preached only the true Gospel – God’s simple plan of salvation – to them. Paul reminded them that his preaching had not been with wise and persuasive words. He had not relied on catchy presentations or emotional appeals to call people to accept and follow Christ. He relied on the Holy Spirit of God to draw people to Jesus as he lifted Him up before them “in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling” (v. 3). Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand that he depended entirely on the Holy Spirit and the authority of Christ to enable and empower him to preach the gospel. Paul spoke of those who were “mature” (v. 6) and stated that he did have a deeper message for those who were growing in the faith and knowledge of Jesus. But, even then, the message was not one filled with the wisdom of this world. The wisdom that Paul preached was one that no man could possibly understand without the Holy Spirit. No human mind could have possibly conceived the story of Christ and the cross because the cross was a despised object among the people of New Testament times. Only God himself could possibly draw anyone to salvation through the story of the cross and crucifixion.

Prayer Emphasis: Refuse to try adding anything to what God has already so clearly stated through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus. **Avoid** trying to appear wise or spiritual to anyone with whom you speak. **Remember** to lift Jesus up, and He will draw all men unto Himself.

Day 4: 1 Corinthians 2:11-3:4

“For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:11)

“The Things of God”

Paul reminded his readers that no one possesses the ability to know another man’s thoughts. In the same way, no one can better understand what God is trying to say to us than the Spirit of God himself! It is through the leadership and direction of God’s Spirit that we learn how to be *saved* and how to be *servants* after we are saved. Since the walk and warfare of the believer is a spiritual matter, people who are not indwelt and led by the Spirit of God might consider some of what a believer is called to do to be foolish simply because they cannot understand why we would make such a commitment to someone who lived and died 2,000 years ago. Since we have the mind of Christ to lead us, we may often appear to be walking in opposition to what the world may consider wise, profitable, and productive. Paul concludes that believers who look to man and man’s wisdom as their final spiritual authority are worldly, immature believers who are still in need of spiritual milk instead of solid food. It wasn’t that they did not *need* solid teaching, but that they were *not ready* for it. Paul concluded that division within the church is a result of believers acting like “mere men” (3:3) and not born-again Christians who live under the authority of Christ.

Prayer Emphasis: Commit to daily Bible reading and prayer. **Ask** God to grow your faith and your involvement in the work of the church. **Seek** out a position of service and be faithful to **fulfill** it. **Make** Jesus Christ more than your Savior – make Him the Lord of everything in your life!

Day 5: 1 Corinthians 3:5-17

*“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”
(1 Corinthians 3:16)*

Love Those “3:16’s!”

While I know that it is purely coincidental, I find that some of the most powerful words in the Bible are found in the “3:16” references. The letter of 1 Corinthians serves as just another fitting example of this fact. This “3:16” includes the first of the 10 “Do you not know” phrases included in this letter. Later, in 1 Corinthians 6:19, Paul will speak of every believer being a temple of the Holy Spirit. However, in this verse, Paul is speaking to the church as a whole. The “you” in our focus verse is plural in the original language while the “temple” is singular. What Paul is saying to the believers here is that we, being many, make up the one body of Christ. Since the issue being addressed at this moment is division, then, in context, this verse should be viewed in the light of the subject and used to promote unity in the body of Christ. For the purposes of Christ to be fulfilled in the church, all the individual parts must become one in their commitment to Him. When we fail to maintain Christian unity, we “defile” (v. 17) the temple of God. When men view our lives, it is important that they see we are faithful in our commitment to place Christ and His purposes above our own personal desires.

Prayer Emphasis: Consider your church life and ask God to show you how committed you are to the desires of the church body as a whole. **Ask** yourself if you are in this for what you can *give* or just for what you can *get*. **Pray** for our church today, specifically asking God to give us unity in purpose and practice.

Day 6: 1 Corinthians 3:18-4:7

*“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one’s praise will come from God.”
(1 Corinthians 4:5)*

“The Counsels of the Hearts”

The people of Corinth were Greeks – and Greeks, in New Testament times – considered humility to be a sign of weakness and not a trait common to great and learned men. Paul concluded this section on division with a reminder that all true, Christian behavior must be measured against the “counsels of the hearts” (v. 5). If anyone who ministers desires praise, then that person should patiently wait until the end of his race and seek only to be praised by the Lord. If the believers at Corinth would see their own, personal ministries as Paul and Apollos saw theirs, then each one would know that we are all mere servants of Christ, and that Christ is the only one who should be praised at any time and for any reason! Verse six clearly indicates that there is no justifiable reason for any one believer to be “puffed up” (proud). Paul desired that the Corinthian believers might “learn” (v. 6) from the examples that he, Apollos, and others had set for them. The word “learn” in verse six means “to practice what you are taught” and is very closely related to the word that is translated “disciple” elsewhere in the Bible. The kind of pride that Paul is warning against is the kind of pride that causes people to compare themselves to others and judge themselves against what they see in others.

Prayer Emphasis: Submit to Christ and His purposes and allow them to be first in your life. **Compare** yourself to only Christ, and humility will always accompany you. **Refuse** to allow any seed of selfishness to flourish in your own heart.

Day 7: 1 Corinthians 4:8-21

“I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you.” (1 Corinthians 4:14)

A Stern Warning

Paul’s earnest desire was that all *people* would become *believers* and that all *believers* would become *devoted followers* of Christ. Because Paul loved the Christians at Corinth as a father might love his own children, he issued a stern warning to them in order to try to bring about a change in some of the attitudes and behaviors that existed among them. He apparently knew that not all the Christians there would respond positively to his appeal. He knew that some had become “puffed up” (v. 18) and that those arrogant individuals were probably the ones who were causing the division in the church. Paul knew that a father who genuinely loves his children must be willing to discipline them when it was the appropriate thing to do. So, he was going to leave it up to them. Did they desire that he come to them with a “rod” or “in love and a spirit of gentleness” (v. 21)? How the believers at Corinth behaved as spiritual *children* was going to determine how Paul was going to behave as a spiritual *father*.

Prayer Emphasis: Avoid God’s chastening by **heeding** God’s commands! **Remember** that God promises to chasten those whom He loves – and that the chastening hand of God against sinning believers is a sure sign that we are truly His children! As a parent, use discipline wisely and never without warning.

Day 8: 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles – that a man has his father’s wife!” (1 Corinthians 5:1)

The Sad Report

Thus far, Paul has only addressed the problem of spiritual *division* in the church. He now must change the subject and begin to deal with spiritual *disorder* within the church. A second major concern in the report received about the new church at Corinth centered on the church’s failure to deal with a sin issue within their membership. Pride is a dangerous thing because it is the opposite of love in the sense that it promotes self over others. The same pride that caused disunity among the church membership resulted in the church showing indifference to an unbelievably bad situation. A member of the church was having an affair with “his father’s wife.” The language there clearly indicates that this was an affair with a stepmother. This kind of relationship was clearly prohibited by Old Testament law (Lev. 18:8 and Deut. 22:22) and was a violation of Roman law in that day. However, this situation did not seem to shame some of the church members at all! It was difficult for Paul to understand how these people could be filled with so much personal pride while something like this was known to be going on within their church. He encouraged the church to take disciplinary action against this believer. Verse nine seems to indicate that there was an earlier letter written by Paul to this same group of believers. In that letter, he warned them not to associate with sexually immoral people, especially within the church.

Prayer Emphasis: **Realize** that church discipline may sometimes seem harsh, but it must always be exercised in the best interest of the church body as a whole. As believers, we must **judge ourselves** by comparing our own lives to God and His Word on a regular, daily basis. In doing so, we will certainly reduce the risk of ever having to be judged by others.

Day 9: 1 Corinthians 6:1-10

“Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated?” (1 Corinthians 6:7)

“An Utter Failure”

A third concern in the report brought to Paul was the inability of the believers at Corinth to resolve personal conflicts and disputes among themselves. It should be made clear that Paul was referring to civil matters here and not criminal matters that should be handled by the state and not the church. Learning what should be resolved in the *church* and what should be resolved in the *courts* is part of our learning to render to Caesar that which is Caesar’s and to God that which is God’s (Matthew 22:21). Paul reminded these Christians that they were to ultimately judge the world. How could a people that God deemed capable of someday judging the world not be capable of judging such civil matters among themselves without having to drag one another to court? Paul asked these prideful, arrogant people how it could be possible that there was none among them that was able to judge in such disputes. Instead of settling their personal differences among themselves, the Corinthian believers were obviously going “to law” (Court) against one another while the unbelieving world watched. Please understand that this does not grant permission for the church to deal with criminal matters and not report criminal activity to the proper authorities.

Prayer Emphasis: Learn to distinguish between what should be resolved within the church and what should be resolved within the courts. Church discipline should never supersede the law. When it comes to conflict, render to Caesar only that which belongs under his authority.

Day 10: 1 Corinthians 6:11-20

“And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:11)

“Were” Versus “Are”

At some time in the past, some of the believers in Corinth had been guilty of the sins listed earlier in verses nine and ten. However, things were to be different in their moral lives now that they had been saved. It is important to note that Paul said, “And such *were* some of you” and not “and such *are* some of you”! The Christians at Corinth were to avoid practicing the sinful deeds of the past. Paul was quick to remind them that inappropriate behaviors exercised under the umbrella of liberty could lead to activities that were spiritually allowable but not spiritually beneficial (v. 12). Christians are not to partake in things that are not spiritually beneficial. And, certainly, sexually immorality is not spiritually or physically beneficial. There is no excuse for believers to behave in such ways. We are to unite ourselves with the Lord and become one with Him rather than becoming one with the world. Paul states that sexual sin is a sin against our own body. In verse 19, we see that our physical body is the abode, or temple, of the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit dwells within us, and since our lives are not our own, but have been “bought at a price” (v. 20), we are to honor God in our body. Peter will later tell us that the “price” with which we were “bought” was nothing less than “the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:19).

Prayer Emphasis: Remember the story of Joseph running away when another man’s wife enticed him to commit an immoral act with her and **ask** God to give you the wisdom to know when to *fight* and when to *flee*. **Refuse** to compromise your witness and testimony by giving in to the lusts of the flesh.

Day 11: 1 Corinthians 7:1-9

“It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.” (1 Corinthians 7:1-2)

Some Difficult Questions

Paul now moves from his discussions on division and disorderly conduct to some other tough questions. One of those questions had obviously been about whether Christians should marry. We will deal with Paul’s response to this question in the next few devotionals. Paul concludes that it is a good thing if a “man” can live without being married. It is important to note that the word translated “man” in 7:1 is the Greek word that can mean a person of either gender. However, his inclusion of the word “woman” in the same verse gives us a strong indication that we have some “man-to-man” talk going on here! Paul was saying that it was a good thing if a person could live single and not sin. However, since that was impossible for some Christians, then it was best that believers be in a committed, marital relationship. In the fulfillment of their marriage relationship, the man and woman are able to better live without becoming involved in sexual immorality. The world would have us believe that sexual immorality is a very normal thing; however, we know it is not a “normal” thing at all for a believer. Marriage partners should avoid depriving one another unless it is for a specified time of fasting and prayer. Obviously, verse eight reveals that Paul was not married. Since Paul had been affiliated with the Pharisees, and since marriage was a requirement for membership into that sect, we must assume that Paul was either widowed or divorced.

Prayer Emphasis: Believe everything that God says to us in His Word is always said with our best interest in mind. **Recognize** that the Bible restricts sexual relationships to legally married men and women. **Pray** for your spouse today and **express** your love and commitment to him or her.

Day 12: 1 Corinthians 7:10-20

“But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches.” (1 Corinthians 7:17)

Marriage and Divorce

It is noticeably clear from these verses that God’s best plan is that married people learn to live with one another and divorce should be avoided whenever possible. We are not to assume that God loves a divorced person any less than He loves someone who has never been divorced. We should also avoid concluding that divorced people are not eligible for service or qualified to do great things for God and His glory. Paul clearly states that what he is about to teach is something that he received from the Lord (v. 10). In today’s Scripture, Paul teaches those who *are* married to do everything within their power to *stay* married. If an unbelieving person leaves their spouse simply because they are a believer, then the believing person is not bound to try to force that person to remain married to them. However, if a believer can live in peace with an unbeliever, then the marriage vow should be honored. Every Christian couple should do everything possible to build a strong, healthy marriage. Running from one situation to another may just mean that you are simply carrying your same baggage to a new address. If you have been divorced and are now remarried, then be fully committed to this marriage, and do everything within your power to make it a success.

Prayer Emphasis: Remember that God has no perfect children! **Praise** God for your marriage partner and **pray** for them daily. Do everything within your power to **make them feel loved and appreciated**.

Day 13: 1 Corinthians 7:21-31

“Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it. For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord’s freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ’s slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.” (1 Corinthians 7:21-23)

A Secret to Success in Marriage

Today’s verses continue Paul’s response to the questions that the Corinthian believers asked about marriage and contain a particularly important truth for success in any relationship. In verses 21-23, Paul explains that the believer is now a servant of the Lord as well as a servant to any current master. As such, the saved servant should no longer view his service as being to his earthly master alone, but to his heavenly Master as well. As such, when we serve others, we should serve them as if we are doing that service to Christ. So, when we consider our marital relationship and the responsibilities thereof, we should view our commitment to that relationship as a service to Jesus Christ. The key to a strong marital relationship is submitting and serving one another while honoring the Lord through our commitment to our marriage partner. It is not difficult to see the urgency in Paul’s words when he states, “The time is short” (v. 29). Paul was encouraging the Corinthian believers to make their devotion to the Lord the first priority in their lives. If and when they did that, all their other relationships would fall into place.

Prayer Emphasis: Allow no relationship to become more important than your relationship with Christ. **Be obedient** to the Lord and all other relationships in your life will benefit from it. **Serve** Him and you will learn how to **serve** others.

Day 14: 1 Corinthians 7:32-40

“But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord – how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world – how he may please his wife.” (1 Corinthians 7:32-33)

Undivided Devotion

One of the reasons Paul chose to remain unmarried was so that he could serve the Lord with undivided devotion. Speaking to those who desired to serve Jesus, Paul stated that he would prefer that they be “without care” (v. 32). The word that is translated “care” here is translated “concern” in other translations of the New Testament. Paul clearly explained what he meant by the word “care” by explaining that an unmarried man could be completely devoted to the Lord’s work while a married person had to serve the Lord while being careful not to neglect his marital responsibilities. Paul felt that the married man might find difficulty in pleasing the Lord and his spouse at the same time. Likewise, the unmarried woman could be totally devoted to the Lord while the married woman had to take into consideration her earthly responsibilities and find a way to serve both the Lord and her family. Paul encouraged those who lost a spouse to consider staying single and suggested that they might be “happier” (v. 40) if they decided not to remarry but to commit their lives to the service of Christ. But they were free to remarry if they so desired. However, they were to be careful to marry someone who was also a committed follower of Christ.

Prayer Emphasis: **Be committed** to Christ, whether single or married. **Serve** the Lord *with* your spouse. **Make** your commitment to Christ a central point in your marriage relationship. **Serve** Christ in such a way that your decision to follow Him is a *help*, and not a *hindrance*, to your marriage relationship.

Day 15: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

“Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.” (1 Corinthians 8:1)

Moving On

The first word of chapter eight (“Now”) lets us know that Paul has said what he is going to say about marriage, and he is ready to move on to the next problem that was hindering the church at Corinth – the issue regarding whether or not a Christian should eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols. Meats that were offered to pagan gods were often eaten by the priests, shared in a fellowship meal by the pagan worshippers, or sold in the market. Some Christians believed that eating this meat meant they were condoning, or maybe even participating in, the worship of idols. Not all believers agreed with that opinion. Some believed that since an idol was nothing and there was only one true God, then meats offered to idols were still okay to eat. As such, these meats could be purchased and eaten without anyone coming to any spiritual harm. Paul agreed that meats that had been offered to idols were just that – meats – but asked the believers to be considerate of new, immature believers who might not have come to this knowledge and to be careful not to eat these meats if it caused confusion. They were to especially avoid eating these meats in the pagan temple itself since that might cause others to think they were participating in idol worship.

Prayer Emphasis: Always be considerate of new Christians and seek to **live** in such a way so as to be an encouraging witness to them. **Realize** that it is fine to exercise your Christian liberties, but always do so cautiously and with concern for the spiritual well-being of others.

Day 16: 1 Corinthians 9:1-8

“Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?” (1 Corinthians 9:7)

Privilege vs. Priority

Paul begins the next section of his letter with a lengthy list of questions concerning privileges. Take a moment and circle the question marks that you find in the first eight verses of chapter nine. Paul is following up on his comments about Christian liberty and using Barnabas and himself as an example. He mentions several things that servants of the church might be allowed to do. Paul believed it would be fine if he were to marry. After all, men like Peter and the Lord’s brothers were married and still serving in ministry. He also believed it would be appropriate for him and Barnabas to accept financial support from the churches. After all, didn’t soldiers receive pay for their commitment to their nation? And didn’t farmers have the privilege of eating from the fruit of their gardens and vineyards? Couldn’t a shepherd rightfully have some of the milk produced by his flock? Paul considered all these things privileges that men like him, and Barnabas, could appropriately accept. But, for Paul and others like him, it was not just a matter of what *could* be done, but rather a matter of what *should* be done. Accepting such privileges should be allowed with priority given to the work of the church and the cause of Christ. We should never allow ourselves to indulge in any privilege that makes the work of the ministry a lower priority in our lives. Weigh every “right” to make sure that it is the “right” thing to do at the current time and in the current situation.

Prayer Emphasis: Evaluate your own schedule of activities to see if you are placing *privileges* above *priorities*. Consider the words of Matthew 6:33 and **strive** to keep God, and your responsibilities to Him, first in your life.

Day 17: 1 Corinthians 9:9-18

“For it is written in the law of Moses, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.’ Is it oxen God is concerned about?” (1 Corinthians 9:9)

The Right Answers!

Our focus verse begins by saying, “For it is written in the law of Moses.” The answers to the questions that these Christians had about Christian liberty were to be found in the Word of God! If we choose to seek answers to the questions about what a Christian can do from men, we will find ourselves torn between several opinions with many of them sounding like the right answer. Or, if we choose to take a poll of counselors, we can ask until we find someone who says exactly what we want to hear. However, the issue of Christian liberty must always come down to what God says to you from His Word. When it comes to issues of liberty, we should be careful not to impose our personal convictions on others. However, neither should we allow others to impose their spiritual preferences on us. Paul had the right to do whatever any of the other apostles were doing, if it was something that God was directing him to do. If God wants us to refrain from eating meats, taking salaries, marrying a wife, or anything else, then we should be faithful to whatever God tells us. While many answers may sound right, the only right answer is to always do what God’s Word instructs us to do and what allows us to reach more people for Christ.

Prayer Emphasis: Avoid accepting what others do (or do not do) as what is right (or not right) for everyone. **Allow** God to lead you and grow you as you spend time with Him in His Word. **Remember** that some things are subject to opinion, but our convictions must always be based on God’s Word.

Day 18: 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

*“For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more;”
(1 Corinthians 9:19)*

The Ultimate Goal

Why should a believer be so concerned about what others might see or think? Paul answers that question in the first verse of today’s reading. We are to be concerned about what everyone thinks about *us* because we want to influence what everyone thinks about *Christ*. The goal of every Christian should be to lead others to a personal faith in Jesus Christ. If that means that we compromise on some of our preferences and sacrifice some privileges along the way, so be it. Although Paul knew he was no longer under the law, he honored the law and attended synagogue worship so he might have more opportunities to win his fellow Jews to Christ. He did not force Judaism on his Gentile listeners, but simply preached salvation through Christ to them. Paul was willing to do whatever he could do without compromising God’s commands if it would help him win someone to a saving knowledge of Christ. All his decisions about preferences and privileges were based on what might afford him more opportunities to preach the gospel to those who were without Christ. When he spoke of running a race, he was speaking in terms that any Greek would understand. They were familiar with races and crowns. They honored their sports heroes and champions and held them in the highest esteem. Paul is trying to help them understand that winning others to Christ is to be the ultimate goal for all believers.

Prayer Emphasis: Never lose sight of the ultimate goal! **Remember** that Christ came to seek and to save those who are lost and He has now assigned that awesome responsibility to His church!

Day 19: 1 Corinthians 10:1-10

“And do not become idolaters as were some of them...” (1 Corinthians 10:7)

Some New Testament “Thou Shalt Nots”

Paul has been answering questions about Christian liberty and dealing with some confusing issues (like eating meats that had been offered to idols). Such matters were the cause for some of the division in the church at Corinth. Obviously, some felt free to eat the leftover offerings from pagan temples and others felt it was a wrong thing for a Christian to do. Anytime that one Christian tries to impose a personal preference on another Christian, an opportunity for division is created. Some believe very strongly about some things for which there is no specific chapter and verse in the Bible. In those cases, we should honor our personal beliefs about such things without trying to impose them on others. However, where there is a Scriptural precedent, then it should apply to all believers. Since the Corinthian believers were so concerned about what they *could not* do, Paul decided to give them a concise list of things that they definitely *should not* do! They should not be ignorant of Bible history and the ways that God has dealt with His people in the past (10:1). They should not be idolaters or be involved in pagan activities (10:7). They should not commit sexual immorality (10:8). They should not test the Lord’s patience as Israel had done in the past (10:9). And just as it clearly states in 10:10, they should not “complain.” These issues had a Scriptural precedent and were, therefore, applicable to all the Corinthian believers.

Prayer Emphasis: Base your personal life on Scriptural certainties, and there will be no confusion as to what you should and should not do. **Listen** to and **obey** God in all matters. **Search** out biblical answers to all your spiritual questions.

Day 20: 1 Corinthians 10:11-20

“Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” (1 Corinthians 10:11)

Be Careful!

We should learn from what we read about those who attempted to follow God in the past. God had a particularly good reason for recording everything that is given to us in the Bible. It is our responsibility to seek out those reasons and apply the things that we learn to our daily life. We are urged to “take heed” (be careful) (v. 12) so we can avoid falling into the same traps and temptations as our spiritual ancestors. It is best to remember that there is no temptation out there that has not been faced before. Anything that anyone in Bible history ever did to dishonor God could find its way into our lives. However, God is faithful to us, in that, although He will allow us to be tempted, He will not allow us to be tempted beyond that which we can bear. He will faithfully show us a way to avoid sinning when we are tempted. How does He show us those ways to escape falling into temptation’s snares? One of those ways is through the lives of those who walked with Him in the past. We can all learn from Joseph’s story and how he ran away from the temptations presented by the wife of his master. We can also learn from the sad story of David, a good man who fell into a very dark situation that touched the lives of many people.

Prayer Emphasis: Read from your Bible daily and **apply** what you read to your personal life. **Recognize** that God refers to these stories as “examples” (10:11) from which we can be blessed to the point of obedience! **Learn** from the stories that God has carefully recorded for us.

Day 21: 1 Corinthians 10:21-30

“All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.” (1 Corinthians 10:23)

The Final Answer

It may seem that Paul has gone on and on while trying to answer the question about eating meats offered to idols, but he has used this question to address the much broader issue of Christian liberty and has dealt with other issues along the way. Paul’s final answer sounds much like what Jesus said when He stated that a Christian could not serve God and money (Matthew 6:24). Paul clearly states that a Christian “cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons” (v. 21). So, even if some things are “lawful” (permissible) for a believer, it is always best to choose to do what is most “helpful” (beneficial) to the church body as a whole. As Christians, we should think more about what will best help us to build the body of Christ and make it stronger. We must learn that our personal freedoms should not become a hindrance to others. So, Paul’s final answer is that we should be careful to avoid doing things that may hinder the spiritual growth of others without totally living our lives in a futile attempt to please others. It is not always going to be easy, but we all have the Holy Spirit to help us make the right decisions along the way.

Prayer Emphasis: Seek to be a good witness in all things and at all times. **Realize** that there will always be those who will be critical of us no matter how we try. When it comes to personal preferences, **seek** a path that is marked by biblical precedence and that will best benefit the cause of Christ and His church.

Day 22: 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:7

“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.” (1 Corinthians 10:31-33)

All for the Glory of God

Paul’s “Final Answer” that we read about yesterday was based on three principles that are clearly defined in the last three verses of chapter 10. Whatever decisions we make about what we eat or drink, we should make that decision with the glory of God in mind. In other words, do what you do for the glory of God alone and not to follow some other person or to seek glory for yourself. He then stated that he tried to please others as much as possible and he tried extremely hard not to be a cause for others to stumble. He also stated that he based his decisions about preferences on what was most beneficial to the church. The principle is this: “God and His glory is the first consideration in all our decisions; what is in the best interest and is most edifying to others is second; and we come last.” It sure sounds a lot like what Jesus said when He told us to “Love the Lord our God with all of our heart...and to love our neighbor as ourselves” (Matthew 22:37-39). Paul urged the believers at Corinth to follow his example since he was following the example of Christ. He then praised the Corinthian Christians for holding fast to the teachings that he passed on to them. His comments on prayer reemphasized the fact that whatever the believer does, whether in *public life* or in *private prayer*, God’s glory is to be their foremost consideration.

Prayer Emphasis: Practice putting God first, others second, and self last. **Memorize** the “Great Commandments” and **make** them a life priority every day. **Realize** that we are never more like Christ than when we are humbly putting God first.

Day 23: 1 Corinthians 11:8-16

“But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.”
(1 Corinthians 11:16)

Public Worship & Private Lives

In yesterday’s verses, we read where, in Bible times, a man was to pray with his head uncovered while a woman was to pray with her head covered. In complying with these simple rules, believers showed their submission to God and God’s plan for authority in relationships. Paul continues this line of reasoning by saying that man (meaning Adam) was not created from woman (meaning Eve), but that woman was created from man. Every man since Adam has been created from a woman. Because of this, we should understand that God did not create man and woman to operate independently of each other. Both are to *work* and *worship* together in such a way that brings glory to God. Submission is not just something that should be exhibited in public worship but in every facet of our lives. If not, then the humility and submission that is exhibited in public worship and prayer services is nothing more than those hypocritical public prayers and offerings made by the Pharisees when they desired to appear to be spiritual in the eyes of anyone who might see or hear them. Christians should be as humble and submissive to God’s authority in their *private* lives as they are at *public* worship. Again, this all ties back to freedom. In verse 16, Paul clearly states that this is not to become a point of contention within the church.

Prayer Emphasis: Submit your life to God, whether you are worshipping *publicly* at church or *privately* at home. **Exhibit** genuine humility in all your life roles – especially in the role that you are called to fulfill at home and with your family.

Day 24: 1 Corinthians 11:17-27

“For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk.”
(1 Corinthians 11:21)

The Lord’s Supper

When our private lives are not fully committed to the Lord, our lack of commitment will soon begin to manifest itself in our public worship. In the case of the Corinthian Christians, one of the ways that their lack of commitment was being manifested was in the way they were abusing the Lord’s Supper. They had turned what was intended to be a very private and personal memorial for believers into a public feast that drew large crowds – with many people coming for the physical food more than for the spiritual blessing. Because of the way these believers were observing the Lord’s Supper, Paul felt they were actually doing more harm than good when they served it. This proved to be yet another cause for division among the believers. In an observance that was to show forth unity – they had division. In a supper that was to show forth humility – they were serving themselves first and leaving others with nothing. Some were even partaking of the wine in excess. To partake of this supper in an unworthy manner meant to do it in such a way that did not memorialize the life and death of Christ. By turning this supper into a public feast, they were dishonoring the Lord and what He had accomplished for them on the cross.

Prayer Emphasis: Refuse to lose your intimacy with God. **Protect** your spiritual life by carefully observing the way you go about the things that you do for God. **Live** in such a way that your entire life will be a living witness of what God has done in your heart.

Day 25: 1 Corinthians 11:28-12:3

*“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”
(1 Corinthians 11:28)*

Self-Examination

The only way to correct the division and disorder in the Church at Corinth was for everyone to examine his or her own life and make the necessary change(s) in their own attitudes and actions. Each person (the word “man” in the original is the word that refers to man as a species and, therefore, means any person, whether male or female) was to examine (test or prove) himself before partaking of the Lord’s Supper. This was to be done every time that the supper was served. This allowed this special service to be a remembrance of Christ and His supreme sacrifice and a reminder to all believers that we should be willing to live sacrificial lives for the One who gave His all for us. The Lord’s Supper was not a time for self-indulgence – but, rather, it was a time for self-examination. The bigger picture of “Christian liberty” needs to be remembered as we continue to study this book. Thus far, we have seen that the pursuit of personal liberties and preferences among the believers led to disunity, division, and disorder. As such, the church, when operating as multiple, individual units, had become dysfunctional. The word “now” in 12:1 is an indicator that Paul is moving on to the next question. Ultimately, the answer to this next question will prove to be the answer to almost all the issues in the church. One thing was sure, God’s Spirit was to be the *cure* and not the *cause* for confusion and division in the church.

Prayer Emphasis: **Look** into your own heart and see if there are any selfish motivations behind your service in the church. **Examine** your efforts to see if they are Spirit-centered or self-centered. **Allow** the observance of the Lord’s Supper to remind you to check the motivations of your heart and service.

Day 26: 1 Corinthians 12:4-13

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

Unity in Diversity

We see the words “diversities” and “differences” three times in 1 Corinthians 12:4–6. It is interesting that those verses also have the word “same” three times. The word “different” was used to describe the gifts that were bestowed upon individuals in the church, while the word “same” was used to describe the God from whom they were received. “Different” was about the diverse services that Christians could provide for one another, while “same” was about the *source* from which that ability to serve was derived. It is obvious that the desires of the flesh led to selfish ambitions in the church at Corinth, and selfish ambition led to disunity. Since the gifts were given to allow the church as a whole to be strengthened by the ministry of the individual members, the church would find unity in their diversity. Nine specific gifts are mentioned in verses 7-10, with each one serving to make the entire church body stronger as a whole. The gifts were selected and distributed by the Holy Spirit. Take a moment and circle the word “one” every time you find it in verses 11-13. Only God could take *different* people and use them in *different* ways to bring the church to a place of being *one* in Him!

Prayer Emphasis: **Live** to benefit the body as a whole and not just yourself and your individual needs. **Consider** the needs of the church as a whole when you make decisions about service. **Seek** to discover your personal, spiritual gift and **employ** it in service to the Lord and His church.

Day 27: 1 Corinthians 12:14-23

“But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.”
(1 Corinthians 12:18)

Mutual Dependence

Just like the human body is not made up of one part, but many, so the church is made up of many individuals who serve as a part of one, complete body for Christ. No individual part of the body should ever consider itself to be *superior* or *inferior* to any other. Each part of the body has a mutual dependence upon the other parts. Verse 18 tells us that God himself “set” (arranged) the various parts “as He pleased.” Just as the human body is no accidental result of some haphazard action or event in the past, so it is with God’s spiritual body, the church. There is a divine design in the way the church is put together. Through that design, the church is enabled to pursue and accomplish a divine purpose when its different parts work together to fulfill the Lord’s purposes. No one part of the body should think that it can operate independently or separately from the others. If any part of the body is severed from the whole, the severed part will soon die, and the body will suffer a great loss of ability or mobility. Without all the individual parts being fully functional, the church itself cannot be fully functional. We all need each other if we are going to succeed in our divine mission.

Prayer Emphasis: **Value** the ministries of others. **Express** appreciation to someone who serves in a different ministry than yours today. **Pray** for all our church volunteers and workers on a regular basis.

Day 28: 1 Corinthians 12:24-31

“...God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, ...” (1 Corinthians 12:24)

“Honor”

The word translated “honor” in verse 24 is a word that means “value” or “price” and is translated in those words in other places in the New Testament. By putting all the different “parts” of the body together, and making them mutually dependent upon one another, God has created a ministry plan that gives value to every member of the church. As such, there are no big or little jobs in God’s church! Every member is vitally important to the overall ministry. Verse 25 clearly states that there should be no division in the body because each part of the body should have an equal concern one for the other. The unifying head of the body is Christ. Verse 28 says that God “appointed,” or literally *assigned*, different people to different roles of service and *equipped* them to serve in those capacities. Can all serve in the same ways? How awkward would it be if everyone in the church decided to preach a sermon in next Sunday’s worship service? How confusing would it be if everyone decided to “lead” in prayer at the same time? How much harmony would we have if everyone decided to present their own special musical presentation at the same time? When we realize that none of the individual parts of the body could be functional without the full participation and support of the others, we learn that all believers bring great value to the church.

Prayer Emphasis: **Value** your Christian friends and fellow church members and **support** them in their efforts to serve the Lord. **Respect** their role and the service they provide to the church. **Remember**, every believer has the potential, and the responsibility, to bring immense value to the church.

Day 29: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith...but have not love, I am nothing.” (1 Corinthians 13:1-2)

The Unifying Ingredient

Some scholars think the words of the 13th chapter were composed separately from the rest of this letter and then inserted at a later time. Whether it was composed prior to or at the same time as the rest of the letter, it is still, no doubt, divinely inspired. Paul is emphasizing that all the spiritual gifts mentioned earlier are to be exercised in, and empowered by, the love of God. Without love, all our efforts will just sound like a lot of loud noise. This is a beautiful section of Scripture that accomplishes several important things: 1) it helps us understand what true love is (v. 4), 2) it helps us understand what true love is not (v. 5), 3) it helps us understand some of the things that love does and does not do (v. 6), 4) it reveals some things that love always does (v. 7), and 5) it includes one thing that love never does (v. 8). All of this might not have been as clear to the church then as it would be later when their understanding would be enlightened. Corinth was famous for its production of bronze mirrors. Although those mirrors were functional, the image that they displayed was far from perfect. Paul wanted these believers to understand that the love they expressed while attempting to serve the Lord would help to cover their personal and spiritual imperfections.

Prayer Emphasis: Seek to serve in love and let it be your one, true motivation for service to Christ. **Express** love to others, especially to those in your family.

Day 30: 1 Corinthians 14:1-9

“Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.” (1 Corinthians 14:1)

“Pursue Love”

The word translated “pursue” in verse one means to run after, or to seek something diligently. Paul is encouraging the Corinthian believers to forsake the pursuit of their personal preferences and selfish ambitions and to “pursue love.” At the same time, he told them they should “desire spiritual gifts.” The word translated “desire” here is translated “covet” in other places in the Bible. The implication is that the believer is to show some initiative in their pursuit of serving God in love and spiritual giftedness. The last part of verse one places a special emphasis on the gift of prophecy. The emphasis on tongues in verses two through ten, is a clear indicator that the members of the church at Corinth had placed a special emphasis on that gift and the gift was being used by so many that no one was able to benefit from the confusion that it was causing in the services. Everyone who exercised their gift of prophecy, however, was said to benefit the church by strengthening, encouraging, and comforting its members while speaking in tongues seemed to be more for self-edification. Paul was not commanding them not to speak in tongues. He was, though, teaching them that public worship was for the edification of the body as a whole and not for the showcasing of individual gifts. The fact that Paul uses the word translated “tongues” 21 times in 1 Corinthians and only three other times in the remainder of his letters, is a rather good indication that there was some abuse of this area of gifting within this church.

Prayer Emphasis: Seek to use your spiritual gift in such a way that the entire church can be strengthened, encouraged, and comforted. **Ask** God to help you discover and develop your personal, spiritual gift.

Day 31: 1 Corinthians 14:10-20

*“I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.”
(1 Corinthians 14:18-19)*

“Voices”

The word translated “languages” in verse 10 is the same word that was used to describe the sound of a flute or harp in verse seven and of a trumpet in verse eight. In each of those cases, it was stressed that the sound made by these instruments should be clearly distinguishable. Human sounds (words) needed to be clearly distinguishable as well if the church were to understand their meaning and learn from their use. Without interpretation, tongues could be like having someone stand up and speak in a foreign language that no one understood. This kind of church experience could easily lead to frustration for the speaker and the listeners. Just like the “sound” of the trumpet (as referred to back in verse eight) was to solicit a certain action or reaction from an army standing ready to do battle, so the words spoken in a public worship service should be clearly spoken and presented in such a way that every soldier/saint knows what they are being asked to do. Paul emphasized the value of prophecy over tongues by saying that he “would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also” (v. 19).

Prayer Emphasis: Notice that Paul emphasized the importance of instructing others over his own, personal gratifications. **Seek** to be as unselfish as possible in your every activity. **Minister** and **speak** in such a way that everyone will understand what they are being asked to do for God.

Day 32: 1 Corinthians 14:21-30

“Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.” (1 Corinthians 14:22)

A Sign for Unbelievers

Verse 22 of today’s reading clearly states God’s intention for the use of tongues when Paul states that “tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers.” The word translated “sign” here is translated “miracle” in other places in the New Testament. The Day of Pentecost was a perfect example of how tongues, like miracles, could be used to gain the attention of unbelievers so they could hear the gospel. The fact that the various people heard foreigners speaking in their own languages caused them to stop and listen. It was a “sign” to them that something supernatural was taking place. Believers, Paul argued, would benefit more from prophecy. Verse 26 clearly indicates that people with different gifts were allowed to exercise their gifts in church services. However, all exercising of spiritual gifts had to be done in such a way that the entire body was strengthened from it. Notice that Paul used the word “if” when he spoke of tongues being used in a public service (v. 27). That is a clear indication that tongues were not a part of every service and certainly not a requirement for public worship. “If” someone spoke in tongues, and “if” there was no one there to interpret, the speaker was instructed to keep quiet “in the church” and speak to himself and God. Two or three “prophets” were to speak in the public services and the people were to carefully consider what was taught.

Prayer Emphasis: Refuse to restrict the moving of God’s Spirit in worship services. It is fine to have an order of service, but the Spirit should feel free to interrupt us anytime that He so desires. **Understand** that all spiritual gifts are appropriate when used at appropriate times and in appropriate situations.

Day 33: 1 Corinthians 14:31-40

“Let all things be done decently and in order.” (1 Corinthians 14:40)

“One by One”

It is obvious that there was to be order, and not confusion, when spiritual gifts were employed in public worship. This was to be the case no matter *what gift* was being exercised or *when* it was being exercised. When the teachers (prophets) taught, they were to do so “one by one” or, as some translations state, “in order” (v. 31). Even though there might not have been a specific “Order of Service” for public worship, the worship services were to be orderly and without confusion. This fits well with the earlier instructions regarding spiritual gifts. The different parts of the body were to work together to perform as one unit. As such, the different gifts, when exercised, each had their proper place and role in public worship. Paul clearly stated that God was not the author of “confusion (disorder) but of peace” (v. 33). The instructions that Paul is giving to the Corinthian believers were the same that had been given to the other “churches.” There are some extreme views, both ways, on the subjects of the role of women and the exercising of spiritual gifts in public worship. We should be careful to avoid being too extreme in our position on either issue. When things are done “decently” and “in order,” then God will be glorified when we assemble ourselves for worship.

Prayer Emphasis: **Respect** the beliefs of others and **refuse** to be critical of other churches that preach the gospel of salvation by grace. **Remember**, no fellow believer is our competitor or enemy. **Pray** that our public worship will be free from confusion and honoring to God at all times.

Day 34: 1 Corinthians 15:1-15

“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

Keeping Things in Perspective

The word “moreover” (15:1) is a clear indicator that Paul is again moving on to another subject. It seems that he has saved the best reason for the church to operate without strife and confusion for last. When weighed against the soon return of Christ and our short-lived opportunity to do His work here, any issue that might cause division in the church should seem petty and unimportant. Paul clearly stated that what he was going to say about the resurrection was information he received (been taught) and was passing on to them. “First of all” (of first importance) was the fact that “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (vs. 3-4). Just as surely as He had appeared to Peter, the 12, and more than 500 other individuals, He was to soon appear to these Corinthian believers. Paul’s humility is clearly exhibited in verses eight and nine. It is obvious that his former role as a persecutor of the church left him with many sad memories and deep regrets. However, God’s grace had transformed this *persecutor* into a *preacher*, and Paul did not allow God’s grace to be wasted on him. He sought to live and serve in such a way that God’s grace would not have been bestowed upon him “in vain” (v.10).

Prayer Emphasis: **Realize** that a proper perspective about the soon return of Christ and the rapture of the church causes all our religious differences to seem unimportant. **Serve** Christ today like you really believe He could return at any moment.

Day 35: 1 Corinthians 15:16-30

*“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”
(1 Corinthians 15:20)*

“The Firstfruits”

Paul wanted the Christians at Corinth to know that he did not consider himself to be either vital or irreplaceable when it came to ministry. Speaking of the other apostles, Paul said that the message could have come from any of them, and it would have had the same power and life-changing effect upon them. It was their personal faith in the *message*, and not the *messenger*, that had saved them. Paul then turned his attention to addressing some issues concerning bodily resurrection. To deny a bodily resurrection was to deny that Christ Himself had risen from the dead. Paul wanted these Christians to understand the grave consequences that accompanied this kind of unbelief. A gospel without the resurrection was futile. If there was no resurrection, then the apostles, including Paul, should be dealt with as false witnesses. By faith, Paul could boldly conclude that “Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (v. 20). In the Old Testament, the “firstfruits” were an indicator of what was to follow, but in much more abundance. As such, the resurrection of Christ was to be an indicator of the fact that all believers could look forward to a bodily resurrection and a reunion with all of those who have gone to heaven before us.

Prayer Emphasis: **Discipline** yourself to prioritize sharing the gospel over debating doctrine with other believers. **Believe** that our time and opportunities to share the gospel are coming to a close. **Remember**, it is about the *message* and not the *messenger*!

Day 36: 1 Corinthians 15:31-40

“If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!’” (1 Corinthians 15:32)

The Risk of Reach!

Since the day of his personal conversion, Paul had sought diligently to win other people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Many times, his efforts to reach out to others came at a great price. Why would he have chosen to face so much opposition and persecution if he did not fully, completely, and totally believe that the gospel was from God? If the resurrection was only some “pie in the sky” and “feel good” kind of teaching and preaching, then he probably should have given up the ministry entirely! He warned the believers at Corinth against being misled by associating with the wrong people. If people refuse to believe in Christ and His resurrection, then we should preach the truth to them. If they refuse to believe the truth, we are not to compromise what we believe when we are around them. Paul warned that there were going to be some who would not understand about the resurrection. He suggested a simple analogy: Just like a seed is sown in one form only to come forth from the ground in another form, so it is with our resurrection. Our earthly bodies will be sown, as they are now, into the grave only to someday emerge as a supernatural, heavenly body. If people want us to explain that, then we should ask them to explain how an oak tree can grow from an acorn. It just happens because God makes it happen! Amen!

Prayer Emphasis: **Accept** Christ as your Savior today. If you have already accepted Christ, then **share** Him with someone else. **Consider** this thought daily: *All people, everywhere, need to be born again if they desire to experience heaven when they die.*

Day 37: 1 Corinthians 15:41-50

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body...” (1 Corinthians 15:42-44)

A Perfect Body

Can you imagine how wonderful it would be to live in a perfect body? The body in which I currently reside is far from perfect. In fact, it is so imperfect that it will someday quit on me altogether! When that happens, it will be so useless that, after whatever reusable parts can be harvested, the remains will be burned or buried! My current body is perishable! However, my new body, the one I have on order from God & Son Inc., is imperishable! It will never get sick or fail me in any way. It will never die. One day, the human part of me will be put away in dishonor only to be raised again in glory. It will be put away in weakness only to be raised in power! It will be put away a natural body that will return to nature itself, but it will be raised a supernatural body that can dwell in the presence of God! Just as surely as there is a natural body in which I *now* reside, there will be a spiritual body in which I will *someday* reside. To get to that spiritual body, I must live through this current phase of life in the natural. When I die, the part of me that belongs here will stay here, but the part of me that belongs to God will go to be with Him in heaven. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. Because of that fact, we must leave this old body behind when we die with full faith that God will give us the spiritual body that He has promised to us.

Prayer Emphasis: **Respect** your earthly body. Take diligent care of it. **Realize** that it is God’s temple and that the Holy Spirit abides with us here. **Thank God** for His presence within you.

Day 38: 1 Corinthians 15:51-58

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)

The “Mystery”

After discussing the resurrection of the dead in Christ, Paul moved on to explain how things will be for those who are alive when Christ returns to rapture His church. The interest of every listener had to be peaked as Paul stated, “Behold, I tell you a mystery.” A New Testament “mystery” was something that was being newly revealed to believers in New Testament times. That is why Paul had to “tell” them what the “mystery” was. Paul explained that someday, without warning, a trumpet will sound. When it does, believers who are alive on earth at that time will be “changed.” Our earthly bodies will become spiritual – never again to be weakened by age or threatened by sickness or death. Believers will realize that the curse of Adam has been eternally broken and that Satan’s temporary victory in Eden will be totally reversed. Rather than wait until that moment, Paul began to offer thanks to God for that fact in the present. Because of this ultimate victory, believers should in this life be firm in their faith – allowing nothing to limit their work for the Lord.

Prayer Emphasis: **Visualize** your being resurrected or raptured and then changed completely into a complete person that can never again fail or disappoint anyone – especially God! **Look forward** to the Lord’s return and **look around** for something to do for God until that glorious day!

Day 39: 1 Corinthians 16:1-11

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: ...” (1 Corinthians 16:1)

God’s Finance Plan

The believer who realizes that the work done for Christ in this life is not “in vain” (15:58) will be willing to invest in ministry so that we can continue to reach people until the day of the resurrection and rapture of the church. The word translated “in vain” in the final verse of yesterday’s reading literally means “empty.” When we invest in God’s Kingdom, we are not going to come up “empty.” It is clear from today’s verses that God fully expects every believer to give to the work of the church on a regular, systematic basis. Our giving should be based on a percentage of what God has given us. If all believers were faithful to the teaching of verses one and two of this chapter, there would be no need for special offerings, or “collections,” to be taken to support worthwhile causes (v. 2). Notice that Paul wisely disassociated himself from the handling of the church’s money. As such, the Corinthian believers were to select someone to oversee the money collected in the offerings and make sure that they got to where they needed to be. Paul let them know that he planned to come and spend some time with them, but, until he could, he was going to send Timothy to minister to them.

Prayer Emphasis: **Review** your giving record and see if you have been faithfully investing in the work of the church. **Commit** to being faithful with a regular gift that reflects your appreciation for what God has given to you. **Trust** God enough to be faithful to Him in giving.

Day 40: 1 Corinthians 16:12-24

“Let all that you do be done with love.” (1 Corinthians 16:14)

In Closing

As Paul began to close this letter, he touched on several issues of importance. Apparently, one of the things that the church had communicated with him about was a visit from Apollos. If you recall, Apollos was a favorite preacher among many of the believers in this church (see 1:12). Paul obviously relayed that request to Apollos but had to report to the church that he was not able to make a commitment to visit with them at that time. Take a moment to review these closing verses and circle the word “love” every time you see it. Just as love had been the answer to most of the problems in the church, love now will be the key ingredient to their sustaining a ministry for Christ until His return. Verse 14 says it all! They were to do everything that they did in love. Verse 22 declares that the one, true measure for ministry is love. If anyone in the church refused to season their talk or walk with love for Jesus Christ, then that person was to be marked and separated from the body before their attitude contaminated the rest of the church. Those who did not exhibit true love for the Lord Jesus Christ were to be “accursed” (v. 22). Paul’s closing prayer was “O Lord, come!” This should be the prayer of every believer today. We should look forward to the moment that we will be with our Lord in Heaven without forgetting to look around for someone to take with us along the way!

Prayer Emphasis: **Thank God** for His helping us through all our **Kingdom Problems!** Pray for churches everywhere and ask God to strengthen them in their work for Him. **Contact us** at gary@seminolebc.com or 850-562-8069 if we can pray for you or help you in any way.