

# THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

CH. I. 1-10.

Every epistle has its own distinctive character, because each was written for a different purpose. By this means God has overruled even the sins and failures of His people in the past to provide us with instruction to meet all the varied needs of the present dispensation, till our Lord returns. And if we are to understand His word as a whole, and receive the instruction that He intends for us, we must observe, as one of the matters of first importance, what that purpose was in the writing of any particular epistle. If this is not observed we shall make one to conflict with another, or fall into the error of over-emphasising one side of a matter to the ignoring of another.

It would be unreasonable to think that Paul, or any other inspired writer, would contradict himself in writing two epistles; much more would it be so to think this of the Holy Spirit Who inspired the writing. And a due regard to the purpose of the writing and the circumstances and conditions bearing upon it, will help us greatly in seeing the balance of truth and the perfect harmony of all Scripture.

To illustrate this point, comparisons with the Epistle of the Romans will help us to appreciate the value of many statements, not only in this Epistle but in Romans also.

When Paul wrote to the Romans he had not been to them, but had been longing to go for a long time. When he wrote to the Corinthians it was to a Church which he had himself established, and with which he had remained for a matter of years. To the Romans he desired to "impart some spiritual gift," whereas the Corinthians were abounding in these. His desire for the Romans was that they might be established in the full Gospel, but everything in the Epistle to the Corinthians implies that they were enriched in all knowledge, but that certain errors and misconduct had crept in (comp. Rom. 1.<sup>11</sup> with 1 Cor. 1.<sup>5-7</sup>). Matters of doctrine in Romans are *expounded* for those who were not fully established. In Corinthians such matters are referred to as arguments for practical devotion for those who knew. And for this reason the latter are often ambiguous in wording, and must be understood from the expository statements in Romans. He longed to go to the Romans, but would not go to the Corinthians while they were not sufficiently humbled over the sin that was among them. Such comparisons help us to see the different "setting" to his teaching in Rom. 14 concerning

“receiving”, and that in Corinthians concerning “exclusion”. And the difference, yet perfect harmony, between the “broadness” of Rom. 14 and the denunciation of denominations in 1 Cor. 12:3.

If these things were more fully recognised among children of God it would contribute largely to the removing of obstacles to unity in the faith. May the Holy Spirit help us in this direction. And with this object in view may we consider the Epistle before us.

Ch. 1, ver. 1: “Paul, called an apostle of Jesus Christ”. Here is an assertion of authority at the outset. Not a matter of pride or glorying in a title; but a deep consciousness of the dignity and solemnity of the responsibility put upon him, with a corresponding sense of his own unworthiness. And when the nature of the Epistle is realized, we can appreciate the aptness of such an assertion. The aptness of a like assertion in writing to the Romans can also be appreciated, but from a different standpoint, as shown by the comparisons above.

He was an apostle (sent one) of Jesus Christ, for He is the Head of the Church. “But it was through the will of God”. This shows at one and the same time the perfect subjection of Christ to the Father, and the fact that it was not of Paul's own will.

“Sosthenes a brother”. If this is the one of Acts 18:17, the converted ruler of the synagogue, it illustrates the kind of men that Paul had as companions: those who had suffered for Christ's sake.

Ver. 2. “The Church of God which is at Corinth”. Though a large city and the believers were many, they were only one church, that is, one local church; and the other saints in the “places” round about were not called “churches”, but were viewed as being under the oversight of the church at Corinth. The term “every place” cannot mean “everywhere throughout the world”, for there is much in the Epistle that could only apply to those of that one church. Though the guidance is there for us should there at any time arise similar conditions. It must mean “every place” in the vicinity, where there were “saints” to be found.

Ver. 3. The common mode of salutation, “grace and peace”, by comparison with the Jewish “peace” alone, reminds us not only of the grace of justification, but the fact that there is grace to meet every need, and therefore we should have continual peace.

Ver. 4. Though the two epistles to Corinth are so full of censure, yet there is the recognition of the work of God in them, which called forth the thanksgiving. This has its

bearing upon another matter. Some, in order to justify an unscriptural latitude in fellowship with errors, will quote the fact that those at Corinth were still a church; ignoring other facts that bear upon it. For one thing, the Holy Spirit had not withdrawn the spiritual gifts from them. This is according to God's principle throughout. Very rarely does He take action against sin without ample warning. But the seven Epistles in Revelation show that drastic action would take place if the warning were ignored. On the other hand, would those who argue in favour of remaining in fellowship where error is not judged, be willing to remain where there was fornication, drunkenness at the Lord's Supper, and a denial of the resurrection? These things existed at Corinth, though it was still a "church"; but the same epistle that calls them a church, censured them heavily and called them to action with repentance. And if Paul would not go (2 Cor. 2.1) to them while those things which caused him heaviness continued, how could we call them a church if there had been no repentance and therefore he had been obliged to disown them? Some might have thought it a time for him to hasten to them, but do we not see in his refraining a determination not to be identified with them while the wrongs remained. Nor is it the "magnitude" of the sin that is all important, it is the attitude that is manifested when the sin is pointed out that is the real index and therefore the deciding factor.

Thanks be to God, the second epistle shows that there was deep repentance and that Paul had confidence that there would be when he wrote (2 Cor. 1.14, 15 and 2.3). And this confidence finds expression in the first epistle in 1.6-9.

It is worthy of note that the word "coming" in ver. 7 is really "revelation". The same word that is used for the Lord's appearing in judgment. A witness against the attempt to make the "apokalupsis" (revelation) to refer to a distinct event from the "parousia" (coming, or presence): as also against the thought of a "secret" coming of the Lord.

Ver. 10 introduces us to the condition of things at Corinth that caused the apostle to write. The thing that the Lord predicted in John 10.12 had begun: the wolf had begun his work of scattering the sheep. The Lord's concern was "that they all might be one". Not simply one in Him, as members of His body. But one in doctrine and testimony—"that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" being His explanation in John 17.21. And here Paul beseeches them "by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" that they all might speak the same thing. Let us note the force of the whole statement here. "Speak the SAME THING, and let there be NO DIVISIONS among you; but

that ye be PERFECTLY JOINED TOGETHER in the SAME MIND and in the SAME JUDGMENT." What a contrast to the prevailing conditions to-day, where all manner of conflicting teachings are being tolerated even in the same meetings. We ought to be concerned. The Holy Spirit has been sent to lead us into ALL truth; and if we cannot come to agreement we ought to examine ourselves and ask the Lord to show us if the hindrance be in ME. I may genuinely think I am right, but I may still be wrong. A long period of viewing a passage of Scripture in a certain way leaves an impression on the mind which may cause a bias without our being conscious of it. But if we really want the truth the Holy Spirit will not deny us; only let us have the honesty of heart to admit what Scripture says.

"That there be no divisions." Yes, division is sinful. But let us distinguish between division and separation. The Corinthians were divided, but not separated. Some said there is no resurrection of the dead; but all came together to break bread (ch. 11.<sup>20</sup> and 15.<sup>15</sup>). Separation is justifiable; yea, it is appointed where error is persisted in; the division in heart and mind over the Word of God is where the sin lies. Oh, how careful we need to be to avoid all stubbornness and all personal opinions.

We are to be "perfectly joined together". Paul says nothing about essentials and non-essentials. An apparently harmless divergence from the words of the living God can be the starting place of a doctrine that attacks the person of Christ, or undermines His work, or casts unrighteousness upon the character of God. Like the points on the railway line, only a "knife-edge" at the beginning, but they may quickly divert the train into a totally different direction.

The "same mind" and the "same judgment". This can only be attained to as "the mind of the Spirit" is allowed full freedom of operation, and every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10.<sup>3-5</sup>), so that He is Lord indeed and His judgment accepted. The issues are not our responsibilities but His; and wherever the truth leads it is our responsibility to follow.



# 1. CORINTHIANS 1.11-31.

Ver. 11 gives us the reason for Paul writing to the Corinthians in the way that he did—at least in this part of the epistle. It was because it had been declared unto him by the house of Chloe that there were contentions among them. In so saying, Paul sets a very helpful example in frankness. He mentions the name of the persons who had informed him about them. He doesn't say, "a certain person told me", or "it was told me confidentially": the mode of expression so common among believers to-day, which leaves no opportunity for those accused to get face to face with those who have given the information.

Paul's frankness in mentioning the name deals a fatal blow to backbiting. How much talking would be stopped if it were known that the hearer would do as Paul did—go straight to those concerned and tell them who had said the thing. The whole thing was done openly. And if people don't want what they say to be repeated to the one of whom they speak, they should keep silence.

In this case, those of Chloe saw there was the enemy's work going on, and realized that Paul should know, that it might be stopped. This is not backbiting, but an open witness against evil, for the sake of the truth and the welfare of the saints.

Now we might ask, Why does Paul say "Now I say", when he is not writing from his own observation but on the testimony of others? This matter of divisions and names continues to the end of ch. 4; and in ch. 4.6 he says, "And these things, brethren, I have, in a figure, transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes, that ye might learn in us not to think above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another".

This shows that there were some *among themselves* who had risen up as leaders of certain teachings, which divided the church into parties who were taking their names to distinguish themselves. This is borne out by ch. 4.18, 19 and 15.12. It is the same thing that Paul foretold in Acts 20.30. And the same thing has happened ever since. The exhortation then was "not to think above that which is written" (omit the words "of men" in ch. 4.6).

This applies to teachers and hearers alike; but alas, teachers so often think above what is written, and the hearers are content to accept it without going to the

Scriptures to see for themselves; or if they do, and cannot see it, they give the teacher credit for knowing better and for being a man who is taught of God, and accept it on that ground. They overlook the fact that those of the other party think the same of their teacher.

But in all these different sects and parties the idea of setting Paul, Apollos, Cephas and Christ at variance with each other would not be entertained. Paul "transferred" the case to himself and Apollos (and Cephas and Christ) that they might learn the folly of their own ways and that God should be acknowledged as all in all (ch. 3.4-7).

This is what is needed to-day. The Word of God is final. Let the matter in hand be read in its completeness. Let it be read again and again, as a whole, if need be: then it will be easy for the simple to understand. This matter occupies the first four chapters, and each statement must be understood in agreement with the whole. The practice of taking single words, statements or verses and connecting them with other statements in different parts of the Bible, without due regard to the matter in hand in each place, simply because the same word happens to be used there, is ruinous to the knowledge of the truth and feeds this disease of pride ("puffed up") and partyism.

In view of what has been said, we can appreciate the force of Paul's following questions, "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" By such questions he exposes the folly of their own standpoint, and puts on record a testimony that equally condemns the adoption of any names, whether they be of men, or of doctrines, or of particular practices, or even of Christ if it be used to distinguish from other believers who are equally His.

The verses that follow (14-17) are an extension of what has been said, to show that Paul took a course which would safeguard the position against *his* name being brought into prominence. But the malpractice of seizing isolated statements regardless of context has been applied to ver. 17 by some to disparage baptism. It is perfectly true that the *object* of Paul being sent was not baptism, but the Gospel, but that by no means nullifies the testimony generally in Matt. 28 and Mark 16 and in the Acts that baptism ought to follow the belief of the Gospel. It is evident that Paul exercised a holy wisdom in this, as did also the Lord Jesus, in John 4.1, 2.

At the same time he makes clear that it is the belief of the Gospel that saves and not baptism. Yet on the other hand, if one truly believes the Gospel, will he not also believe the testimony of the Lord and the apostles as to baptism, which is so definitely associated with the Gospel, and be obedient?

From ver. 17 another important aspect of the case is introduced: foolishness on the one hand and wisdom on the other. And we find that this permeates the whole of the four chapters dealing with this matter of schisms. Obviously schism is folly as well as sin. It breaks up the unity of the body and hinders the appointed ministry of member to member (Eph. 4.<sup>15, 16</sup>).

We also see from the testimony here that the cause of the schism is the foolishness of aiming at the wisdom of the world. To our shame, it is true that "the children of this age are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light." They make provision for their own sphere: we, instead of laying up treasure in heaven, our own sphere, hanker after the things of earth. But we have a heavenly calling, and seeing that the world is in darkness, and that we are not of the world, we should be concerned to have the wisdom which is from above (James 1.<sup>5</sup>; 3.<sup>13-18</sup>). That wisdom is foolishness with men; but the foolishness of God is wiser than men. And how does this affect the matter of schism? By thinking above that which is written (ch. 4.<sup>6</sup>), instead of depending wholly on "the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth" (2.<sup>13</sup>). When one cannot find a definite statement in Scripture concerning some teaching which he holds, he will say "it is in the warp and woof of Scripture"; or, being unable to produce proof of a matter he will speak of "cumulative evidence", or speak of being spiritually minded and initiated into the mysteries of God, in a way that implies that others who are not satisfied with his interpretations, but ask for simple statements in the words of the Holy Ghost, are not in communion with God. This is the wisdom of the carnal mind, that having decided on a doctrine reads Scripture to conform to it. And as this does not apply to one doctrine only, but to scores, so the leaders increase, all at variance with one another, and the schisms increase with them.

There is no reason to think that the Corinthians were in error on such vitals as the deity of Christ, or justification. Except that some denied the resurrection, they held the Gospel as Paul had declared it to them (ch. 15.<sup>1-4</sup>). Therefore his emphasis on the Gospel being foolishness with men, but at the same time the power of God and the wisdom of God, is a matter of using that which he knew they would agree to as a basis for something further. That is to say, "If you rejoice in a Gospel which is foolishness with men, but which you know to be the wisdom of God; and you know the Gospel (Christ crucified) to be the foundation of all, why do you leave the wisdom of God for the wisdom of men in building the superstructure?" Which results, not in edification (building

up) but in destruction (pulling down and rending of the body).

Continuing through the chapter we see the contrast drawn repeatedly between the wisdom of men and the wisdom of God: not only in the Gospel itself, but in the vessels which He deigns to use, human and otherwise, "that no flesh should glory in His presence".

Then in ver. 30 we come to the words which have been so much misused to support the belief that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us: or rather, one word is picked out from the four, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. The matter of imputed righteousness is not here at all. Consistent with the theme of the whole four chapters, Paul asserts that Christ *became* to us wisdom, in contrast to our own human wisdom. In James 3 we have seen the difference between the two wisdoms, that which causes strife and schism is earthly, sensual (soulish), demonial. That which is from above results in righteousness. So in Cor. 1: "Christ Jesus, Who of God became to us wisdom, righteousness also, and sanctification, and redemption". This wisdom is followed by and characterised by the other three things. All of them in a practical sense. The wisdom is not imputed (legally reckoned), so neither is the righteousness nor sanctification nor redemption. Moreover, if the righteousness were imputed righteousness, the order would be wrong, that should be first.

The redemption here is also a matter of practical experience. Not by blood, but by power. So that the object of the verse as a whole is to demonstrate that the wisdom of God in the Gospel is commended by the effect it has in the lives of those who receive it, that, as it is written, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (from Jer. 9.23).

# 1. CORINTHIANS 2 & 3.

If any of God's servants could boast anything in the flesh, Paul himself could have done. Brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a devout follower of the law of Moses; at his conversion he was commissioned by the Lord from heaven to be His witness to the Gentiles and kings and the people of Israel. His doctrine was received by direct revelation from the Lord, so that he had no need to be instructed by men; but the opening verses of this chapter show how he set aside all that he might have counted as assets to the gospel testimony—not only for the purpose of the epistle which he was writing, to witness against their glorying in men—but from the very first of his coming to them.

He refrained from anything that would persuade them to receive the testimony, that the excellency of the power might be of God, that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. It is beautiful to see that the one who had plenty to glory in, if he had so wished, was like his Master in the setting aside of all.

But there is another side of the matter, too, he was with them in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling". In other contexts he speaks of "boldness" in preaching and writing, but there is no contradiction. Who is there that has been cast upon the Lord for words to speak who has not felt the same in measure? He would face men or lions for the sake of the gospel; but he trembled lest the message should be in his own wisdom and power and not that of the Holy Spirit. But God has respect to those that tremble at His word (Isa. 66.<sup>2</sup>), and the church at Corinth was a standing testimony to God's use of His servant.

In ver. 2 the words, "I determined not to know anything, etc.," may be misunderstood, and encourage some to go no further in the knowledge of the truth than to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified. But the force of the statement is, "I did not determine to know", not "I determined that I would not know". The Greek definitely puts the negative with the word "determine". This attitude fits the principles that he is setting before them, to make himself nothing and to preach Christ.

There may also be another reason for this in the circumstances of his coming to them. He had come to them from Athens, a city famous for its philosophy, a centre of learning of the Greeks. But he found the city wholly given up to idolatry and mythology. And when he

preached Jesus and the resurrection to them he was called a "babbler". But with itching ears for anything new they gave him a hearing, till he spoke of resurrection and judgment, then some mocked and others said we will hear thee again of this matter.

Wise in their own conceit, they had no time for God's testimony.

From there he passed to Corinth, another great city of the Greeks. What was he to expect? He knew that worldly wisdom was of no avail, and he was cast upon God, not only for words to speak, but for the power of the Holy Spirit to convict and convert. So in the house of Justus God began to work: and Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed with all his house.

But, we may ask, what is the purport of all this? Many there are who would rejoice in these principles in gospel testimony. But in this epistle it is part of his testimony, which occupies the first four chapters, against DENOMINATIONS.

The true meaning of his words, "I did not determine to know", in ver. 2, is borne out by what follows from ver. 6 onward. He spoke the wisdom of God, the hidden wisdom, among those that were perfect. And this word "perfect" is understood from what follows. There is no suggestion of sinlessness. Those who are perfect in this sense are those who are indwelt by and subject to the Spirit of God.

From the time that Adam first sinned man has been in a defective state as to the things of God. Not that he is thereby excused, as Paul showed to the people of Lystra (Acts 14.17). But by the new birth a condition is brought about whereby we are made perfect, or complete, so that we may understand the things that are freely given to us of God. Yes, it is our privilege to *understand* these things.

And as we read through these verses and note the emphasis on the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, how vain and futile we see it to be to introduce the wisdom of man. And on the other hand, how glorious a possession we have, as ver. 16 says, "we have the mind of Christ". Do we appreciate this as we ought? Do we find it so in experience? Whence all the conflicting doctrines among believers if we all have the mind of Christ?

It is indeed true that we have the mind of Christ, but though by new birth we become a new creation, we have not got out of the old altogether; it is our *responsibility* to put off the old man and put on the new (Col. 3.9, 10), and to "bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10.5). If this were done,

the mind of Christ would be free to assert itself and we would all speak the same thing; but the common thing is for believers to allow the minds to run after favourite speakers and writers. And if there is any judgment to be made on a matter, it is not the mind of Christ that is sought, but the mind of some leaders or teachers, specially of their own denomination, and their verdict is accepted as final.

The Holy Spirit does not usually force His truth upon us, but He is graciously willing to lead if we are really willing to be led: and that implies willingness to obey and to go when the leading is given.

It is the party spirit that makes national politics the failure that they are. And it is the party spirit that makes the Church the failure that she is. The Book of Proverbs, written by one specially endowed with wisdom from God, says, "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes" (ch. 21.<sup>2</sup>), and it also says that "the way of a fool is right in his own eyes" (ch. 12.<sup>15</sup>). What folly and pride to think that *our* way must be the right way: and the more obviously so when all the sects are thinking the same. Is it not high time to awake out of sleep?

Am I wrong in what I have written, or does the next chapter confirm it? Paul says, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk according to man? For while one saith, I am of Paul: and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?" What clearer testimony could there be that the denominational attitude is the greatest barrier to the teaching of the Holy Spirit. And this applies to those who profess to be "outside the sects" as much as to any others.

Notice how in the verses that follow, the emphasis is put upon God's work, even though Paul was an apostle and spoke by inspiration. In ver 5, "The LORD gave". Ver. 6, "GOD gave". Ver. 7, "GOD that giveth". Ver. 9, "GOD's husbandry". Then follow those solemn verses concerning the judgment seat of Christ. Paul, as a wise master builder, had laid the foundation—Christ. But it was each one's responsibility to see what he built upon that foundation.

The fact that *your* school or *your* circle taught a certain thing will not clear you at the judgment seat of Christ. The mind of Christ is available to *you*. That is, of course, if you are born again. It is *your* responsibility to avail yourself of it.

Many there are who studiously avoid denominational names, knowing them to be wrong, but they are just as denominational in their attitude of mind as those who openly use the names. Nothing that is not taught among them is given a moment's genuine consideration. Can the Holy Spirit work in such conditions, according to the opening verses of this chapter? Much that has been prized as precious will be "burned up" in that day. Thanks be to God, grace will secure the believer, "he himself shall be saved", but the loss will be real; and it will be felt, or it would not be loss.

We should also notice the contextual force of ver. 17: "if any man destroy the temple of God, him shall God destroy". It is the same word "destroy" in each case. Another word is used in 2 Cor. 10.<sup>8</sup> and 13.<sup>10</sup>, where Paul contrasts "destruction" to "edification", but it is the same in principle. The context in ch. 3 is speaking of building up on the foundation. Sectarianism, denominationalism, the party spirit, all tend to destruction and not edification. They not only perpetuate errors which originally were mistaken views of godly men, they enlarge them and corrupt the Scriptures in order to defend them. Let us note the solemn words concerning such, "him shall God destroy". There is no suggestion of annihilation in any of these words used for "destroy". As we have seen, "he *himself* shall be saved". But the damage done to the temple of God here by these means merits, and will receive, something corresponding in God's administration of His perfect righteousness among His people. Oh that we all may be willing to "become fools that we may be wise".



# 1. CORINTHIANS 4

As we read Paul's writings attentively, we cannot but be impressed with the balance of his character; in that while he asserts definitely his authority as an apostle of Christ, he always takes the position of a servant among the Lord's people. In this he shows that, though he was not one of those who followed the Lord in the days of His flesh, he had nevertheless imbibed the true spirit of his Master. John 13.<sup>13-17</sup> is one of a number of instances where the Lord showed this precious balance. "Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am". Here is the assertion of His Lordship. And the next verse, with its further assertion of Lordship, gives also the servant attitude which He ever took.

So in 1 Cor. 4, the first word by which he describes himself is one of subjection (literally, an under-rower). The word came to be used of anyone who had the position of an assistant, or an inferior officer. But that was his relationship to Christ. The next word, a "steward" of the mysteries of God, shows again the subject aspect, but it is of the mysteries (or secrets) of God. Hence, there was a real dignity and authority attaching to his position.

But as it is required in stewards that one be found faithful, so he would discharge his responsibility as one that had to give account to his Lord. To be judged of them, or of men at all, was a very small thing to him. In this respect he maintained the dignity of his calling, but we must remember that it is on the background of the self-abnegation of chapter three: "Who then is Paul?" From this we learn that pastors or teachers, indeed all who labour in the word and doctrine (1 Tim. 5.<sup>17</sup>) are to be respected according to the gift bestowed on them. But no man is to be regarded as an authority. An apostle had direct inspiration from God; but even then they were not infallible, as is seen in the book of the Acts. How much more then is it out of place to put a man on a pedestal in these days, when there is no inspiration, and godly men differ as to the teaching of the inspired writings.

Therefore, he says in ver 5, "Judge nothing before the time". Now what are we to understand by this? Seeing that there are other places in Scripture where we are exhorted to judge, but with righteous judgment. In ch. 2.<sup>15</sup> we are told that "he that is spiritual judgeth all things", and in ch. 6 he rebukes them for not judging their own affairs.

It is evident that in their state of partyism and setting up of different leaders among themselves, 'they were judging in a wrong sense. And the beginning of ch. 3 shows that they were not capable of judging while they were in that state.

Where he tells them not to judge he goes on to speak of the Lord, when He comes, making manifest the counsels of the heart. May it not be more than likely that the hateful attitude which may also be found to-day was showing itself among them: that is, if one does not agree with certain things held by some, he is at once judged to be in a wrong spiritual condition. "If you were more meek you would see as we do". Or, "our godly teachers are not to be questioned". The thought that there is just a possibility that they may be wrong is not countenanced, and no matter how plain the Scripture statements may be against their teaching, they are ignored. May we all have grace to reject the wrong judging and exercise ourselves to judge righteous judgment and to discern between things that differ.

In view of what we have now seen in the preceding chapters we can perhaps appreciate more fully the "transfer" of these things to himself and to Apollos. If I as an apostle, he as it were says, am only an instrument for God's use, then don't be puffed up for one against another of those among yourselves.

The further reference here to the Lord's coming and His judgment seat, after ch. 3, has its own special encouragement for us. Ver. 15 of ch. 3 has given rise to the question as to whether one's works may be *all* burnt up, and the believer have no reward. But can we suppose that ver. 14 implies that anyone will have nothing at all to be burnt up? No. We cannot think that even of apostles. But ch. 4.<sup>5</sup> comes in with its added statement, "then shall *every* man have commendation from God". This is the more pointed too because it comes in a context of judging wrongly as to the counsels of the heart. True, if our heart counsels have been wrong, the Lord will not excuse them, and we shall suffer loss. But what if we have judged another's heart counsels to be wrong when they were right, and we see him commended by the Lord, and receiving reward! Let us take to heart the exhortation of Rom. 14.<sup>13</sup>: "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in a brother's way". But grace reigns; and where the Spirit of the Lord has come in and begun His blessed work there will be *something* to reward in that day. May we be more alert to detect this in children of God wherever we may meet.

But Paul has something more to say to those who were puffed up, and his language increases in severity as he approaches the end of the matter. Let us appropriate his words to ourselves. Ver. 7: "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" Are we the *authors* of the truth we hold? Or have we but received *something* of the common heritage of all saints? The Corinthians were lacking in no gifts. They were "full". Like the Laodiceans later, they had no need of anything. But their own estimation of their "riches" was really their poverty. They had taken a position of reigning on the earth before the time. And what is our position to-day? Let me ask myself, Does my course of life, my regard of earthly possessions, or my use of worldly wisdom suggest that I am a stranger and a pilgrim in the earth? Am I taking a position of influence in the world to try to improve that which the Word of God tells me is fast preparing for the Man of Sin? Or, am I taking the appointed position, in the the world, but not of it? Does my life compare in any way with what Paul here writes of himself, or does it compare rather with that of those whom he reproves? Is it not written, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim 3.12)? Why do we not see it so to-day? The Church as a whole is too Corinthian-like, it has sought a position of reigning before the time. None of us *like* persecution or tribulation, but they are our appointed lot in the world; and we can only escape them by being unfaithful to our Lord and our heavenly calling; for the world has not changed, nor the Devil in whom it lieth.

The severity of Paul's language, however, does not nullify his love. So in verses 14-16 he protests his love to them: as a father he cared for his children, desiring only their good, which included prominently a full reward at the judgment seat of Christ. And though he would not go to them while they remained as they were, he made it plain that he intended to come as soon as he could see it to be God's will, and that when he did come he would use his authority from the Lord without partiality for the removal of the evils that ~~existed~~ *might still ex*

In those days, when spiritual gifts were in operation, and the apostles were present, the Lord confirmed their word by miraculous intervention, as in the case of Ananias and Saphira, and of Elymas the sorcerer. But in these days of confusion it is different. Paul said that if he came to them he would know not the speech of them which were puffed up, but the power (verses 19, 20). Obviously referring to some manifest token from the Lord. But to-day, the one who is wrong in the disputes among God's children is often the one who is exalted and defended, though he

may resort to unfair means of maintaining his position. And the Lord does not intervene. It is a test of faith and patience for those who are in the right, and such must be prepared to leave it for the Lord's settlement in that day.

In ver. 21 the "rod" is made the opposite of "love" and "meekness". Chap. 13 must never be allowed to lose its value. Love never faileth. But there are differences to be observed regarding these things. Love, in the context we are considering, is not contrasted to hatred or selfishness; but to the use of the rod, which would really be prompted by love. And the spirit of meekness is not contrasted to pride, but to that severity of which the use of the rod was the expression. (Of course, it is not a literal rod here, but a figurative one—words of severity and censure).

Thus we learn that that which outwardly may appear to be the opposite of love and meekness is really the expression of a love that will not allow anything that is harmful to those who are loved. As it is recognised in other matters that at times "one has to be cruel to be kind".

Our love to one another should be that, at all cost, we desire to see one another walking in the truth and keeping the Lord's commandments (1 John 5.<sup>1-3</sup>; 2 John 4).

# 1. CORINTHIANS 5 and 6.

Although Paul said, "It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret" (Eph. 5.12), he did not hesitate to speak when there was occasion. Neither is the exhortation out of date, for it was written to those called saints (1 Cor. 1.2). They had become "puffed up" with worldly wisdom, and the fall came. See Prov. 16.18 and 1 Cor. 10.12.

It is clear from 2 Cor. 12.21 that this was not the only case of its kind among them; but this was of an outstanding nature in that the near relationship was involved, and the lawful husband was not dead, for he must have been the one who "suffered wrong" mentioned in 2 Cor. 7.12. And yet they had not mourned over it. What a warning! Well may Heb. 3.13 warn us against being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

That this one was a saved one, a child of God, is clear from ver. 5, "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus". But Paul had judged that it was necessary for such an one to be "delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh" to this end. Satan's hatred of the saints is thus overruled to accomplish God's purpose.

But the destruction of the flesh *that* the spirit might be saved seems to show something further as to God's balancing of the accounts for reward or loss at the judgment seat of Christ. If this one had continued in sin, it seems to be that there would be more for which to lose than for which to be rewarded. How then could it be true that *everyone* shall have his praise of God, according to ch. 4.5? Thus the cutting off of this one was necessary for the maintenance of God's righteousness in this sphere. Howbeit, the threat was overruled to bring the one to repentance, and his life was spared.

But, as we have seen, the leaven of this sin had already spread among them, the "whole lump" was being affected.

Sin is sin wherever it occurs and whatever the results, but we can praise God that He overrules it to provide us with precious instruction. His teaching concerning leaven is brought out by this state at Corinth in a way that is far-reaching.

Leviticus 2 shows that only unleavened things can typify Christ; and ch. 23.15-21 shows leavened bread to be a type of the Church; it was waved before the Lord, but not offered upon the altar.

The Corinthians were exhorted to "purge out the old leaven"; this evidently refers to that element of sin that remains in us, but which it is our responsibility to deal with, an individual matter. But the argument of the next state-

ment is "even as ye are unleavened". How can we purge out the old leaven if we are unleavened? The purging out of the old leaven refers to what we are in our actual state as individuals. The fact that we are unleavened refers to our position in Christ, where "all is of God". It is a new creation (2 Cor. 5.<sup>17-18</sup>). Thus what we are "in Christ" should predominate by our mortifying of the deeds of the body in actual experience, where the old and the new natures are at warfare one with the other.

Now in order to avoid the Scriptural teaching as to the appointed unleavened bread for the Lord's Supper, with its true symbolism, some have asserted that the loaf on the table represents the body of Christ—the Church, and therefore should be leavened; misusing 1 Cor. 10.<sup>17</sup> to this end, as well as corrupting other parts of truth.

The Lord did not say, "This is My body which is the Church", but "This is My body which is given for you". Neither did He say, "Do this in remembrance of the Church", but "Do this in remembrance of Me". This illustrates how resisting the will of the Lord leads to the Church taking the place of the Lord. Is it not serious!

Then again the Scriptures we have noted show that we are not united to Christ by His taking of our leavened nature, but by our taking of His unleavened nature. Therefore if the loaf on the table did represent the Church it should be unleavened for that reason also. Possibly the use of the "wafer" by Romanism has led, or did lead, to the use of "ordinary bread" (leavened), but is it not one of the essentials of Romanism for the "Church" to usurp the position of the Lord? Let us be careful not to fall into a fresh error in avoiding an existing one.

The further misuse of this passage to support the wrong practice at the Lord's Supper is that it is argued that we are not told to keep the feast with unleavened bread, but with the unleavened (condition) of sincerity and truth. Now the fact is that this passage does not refer to the Lord's Supper.

The "feast" referred to in ver. 8 is the feast of unleavened bread (Lev. 23.<sup>4-8</sup>) which followed the Passover. The seven days being typical of the whole of the present dispensation, even as the seven days in Lev. 8.<sup>31-36</sup>. Thus the argument of the passage in Corinthians is, "Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us; *therefore* let us keep the feast . . . with the unleavened (condition) of sincerity and truth" all our lives; referring to the evils that had come in among them. Let us not read into Scripture what is not there. When dealing with the Lord's Supper, let us keep to the passages that refer to it, and so with all other subjects. It is not sincerity and truth to corrupt the passages referred to in order to maintain a wrong practice.

Then we have an important principle of separation in verses 9-13; from which we see that whereas we are not to cut off dealings with the wicked of this world, "for then must we needs go out of the world", we are to cut off one who is "called a brother", if he is found to be living in the condition mentioned.

The reason is given in that it is not our place to judge the world. It will be when we are changed and made "like Him". But for the present we must leave the world for God to judge. But we have a responsibility to judge among ourselves as members one of another and of the family of God. Without such judgment the Church cannot be kept as it should be. The question, "Do not ye judge them that are within?" implies that such judgment is recognised as proper in all things.

### I COR. 6.

It is clear from the end of this chapter that it is a continuation of the last, for the final words concerning fornication are found there. Thus the first part of the chapter is seen to be a continuance of the subject of judging. In ch. 5 the fact that we are not to judge the world *now* is used to guide as to our conduct towards the world. But in ch. 6 the fact that we shall judge the world *then* is used to show that we ought to anticipate that day, not in usurping privileges before the time, but in exercising ourselves in those things which are already ours. For instance, in ch. 2 we saw, in a passage dealing with judgment, that we have the mind of Christ.

We note the language, "*Dare* any of you, etc.", and the judges of this world described as the "unjust". The whole passage is worded so as to make them ashamed (ver. 5). And from this standpoint it is seen that the exhortation to "set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church" is for that purpose. But it is counter-balanced by the question, "Is it so that there is not a wise man among you?" An illustration of this is found in the book of Job, where after the three friends had tried in vain to deal with him, from their own point of view, Elihu, a young man, comes forward and angrily rebukes them. And it is remarkable that the Lord rebukes the three friends in ch. 42, but says nothing against Elihu. It is true that "Great men are not always wise"; "neither do the aged understand judgment" (ch. 32.<sup>7-9</sup>). Ruts of long practice and prejudice for friends of long standing often hinder sound judgment; and younger ones out of respect for their elders hesitate to differ from them. Oh, that the mind of *Christ* might be more in evidence among us all.

According to ver. 7 it is better to suffer the wrong than

to go to law before the unbelievers, but that must not be allowed to argue against sound judgment among ourselves.

In ver. 11 "such were some of you" indicates what some of the saints at Corinth had been saved from, and as such shall not inherit the kingdom of God the argument for holiness is apparent. They had been washed, sanctified, justified. Now note it is not justified by the blood of Christ, but "by the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God". (The word "in" often has the meaning "by", and it is the same in both places here). The name of the Lord Jesus is associated with power, not with imputed righteousness (see Matt. 28.<sup>19</sup>; Acts 3.6; 4.10, 30). The context also is dealing with the changed life of the Corinthians and the word "justified" would therefore seem rather to be "made righteous" in practice.

Ver. 12 is not to be connected with the sins mentioned just before, but with what follows. It was "lawful" for Paul to eat what was to him as a Jew under law "unclean". But he would not allow the dictates of his body to decide, he regulated these things so that all should be made to serve the Lord's purpose. If then he would not allow the body to dictate in these things, how much less in those things which he rebukes. This body has to perish; but it is for the Lord for the time being and God is going to raise up another body like unto the Lord's.

Therefore our bodies are regarded as members of Christ and are to be kept pure for Him. Sin can have no part in "the body of Christ", it is the new creation. Therefore, every sin is without the body. "But he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body". And Rom. 1 shows that such sin is visited by God upon the body now. Hence, flee from it. Don't stop and trifle with it and think that God will give the victory, but flee. Joseph acted wisely in this toward Potiphar's wife, but she cunningly turned the tables on him.

Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit; they are part of the purchased possession of Christ. Bought by His precious blood. We are not our own. Therefore it is not a matter of abstaining from the grosser sins only. We have no rights. We ought not to please ourselves. We want this and we want that because the world has it. Unsaved relatives bring an influence to bear, and we don't like to be different. The devil argues there is no harm in this, and the Lord would not deny you this little pleasure. But if the heart is right and we appreciate the cost of our redemption, we shall find our chief delight in giving Him pleasure, not living unto ourselves but unto Him who died for us and rose again.

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Addresses of others who would like these papers, and correspondence from any concerned for the unity of the faith, welcomed.  
H. G. HOBBS, St. Catherine's Road, Long Melford Sudbury, Suffolk



# 1. CORINTHIANS 7.

There should be no need for any apology for dealing in plain language with any subject in the Word of God, seeing that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable" (2 Tim. 3.<sup>16</sup>). But there has been a mistaken idea of modesty among Christians which has made it very difficult to even touch upon the matter of sex. This has resulted in children growing up to maturity in ignorance of things that they ought to know, or picking up the knowledge through undesirable channels. Surely there is no better place for children to learn of this matter than in the home and through the Word of God.

In like manner, children of God who are married are sometimes led astray from the true path of God's appointment by those who hold unscriptural views, with the result that a yoke is put upon their necks which God never intended them to bear; and instead of the married state being what God intended it to be, it is a strain upon one or both partners and sometimes drives husband and wife apart. The chapter before us gives plainly what God's intention is in the married state; and it is amazing that some who have a good knowledge of Scripture can hold and teach contrary to what is contained here. Hence it becomes necessary to speak plainly on this matter.

If it is first stated what the error is which is referred to above, it will make the position clear and the force of the statements of the Scriptures will be appreciated in contrast to the error as we come to them. It is taught that sexual coition should *only* be with the object of childbearing: and that it is *sin* for it to take place even by married couples without that object. The results are that in some cases an undue strain is placed upon the wife through child-bearing in quick succession, or, to avoid this, total abstinence is maintained. The error also involves total abstinence for the whole period of pregnancy, and once the wife is past child-bearing coition must cease for the remainder of the life.

Some will at once say to this it is totally wrong; but others with a conscience toward God on the matter are carrying it out. But what does God say?

In writing this chapter Paul has expressed his own mind on some points without any command from the Lord. But we must not treat the whole as if it were only his opinion. It was "by permission" according to ver. 6, and at the end he says, "and I think I have the Spirit of

God ". The Lord said, " all men are not able to receive this saying ", and Paul writes from the same standpoint. It is not a matter of *commandment*, but of the individual's decision.

Paul was one who was " able to receive " the Lord's saying concerning eunuchs in Matt. 19.<sup>10-12</sup>. He had made himself a eunuch, of his own will, for the kingdom of heaven's sake. This was known, of course, among the Christians, and from the chapter before us it is clear that he exhorted others to do the same (verses 7, 8). And from ver. 1 it seems that it was on this point that they had written to him. And his reply to this is clear that total abstinence is " good ". But he at once adds a " Nevertheless ".

Now let it be noticed that nowhere throughout the whole chapter does he say anything about childbearing. He is dealing with the matter purely from the standpoint of satisfying that impulse which is implanted by God in every human and in every animal in His creation. So he writes: *not* " for childbearing ", but " to avoid fornication ", " let every man have his own wife, and every woman her own husband ". This indicates that it is normal for the impulse to operate in both. And ver. 4 also shows that neither is to refuse the other.

To refuse is to " defraud " (ver. 5), which is the same word as is used in ch. 6.<sup>7, 8</sup>, but in other connections, of course, and is therefore sin. The very opposite of what some would have us believe.

There is an exception, however; there may be an abstinence " by consent ", not by compulsion, on either side. And that for prayer and fasting. The ordinary occasions of fasting in Scripture are not longer than three days, and this should be noted. For long abstinence may result in incontinency with temptation in thought, if nothing else.

Then after saying (ver. 7), " every man has his proper gift of God ", he says in ver. 9, " But and if they cannot contain let them marry ". Here is a further emphasis on this reason for marriage. In James 1.<sup>5</sup> we are told, " If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him ". But in this matter there is no suggestion that one will get the victory by prayer. Both the Lord and Paul present it from the standpoint of " ability " and the solution is marriage.

The next verses are in entire agreement with the words of the Lord, " What God hath joined let not man put asunder ". But if the woman does depart she is to remain

unmarried. This relates to cases where only one of the partners is saved, and that after the marriage. This circumstance usually brings about difficulties, but if the couple can live peaceably together, it is the Lord's appointment for them so to do. The believing one "sanctifying" the other for this purpose.

The word "sanctified" and the word "holy" in ver. 14 are the same, and must not be taken to have any bearing on the spiritual condition of either parents or children. If the children were sanctified in the spiritual sense it would make regeneration unnecessary. And if the unbelieving partner were sanctified in the spiritual sense we would have the impossible: a sanctified unbeliever.

The word "sanctified" or "holy" simply means "set apart". Usually, of course, it means "set apart to God". But here the context shows that it simply means set apart for the family relationship and the fellowship which that involves. Normally a believer cannot have fellowship with an unbeliever (2 Cor. 6.<sup>14-18</sup>), but no matter where or how the marriage is contracted, it is, as it were, written in heaven; God hath joined them. In this chapter He makes provision for the emergency.

In ver. 16 the suggestion is made that the saved partner may be the means of saving the unsaved one. But let it not be overlooked that this refers to cases where the marriage took place before either were saved. Some believers have entered into marriage with an unbeliever in the hope of saving the partner, but it is against the will of the Lord and usually leads to disaster.

In verses 17-24 Paul elaborates on the principle of abiding in one's calling to strengthen what he has said as to the marriage tie not being broken. But he is careful to put in a balancing statement in ver. 21 and in ver. 23. "If thou mayest be made free (as to service), use it rather". It is possible that one might be better off in a "bound" position, as far as this world is concerned; but if there is the opportunity of being free one should use it. We need to be careful as to binding ourselves in any matter. "Ye are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men". Therefore if one is bound he must keep a clear conscience toward his Master—Christ. Allegiance to an earthly master, even in the case of a bought slave, must not displace allegiance to Christ. In all things He should have the pre-eminence. Some would say, we must obey, and put the responsibility upon those who command. It is a dangerous principle which cannot be carried to a logical conclusion. The Scripture principle is "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5.<sup>29</sup>). And this applies to all spheres. Normally we are to "obey magistrates" (Titus 3.<sup>1</sup>). But

that pre-supposes that the magistrate is acting in the fear of God, as all authorities should. Normally the wife should obey the husband: but that must be understood in the same way. She must not steal if he tells her to. And so with masters and servants. Oh, may we ever remember that we are *bought* with a price.

In verses 24-35 Paul shows his concern that the saints should not be distracted from serving the Lord by any earthly responsibility (verses 29-31). His reason being "the time is short". Many years have passed and the Lord has not come. Shall we say, "My Lord delayeth His coming", and settle down? No. Even if we are not alive when the Lord comes, there is more to do than we shall find time for. His wife hath not made herself ready yet. And to use another figure, God's house (spiritual) lies waste. (Rev. 19.7; Hag. 1.4).

Returning to the original matter in ver 36, Paul makes another clear statement, this time concerning one who is past childbearing. If she "need so require," "let them marry".

Ver. 37 has presented a difficulty which one translation at least has sought to overcome by rendering it "that he will keep his virginity". But it is not so. The word is "virgin". It might be taken to refer to the father of the virgin, as the next verse does, but the words "having no necessity, but hath power over his own will" forbid that interpretation. There seems to be no escape from the conclusion that the one referred to is the one that has contemplated marriage with the virgin, and therefore the words "that he will keep his virgin" seem to have the meaning that he will keep his virgin as a virgin; that is, refrain from marriage. Then Paul refers to the father in ver 38, "he that giveth in marriage" and "he that giveth not".

The strong point with those who hold the error referred to at the beginning seems to be Genesis 38.9. But this can be explained on the principle of such passages as Luke 14.18-21 and 17.27. There is nothing wrong in the things themselves mentioned in these passages, it is the circumstances that make them an offence. So in Gen. 38.10 the action itself is not the cause of God's anger, but the fact that he deceived and humbled the woman and avoided the responsibility of raising up seed to his brother.

Birth control, if it is a matter of avoiding the normal responsibility according to 1 Tim. 5.14 and Gen. 1.28, is not right before God; but there may be occasions when it is justifiable for physical or financial reasons.

# 1. CORINTHIANS 8-10.

If we are to get a proper understanding of the passage which commences at ch. 8.<sup>1</sup>, we must recognise that it continues to the end of ch. 10. The three chapters are one subject. Paul could have said concerning things offered to idols, "Leave them alone altogether"; and so dismissed the matter. But that would have left the Christian just subject to a command in a way that develops a blind obedience without understanding of principles that have a wide application. It is good for us to be prepared to act in blind obedience if need be. The Word of God is not to be questioned because of our lack of knowledge; its authority must be acknowledged always. But God would have us grow up to manhood in spiritual things, apprehending principles that we can apply to the varying eventualities of life. Therefore Paul was inspired to give this lengthy answer to the question, bringing in various other matters which, in a sense, may seem to be side issues, but which have a direct bearing upon the first matter.

Thus the first lesson to be learned is to hold knowledge with humility (verses 1, 2). "Knowledge puffeth up". But we are not to despise knowledge on that account. The New Testament is full of instruction for the saints; and Paul was continually concerned that they might increase in knowledge and understanding.

Ver. 2 clearly says that we know nothing yet as we *ought* to know. Often it is the one who has a little knowledge that is puffed up. We need grace to increase our knowledge with due humility in proportion, and to rejoice more that we are "known of God" than of what we know. And if that principle is imbibed, it will help much in deciding what we should do in such a matter as eating things offered to idols, and other matters too.

So then, it is not for us to say "the idol is nothing", and eat and drink accordingly. We must recognise that there are others to whom the idol is something, and their consciences must be considered.

Ver. 8 says plainly that the eating or the abstinence makes no difference to us before God. That is from the standpoint of the bare action. But verses 9-11 are equally clear that others may be affected by the example we set and be encouraged to do that which their own consciences condemn. And ver. 12 says that if we do so we sin against our brethren and against Christ. It is not for us to say, "I am not to be governed by his lack of knowledge".

Love will lead us to give way and refrain for the other's sake, though we may be free in our own conscience. Thus we see that knowledge puffeth up, but charity buildeth up. The perishing in ver. 11 being the opposite of the edifying in ver. 1. And Paul concludes this first part of the subject by stating his own standpoint: that it is better to abstain from flesh entirely than to cause another to stumble by our example.

If this principle were really appreciated and acted upon (and it is love so to do) we would not find believers justifying themselves in drinking intoxicants, and smoking and other things: ignoring the consciences of others and the bad effects of their example to satisfy themselves. A Christian man once told the writer that he could preach the gospel outside a public house while he held shares in the Brewery. He could not do it if he had imbibed the principle of "charity" as exemplified in this chapter.

## CHAPTER 9.

The beginning of this chapter seems to be quite another subject from ch. 8. But why does he suddenly ask the question of the first verse? The questions are self-answering and therefore are a strong way of asserting those things, with the understanding that they will agree. Verse 2 shows this to be the case: and as we go on through the chapter we see that the whole argument is that though he was an apostle, beyond question, and therefore had the right to all the privileges of the other apostles, he used them very sparingly, preferring to make his service a free-will offering by working for his own maintenance. The principle of giving to the Lord, as exemplified in Scripture, goes a long way beyond giving a tenth of one's income. Again let us remember *we* are bought with a price, body and soul. Then when we come to the end of the chapter we see that all leads up to the practice of becoming "all things to all men". But let it be clear that this does not mean engaging in worldly amusements or drinking, or in any way *enlarging* one's liberties, as is being advocated by some who profess to be Christians; saying that we ought to mix with the people in order to lead them to Christ. Such a course is the very opposite of what is taught in ch. 8, as we have seen. It would lead many a weak one into a snare and cause him to fall.

On the contrary, Paul would narrow down his liberties lest another conscientious one should be offended. He would discipline himself as an athlete training for a race.

Thus we see the same principle of love and tenderness for the consciences of the weak is set forth in this chapter from the standpoint of his apostleship as he urges upon them all in ch. 8.

## CHAPTER 10.

The word " Moreover " with which this chapter begins shows that he is still continuing the same matter. So that after enumerating the things which happened to Israel in the wilderness, he says, " Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples (types) and they are written for our admonition "; with the warning, " Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall ".

Then in ver. 14 we see the bearing of this upon the matter of idolatry. This time from another angle, not that of another's conscience or weakness, but of our own weakness. Hence, " flee from idolatry ". To eat meat offered to an idol is nothing, because the idol is " nothing ". But beware, there is danger in it. The things which the Gentiles sacrifice to their idols are really offered to the demons associated with those idols. Therefore, when Satan could not get Balaam to curse the children of Israel he connived to draw them into mixing with the Midianites, joining in their feasts and so partaking in their idolatry and fornication. This brought God's displeasure upon them and many died.

We may not have to decide as to open idolatry in this land, but many are the allurements that Satan uses to draw the children of God away from the path of their heavenly calling. How many have felt sad and sick at heart after gathering at a Christmas party. The feast comes from sun worship not from Christ's birthday; and the accompaniments pander to the flesh and war against the spirit. Flee from idolatry, that is the only safe course: and the principle applies to many things.

Moreover, the partaking of the idolatrous feast is shown to be antagonistic to the object of the Lord's Supper. Paul could say, " All things are lawful for me " for the idol is nothing. But he adds, " all things are not expedient, all things edify not ". And we shall find that if we say, " We are not under law, but under grace ", and use grace as a license for engaging in worldly things to please relatives or friends, we shall find in our spiritual experience that they are not expedient, and contrary to being edifying they tend to destruction. Pulling down instead of building up.

It may be argued from ver. 27 that we have liberty to partake in a feast, even where those present are idolators. Yes: but this will need much grace if we are to act on the principle that we are not our own, we are bought with a price. To be faithful to Christ is not easy in such circumstances; for to refuse to eat what is set before us and to give a clear testimony why, will not make us popular. But what applies to eating and drinking applies to singing and other things. Remember ver. 12. To eat

whatsoever is sold in the shambles is a different matter, we don't need to ask questions that open up difficulties.

The principle may also be extended with regard to selling or making things that are, as it were, associated with idols. To argue that it is one's living is wrong. We are not our own, we are bought with a price. It is for us to obey. The issues are God's responsibility, and He will not fail. Whether therefore we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, let us do all *to the glory of God* (ver. 31).

*Observations on some details in the passage.*

Ch. 8.<sup>11</sup> The context here shows that the word "perish" does not mean to be annihilated as some would have us believe concerning the unsaved.

Ch. 9.<sup>14</sup> shows that though Paul sought to make the gospel "free", he nevertheless recognised the principle that they that preach the gospel should live of the gospel. That, of course, refers to those who, like Paul and others, gave themselves up to the work.

Ver. 17. Here is shown the important difference between doing a thing "willingly" and doing it under a sense of compunction, or of merely fulfilling a duty. "God loveth a cheerful giver". And for such service there is promised a reward.

Ch. 10.<sup>2</sup> "Baptized . . . in the cloud and in the sea". Typical of the baptism in the Holy Spirit which normally accompanied the baptism in water in Paul's time.

Ver. 4. The Rock that "went with them" is not the rock which Moses struck. That was a type of the true Rock which was ever with them. Through Moses as the administrator they partook of the *spiritual* meat and drink which came from Christ. That is that they were given His words in the law, and in the instruction given to them by Moses. But that did not save them, even as those in the parable of the Sower who brought forth no fruit. They received His words, but to no profit.

Verses 16, 17. The breaking of the bread is the expression of a fellowship that embraces all the will of God. Note the order in Acts 2.<sup>42</sup>. To limit the fellowship to the Lord's Table is not the teaching of Scripture. The partaking does not make us one body. The meaning of the word "for" in the second case is that we signify that we are one body by partaking of the one loaf which is Christ typically.

Ver. 26. "The earth is the Lord's", therefore eat and ask no questions.

Ver. 28. "The earth is the *Lord's*," not the idol's, therefore eat not.



# I. CORINTHIANS II. 1-16.

The first verse of this chapter is obviously the conclusion of the subject which occupies chs. 8 to 10, wherein Paul not only exhorts the saints as to their attitude towards things offered to idols, but shows by his own example how they should act—considering others before themselves. May we take this final word of exhortation to ourselves, to be applied to all things.

Verse 2 begins the fresh section, just as ver. 17 does.

Generally speaking, Paul could praise them that they kept the ordinances that he had delivered them. But the arrangement of God concerning praying and prophesying seems to be a matter as to which they lacked instruction, hence the words of ver. 3, "but I would have you know".

Such a matter as this is not a matter about which we need not be concerned; it is an appointment of God—one of the "ordinances" which it is our responsibility to keep.

In opening the subject, the apostle first presents the matter of headship, which viewed from the other end is subjection. In Phil. 2 Christ is our example in that He became subject to God and His law. So it is here. Christ is subject to God, the man is subject to Christ, and the woman is subject to the man. Present day ideas object to this subjection, but it is God's appointment, and the arrangements here for praying and prophesying are based upon it.

But Christians too, sad to say, in many cases resist the teaching of this chapter, and find various ways of escaping the plain instructions that are given.

It is evident that a woman's long hair is her glory—the glory of being subject to her husband; and indeed to man generally. But for a man to have long hair is a shame to him, for he thereby denies the position of authority which God has given him. And the rule concerning the hair, being broken as it is to-day, corresponds to the objection on the part of women to be subject to their husbands. In Gen 2.<sup>18</sup> the word is not "helpmeet", commonly taken to imply equality, but "a help as before him", which in the light of 1 Kings 12.<sup>6</sup> implies subjection. Hence the cutting of women's hair is indicative of the revolt that has been made against God's appointment for the woman's position. It should therefore be abhorred by every believing woman—not compromised with by going half way.

Let the hair be long and the heart correspondingly subject. And if this were entered into joyfully it would help towards a right attitude of heart towards the teaching as to "covering" in prayer.

Some have objected to the teaching of this chapter, saying that it is only Paul's Jewish ideas. This not only denies the inspiration of Scripture, but is contrary to fact. For whereas he writes to the effect that a man should uncover his head for prayer, the Jew always covers his head for prayer, even in his own home. So from the Christian standpoint he says, that a man praying or prophesying with his head covered dishonoureth his head. But every woman praying or prophesying with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head.

We notice that it is not only for prayer but for prophesying too. This disposes of the explanation by some that these arrangements are to be limited to the gatherings "in church". But ch. 14.<sup>34</sup> forbids a woman to prophesy in church, because though she may be able to pray in silence, she cannot prophesy in silence. Therefore the arrangements here are not "in church", but at home, where a woman could prophesy.

Another way of avoiding the force of this passage is by arguing that, in ver. 15, we are told that the woman's hair is given her for a covering (or veil). The word "for" here sometimes has the meaning "instead of", and this is laid hold of to argue that her long hair disposes of the need for an extra covering. It sounds very plausible if the mind is already set against using a covering, but it destroys the meaning and plain statements of the whole passage.

The translators of the Authorized Version have in most cases decided which words to use in English from the sense of the passage as a whole. And in many cases the marginal suggestions and different renderings by later translators miss the mark. The word "for" here has the sense of "as" a covering. Quite a legitimate meaning of the word. If it were "instead of", it would contradict ver. 6, "If the woman be not covered let her also be SHORN". This word "also" necessitates that the covering is something *additional* to the hair. And verses 4 and 5 have the same meaning: for how could a man cover and uncover his head at different times if the hair only were referred to!

Moreover, women who object to covering their heads for prayer at home, would object just as strongly to their husbands kneeling for prayer with their hats on. What inconsistency is born of prejudice!

So then, it is just as much a shame for a woman to pray uncovered as it is for her to have her head shaved. That is the argument of the passage. To be shaven would signify a complete renunciation of authority: and to pray uncovered signifies a renunciation of God's authority, through Christ, and through the man (verses 3-5).

Reverting to the word "for" a covering, in ver. 15, we see from the argument of the passage as a whole that the meaning "as" a covering stands, and that as "nature itself teaches" that women should have long hair, a token of subjection at all times, so in praying or prophesying she should have the *extra* covering, be it hat, shawl, kerchief, or whatever else is sufficient to be a token of the subjection that is fitting before God.

Verses 7-15 provide several arguments for the arrangement, all of which witness against the equality of the sexes as taught to-day.

- (i) The man is the image and glory of God, the woman is the glory of the man.
- (ii) The man was made of the dust of the ground, the woman was made from the bone of the man.
- (iii) The man was not made *for* the woman, but the woman *for* the man.
- (iv) The angels are witnesses of these things (Heb. 1.<sup>13</sup>, 14; 1 Pet. 1.<sup>12</sup>). If therefore the woman rebels against this ordinance, she may rob herself of the protection of the angels and expose herself to the attacks of evil spirits (Eph. 6.<sup>12</sup>).
- (v) Nature itself teaches what is right in this matter.

But there is also a balancing thought in verses 11, 12. Woman is not to be despised, but as Peter says, "giving honour unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel". Though in creation the woman was from the man, in birth the man is "by the woman". "But all things of God".

It is a thing to be condemned to ask questions from the standpoint of evading the issue, but honest enquiry concerning a genuine difficulty is commendable. Some may have a real difficulty about carrying out these arrangements. For instance, is a man always to uncover his head for prayer while walking in the street? Does it not suggest a parade? Is a woman to leave her work in the home and go for her hat whenever she wants to pray? The Scripture has its answer. But let each and all acknowledge the Lord's instructions first, then seek His solution of difficulties. In the chapter we are considering it is prayer to God that is mentioned; and we ought to be careful not to confuse

the three Persons of the Godhead in our prayers. " We have an Advocate with the *Father*, Jesus Christ the righteous " (1 John 2.<sup>1</sup>). " The Lord " in New Testament language refers to Jesus Christ, and not to God the Father (except in quotations from the Old Testament).

A consideration of the New Testament will show that a distinction is made between prayer to God and to the Lord Jesus. The normal thing for prayer to God the Father is covering or uncovering according to sex, and attitude of body, which also signifies humility before Him. The practice of sitting in a meeting for worship is *not* commendable. If one is unable to kneel for physical reasons, he may stand or sit according to the circumstances. But kneeling is the proper thing, and the earnest lifting up of holy hands is an expression of fervency with an emphasis on *holy* hands. The following passages help in this connection: Luke 22.<sup>41</sup>; Acts 20.<sup>36</sup>; Eph. 3.<sup>14</sup>; 1 Tim. 2.<sup>8</sup>).

But the Lord Jesus Christ has taken His place as Mediator between us and the Father, and though we may speak directly to God the Father, there are times when we may be conscious that the Lord Jesus is the One who has promised, " Lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the age." And ejaculatory prayers may fittingly be addressed to Him, regardless of posture or dress. For He is the great High Priest Who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and is able to succour us. So when Stephen was being stoned we see that he called upon the Lord Jesus. Note that in Acts 7.<sup>59</sup> the word " God " is in italics, signifying that it is not in the original. So the words read, " calling upon and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," and then, " Lord, lay not this sin to their charge ".

That he was very much in fellowship with his Lord and led by the Spirit at that time is evident from the context. Thus we see that the path is made simple if there is a disciple-like attitude of heart.

# I. CORINTHIANS II. 17-34.

## THE LORD'S SUPPER.

According to I Cor. 10.<sup>16, 17</sup> the Lord's Supper is intended to express a unity of those partaking. But Paul could not praise the Corinthians concerning this matter because there were schisms among them. One was following this leader and one that. For the most part they were keeping the ordinances as he had delivered them to them (ch. 11.<sup>2</sup>), but there were some who were erring (ch. 15.<sup>12</sup>). Hence he believed that what he had heard was "partly" correct.

The disunity among those partaking at the Supper is solemn enough, seeing that it contradicts the significance referred to; but in ver. 19 a more solemn fact is revealed. The party spirit of following different leaders made it "necessary" for certain heresies (private opinions, contrary to the truth) to be revealed, in order that the ones approved might become manifest thereby. God could have caused one of the prophets in their midst to stand up and pronounce His judgment concerning these divisions; but in their carnal state they would probably have rejected the testimony of the prophet as not being of the Lord. God therefore saw it to be necessary to allow them to go on their own way until some heresy revealed itself and thus it was made manifest who it was that was in the will of the Lord and who not. For instance, the denial of the resurrection came up and some fell into the error. Then Paul took up the matter, and dealt with it so ably by the Spirit in ch. 15. How humiliated and ashamed must they have been who had embraced the error and the more so the one who had started it.

In these days errors have so permeated the Church of God and it is so split up that such disciplinary dealing on the part of God is lost sight of.

Partyism, however, must still have the same effect. It must of necessity cause bias, and therefore must undermine sound judgment. If one sticks up for his party, denomination, or sect, he cannot exercise sound judgment. The wish, instead of the Scripture, will decide. But the position being what it is and the state of confusion being so involved, few are disposed to apply themselves sufficiently to come to a sound decision, even though they be concerned at the sad state of affairs. Yet the promise still holds, "He shall lead you into all truth", and if we are willing to mortify partyism and cleave unto the

Lord, and renounce everything for His sake and His truth, the Holy Spirit will lead to unity in the truth. But the sad fact remains that some who have erred have not taken warning at the signals God has given and have gone into further error. What a sad awakening must eventually come to such!

The apostle then proceeds, in ver. 20, to reprove another fault, which he says renders their observance "not the Lord's Supper". They came together "unto the same thing" (not "the one place"), but they failed of the object because they indulged themselves. The word "other" in ver. 21 should be left out. They were making a feast, before the actual Lord's Supper, in which only some were included; for whereas some were drunken, some on the other hand were hungry. Thus those that had were despising and putting to shame those that had not. Our partaking of the one bread is a testimony that the body of Christ is common to us all, that there is "no difference". But their partyism was a double denial of the unity that their partaking signified. Well might Paul say, "Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not".

A word here concerning the term "the Lord's Supper" will not be out of place. The Greek has no apostrophe's. Usually possession is expressed by the word "of", as in 1 Cor. 10.<sup>21</sup>, "the cup of the Lord" and "the table of the Lord". But in some cases possession is expressed by using an adjectival form of the word for the possessor. On this account some have suggested it should be rendered here "the lordly supper". This would not be true to fact. For such a term would suggest "lordly" in *character*. This the Lord's Supper is not. It is most commonplace in character, in its appointed form. A very simple arrangement.

Another use of the adjectival expression is in 1 Cor. 4.<sup>3</sup>, where it should be "man's day" (not "man's judgment", though that is implied). We could not read here "manly day"; obviously the adjectival term is used for possession.

The importance of this may not appear on the surface. But the term "lordly supper" might be used to justify an ornate display which is opposed to our pilgrim calling. But there is also another matter involved. In Rev. 1.<sup>10</sup> the same adjectival form is used for "the Lord's Day". The Holy Spirit could have used the same form as in 1 Cor. 10.<sup>21</sup>, "cup of the Lord", but He has not. It is the same as for "the Lord's Supper". It is not "the lordly day", neither is it "the day of the Lord" as some

have asserted, suggesting that John, in spirit, was carried forward into "the day of the Lord". "The day of the Lord" is the common expression in both Old and New Testaments for the "day" of a thousand years when the Lord will reign upon earth. The Holy Spirit has avoided this expression and used the adjectival form the Lord's Day to make it clear that it is not "the day of the Lord". Those who render it "the day of the Lord" teach that what John saw in vision will happen in the day of the Lord. Whereas most of the things foreshewn in the book will happen before the day of the Lord commences. Thus their version upsets the whole of the outline of prophecy. The words imply that John was in the Spirit on a certain Lord's Day" (the first day of the week).

So much for the word "Lord's". Now as to the word "Supper". This word is *always* used for the evening meal. The different word rendered "dinner" is *always* used for the early meal. Both are used, showing their distinction, in Luke 14.<sup>12</sup>. John 21.<sup>12</sup> uses the word "dine" for the morning. Thus the very name which the Holy Spirit has given it witnesses against the morning practice for the Breaking of the Bread. It is a supper. Moreover Paul is inspired to say that it was in "the night in which He was betrayed" that the Lord instituted it. Acts 20.<sup>8</sup> bears out that it was so observed by the disciples by the "many lights in the upper chamber". Who made the alteration? Rome! and Protestantism has perpetuated it. Paul then goes on to record the same thing being revealed to him from the Lord as the eleven had it shown to them on that memorable evening.

In ver. 26 he refers to "this" bread and "this" cup. Not any bread and any cup, but *that* bread and *that* cup which the Lord took when He said, "*this* is My body", and "*this* is My blood". There is no question from the three Gospel records that it was unleavened bread that He thus designated to be a type of His body. In fact He could not have said it of leavened bread, it would not have been true.

Moreover, the term "fruit of the vine" is used for the contents of the cup, and there is no ferment in the fruit of the vine, it enters in after the grapes are pressed. Wine can be fermented or unfermented, but the term "wine" is never used in Scripture for the Lord's Supper. Leaven and ferment are both typical of sin. And leavened bread is typical of those in whom sin has worked but has been checked by the Holy Spirit (the fire, Acts 2.<sup>3</sup>).

The Lord said that this thing was to be done "with a view to" His remembrance. Thus the symbols are intended to be a *help* to His remembrance. Those who say, "We are not occupied with the symbol, but with the Lord" must indeed shut their eyes to the symbols; for leavened bread and fermented wine could not help to the remembrance of *His* body and blood.

Moreover, Paul adds, "as often as ye eat *this* bread and drink *this* cup ye do *shew* the Lord's death till He come". Nothing but unleavened symbols can possibly shew the *Lord's* death. He knew what He was appointing, and a simple reverence for Him and His words will lead to simple obedience. Reasoning aside to justify disobedience and continuance in a thing that is so serious in its suggestiveness is born of stubbornness (see 1 Sam. 15.23), and this is the more grievous when it is manifested in connection with that glorious Person Whom they gather to worship.

Some of the later manuscripts omit the words "of the Lord" at the end of ver. 29, so that it reads "not judging the body", which may refer to judging one's own body, which is in agreement with the context. But if it is referring to the Lord's body, then surely it implies that we should discern the Lord's body in the bread. This would be impossible if it were leavened.

The remaining verses show that the whole passage is intended to deal with the disorderly conduct at Corinth, and shows how the Lord was chastening them for it. The alterations which have become popular to-day had not come in then. But His chastenings are not seen to-day as they were then, the position has become so confused that if the Lord began the chastening we may wonder where He would cease. Nevertheless, the judgment seat of Christ is a solemn reality.

Oh that love to the Lord and reverence for His Word may stir some to obedience. To break the shackles of conventionality, and instead of pleasing self and others, to please Him whose precious body and blood were given for us.



# I CORINTHIANS 12.

The first three verses of this chapter witness that at the time of writing there were counterfeits for the gifts of the Holy Spirit in connection with idol worship. John also warns of this in John 1.<sup>4</sup> at a later date, giving a test in that the demon counterfeit omitted the testimony that Jesus Christ had come in *flesh*. Many theories about the person of Christ have been propagated from time to time. Paul, in Corinthians, makes the Lordship of Christ to be the deciding factor. From this we see how Satan has attacked both the "sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow". But in view of John's warning let us beware of *omissions*. The last days will be characterised by this counterfeit working with actual miracles, as the Lord has warned us in Matt. 24.

In considering the remainder of the chapter we can see that throughout there is a witness against the party spirit that Paul has been denouncing earlier. All his remarks about the one God, one Lord, one Spirit, one body are aimed at this party spirit. And although there had not developed at Corinth the denominational distinctions of today, we must remember that today's conditions are but the logical outcome of those against which Paul testified and nipped in the bud. Therefore the witness of this chapter is a denunciation of all the present denomination-ism. Let us remember this as we go through the chapter, for it may be that this is of more value to us than all else that is said about spiritual gifts themselves.

In verses 4, 5, 6, we have the same Spirit, the same Lord, the same God. Some have used this term "God", where it occurs in connection with the Lord Jesus, as an evidence that the Lord was not God; the title "Lord" in some cases having no more force than our word "sir". The same word, however, is used for quotations of the word LORD from the Old Testament, where there is no question of the Godhead being meant. Acts 2.<sup>36</sup> and 1 Cor. 6.<sup>14</sup> might be used against the deity of our Lord because God raised Him up. But Phil. 2.<sup>5-9</sup> shews that the One whom GOD has exalted "thought it not robbery to be 'equal' with God".

In view of this, we see that the spiritual gifts were in operation by the united work of the three Persons of the Godhead. What a glory attached to those gifts; and how wrong therefore to use them for self aggrandisement or anything but the glory of God alone!

The "profit" spoken of in ver. 7 would of course be for the glory of God in that the whole were edified. The expression "to profit withal" implies the united profit of all.

But all the different gifts were possessed by different individuals; though some might have more than one gift.

And after mentioning the varied gifts the apostle draws attention to the one Spirit that worked them and then goes on to use the figure of the body, v.v. 11, 12, to shew the harmonious working that should exist in a church where such gifts were in operation. All the passages which use this figure do so for the purpose of shewing a unity of working by the various members for the benefit of the whole. See Eph. 4.<sup>4-16</sup>; Col. 2.<sup>19</sup>. But where is the *manifestation* of this "body" condition today? It does not exist. It is true that Christ is the head of the body the Church and we are members of His body, nothing can alter it. But the Church is so rent by schisms today that her disjointed condition denies the truth of that body relationship to Christ; and the expression of a body in the co-working of its members is lost altogether. The interdenominational working of the present time allows of such glaring errors that no one with a conscience toward God for truth can have anything to do with it. On the other hand, the party spirit is so strong that if one is not of US, and doesn't think as WE think, he is slighted or even treated as an enemy, without considering his views in the light of Scripture at all. No wonder the world scoffs. And the Devil laughs while the name of the Lord is dragged in the mire. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples when ye have love one to another". And the members of a body express this.

Therefore Paul reasons if the foot shall say, "Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" Thus declaring that whatever sectarian attitude is taken one cannot escape his responsibility to every member in the body of Christ. It was Cain the murderer who asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Thus there is not only set forth the harmonious functioning of spiritual gifts, but the responsibility of one for the others, whether there be gifts or not.

The words of ver. 13, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" should not be confused with birth of the Spirit. The expression "baptized by the Spirit" will be seen from its contexts to refer to that out-pouring of the Spirit, which was accompanied by gifts of prophecy and tongues, which was usual in the early Church. And from ver. 13 it would seem that at that time each member that was "added" gave some manifestation of this by which he became incorporated into the one body. Obviously this is not so today.

In ver. 21 the reference to the "head," and to the "feet" and the "eyes", which are part of the head, should not be confused with the passages which speak of Christ as the head of the body. Each use of a figure of speech must be understood according to the purpose it serves in the different contexts.

The principle of responsibility does not stand alone in this passage, v. 22 speaks of the more feeble being *necessary*. There are some members of our bodies, specially those which are unseen which are small and delicate and need to be well protected, but they are very necessary. Here is an encouragement to the weak and the young; and a warning to those who are more prominent and matured in service.

The last verse of the chapter shews a balance, which is always applicable. The gifts were not to be belittled they were to be coveted. But there was and is a "more excellent" way. It is love. Love thinks of the other, not of self. And that which desires the true profit of the other is love. More loving expressions count for little.

But we may now ask, "What about spiritual gifts today?" It is a noteworthy fact that after Paul wrote to Timothy, "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me", no reference is made to the Church being the body, or to elders, or to spiritual gifts. That statement in 2 Tim. 1.<sup>15</sup> marks an important point in Church history. The churches in Asia, mostly founded and cared for by Paul had rejected his testimony and that of Timothy whom he had placed among them; and errors had split up the people of God. From that time onward no reference is made to any miraculous gifts among them. The only references to miracles is to the counterfeit working of the agents of the Devil, as to which we are warned in the last days.

In Mark 16.<sup>20</sup> and Heb. 2/<sup>3</sup>, 4 we are told that the miraculous gifts were for the *confirmation* of the word of the gospel. The miracles which the Lord wrought were for that purpose (John 5.<sup>36</sup>; 10.<sup>38</sup>; 14.<sup>11</sup>) and when the Lord had gone the Holy Spirit took His place working in the same way through the apostles. But such confirmation would not be consistent with God's truthfulness today. To which of the sects could God give such witness of approval today? Those who profess to have the gifts are far away from the Scriptural pattern.

On the day of Pentecost the gift of tongues made the people marvel because they heard them speak in their own dialects wherein they were born. The word dialect indicates a natural expression peculiar to the various localities; so different from that of a foreigner who has *learned* the language. This was a witness. But where are the evidences today that that which is supposed to be a "tongue" (a language) is really that. Do we find men of other languages being convinced by hearing their own dialects spoken in this way? This matter needs to be proved, and not taken for granted. We shall have more to say on this when we come to ch. 14 which deals with the use of the gifts.

# I CORINTHIANS 13.

Chaps. 12, 13 and 14 are one subject. And we must consider ch. 13 in this way, though its principles will apply whether gifts be present or not.

There are two words for love in the Greek—"philos", the love of friendship which is reciprocal; and "agape", which is a love that operates regardless of whether anything is returned. This latter is the one used in John 3.16, and it is the one used here, and in every case where our word "charity" is used. The essential difference is that the love of friendship varies according to circumstances, but this charity love "never faileth". In the varying experiences of Christian fellowship we do well to test our love by this standard.

We see then what a bearing this love has upon the previous chapter. If such love is in full operation there can be no party spirit, no self gratification; but the principle of the working of the members of the body will be illustrated continually. And if one spoke with the tongues of men *and of angels* and had not this love, he was as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. This is the only place where we read of the tongues of angels. The tongues spoken by a gift were either known by those who heard them, or if for the churches' edification, were interpreted by that gift. Some have thought that when they have made utterances that cannot be understood they have used the tongue of an angel. But we never have an actual case in Scripture of a man speaking in an angel's tongue. The angel always used the tongue of the one to whom he spoke.

A comparison of vers. 1 & 2 will shew the object of mentioning the tongue of angels; Paul sets forth the most extreme example. We have no reason to believe that anyone actually did remove mountains. These things are simply hyperbole for the purpose of the argument.

It is therefore befitting to those who make these unintelligible utterances to have them well tested and not to assume anything.

The purpose of these opening verses then is to show the "more excellent" way. The gifts and the love together would be the desirable thing but far better to lack the gifts than to lack the love.

But ver. 3 gives a further view. It is possible to give and to suffer much for the Lord and yet to lack much in love. May we search our hearts and ways as we proceed through this chap. to learn what love is.

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Addresses of others who would like these papers, and correspondence from any concerned for the unity of the faith, welcomed  
H. G. HORBS, St. Catherine's Road, Long Melford, Sudbury, Suffolk

# I CORINTHIANS 13 (continued).

It is evident that if the Holy Spirit saw fit to inspire Paul with such a description of love, there must be a general misunderstanding as to what it really is. Love is one of those precious things which are not found in large quantities. Moreover, like some other precious things it is often found mixed with other things, where it can hardly be detected; and there are things that look like it but are only inferior substitutes. Comparatively few people can distinguish between a real diamond and "paste". And certainly the average person would not discern the difference between nine carat gold and twenty carat from sight, nor would they know how to set about testing it.

Well, here are a few things that will guide us in testing what is true love; for there is plenty of counterfeit for it.

Ver. 1 shews that talking is not love. And the possession of a spiritual gift, or of much understanding, does not involve the possession of it, according to ver. 2. Nor can it be measured by the amount one gives away or is willing to suffer, according to ver. 3.

To "suffer long" is quite a different thing from suffering in body. To suffer long and be kind reminds us of the Lord's words in Matt. 5.<sup>43-48</sup>. From those verses it is evident that love desires the good even of an enemy: and will return good for evil on all occasions. It does not "envy" (ver. 4), it rejoices in the wealth or profit of another. It does not seek prominence, or make a show to get glory. It does not even seek that which is its own. Paul set an example in this when he said, in 2 Cor. 12.<sup>14, 15</sup>, "though the more abundantly I love you the less I be loved". His love to them did not consist in a flow of smooth words, he had upbraided them severely, and thus had risked losing their love for it. But by the grace of God, the Corinthians had repented of the wrongs and responded to the love that sought only their good.

Love is not easily irritated. We must distinguish here between being provoked, as God was provoked to anger by Israel, and that tendency to be irritated and annoyed when something affects ourselves in a way we do not like.

The word "think" (ver. 5) is really to "impute"—to think evil of someone before we have proof that the evil exists. So is it in Phil. 4.<sup>8</sup>, the reverse side of the same thing. "Think these things of one another". Always be ready to give credit to the other for the best—not the worst. Though we are not to shut our eyes to sin, as the next verse shews.

"Iniquity" (ver. 6) is unrighteousness. Love rejoices in justice, in fair treatment in everything. Uprightness, frankness, honesty. It rejoices with the truth. Thus love and truth go hand in hand. Truth in doctrine, because anything else is a grief, if not an insult, to God. Truth in dealing with one another. Remembering that by speaking only half the truth we may in effect tell a lie.

In ver. 7 "beareth all things" is in the sense of enduring without yielding; "endureth all things" is with the thought of patience. "Believeth all things, hopeth all things", obviously all things that are true. Do we believe *all* that God has said, or are there some things we would rather not go into. God means every word that He says, and not one jot or tittle will fail: and if we *love* Him we shall value His commandments as much as His promises, even though it costs something to obey them (Psa. 119.<sup>66</sup>).

"Love never faileth". The context goes on to speak of eternal endurance, and if love will continue for ever then surely our love to one another should not break down under the varied strains that are put upon it while we are here.

A comparison of the remaining verses reveals the need of comparing "spiritual things with spiritual" as well as Scripture with Scripture (1 Cor. 2.<sup>13</sup>). The statements in ver. 8 need to be compared, not only with ver. 12, but with facts that are established by the general teaching of Scripture.

The fact that we shall know even as we are known proves that knowledge will not "vanish away" into non-existence. This is important in another connection. The Greek word "katargeo" which is the word here for "fail" and "vanish away", is asserted to mean "a complete cessation of existence" by those who teach that the ungodly will be annihilated. But prophecies will not cease altogether when we are made perfect at the coming of Christ, Joel 2.<sup>28</sup> shews that they will be in operation during the Millennium. And if we are to know as we are known, knowledge cannot "vanish away" into non-existence. This proves that the word "katargeo" does not imply non-existence in the case of the ungodly; and it also makes clear the meaning of these statements concerning the spiritual gifts. Prophecies had a value in the early Church—they had not a complete New Testament as we have. And if they were present today they might still be of value in forewarning us of various things. But when that which is perfect is come it will not have that value to us because we shall be beyond the need of it. So we see the mean-

ing of the word "katargeo" is "to be rendered non-fruitful, or inoperative, or of no effect". Not "annihilated".

So with "knowledge". There was a spiritual gift of knowledge (ch. 12.8), but when that which is perfect is come, such a gift will not be needed. As to "tongues" the word is they shall "stop".

What then is the real object of these statements? The Corinthians were not exercising their gifts in *love*. They were not considering the profit of the whole, but their own gratification in the exercise of them. But Paul points out, not only the wrong of this, but the folly of it: for these things are but transitory: *love* abideth ever.

So he likens them to the things of childhood as compared with the things of manhood. During this experience of seeing through a glass darkly, as in a riddle; and knowing in part, these things have a place—hence he wrote "covet earnestly the best gifts". But he added "the more excellent way" of love, which will abide when we reach our manhood state of perfection.

There is nothing in verses 9, 10 to prove that these gifts *will* continue till that which is perfect is come. Knowledge and prophecy are not the only things that are in part now. And the purpose of the passage is not to shew that any of these things will continue: but to shew the comparative weakness of that which they gloried in. The point is that *whatever* is in part will be done away when that which is perfect is come. Therefore seek the more excellent way, "love": knowing that love is not one or two of the foregoing elements, but all the elements together and in due proportion. It is this proportion which characterized the whole of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## I CORINTHIANS 14.

The same standpoint is seen at the beginning of this chapter as at the end of ch. 12. The words "follow after" here suggests a pursuit of something that will elude your grasp. And is not that true of *love*? For a moment we may think we have attained to it, only to be reminded very shortly that we have failed of it. But nevertheless, "pursue".

To seek spiritual gifts of any kind, whether miraculous or not, without love, is to court disaster. Whatever we attain to should be with the object of benefiting others. Whoever thought of building up one member of his own body and neglecting the rest! Such is the self-centredness of desiring gifts without the object of edifying the whole.

Having thus laid the foundation Paul goes on to enlarge upon his subject. He puts the emphasis on Prophecy.

Now it is not the exercise of a spiritual gift for one to announce in a meeting that "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh". Such a thing requires no spiritual gift. Apart from the prophecies in Scripture which concern the events connected with the coming of Christ, there is an aspect of prophecy which served a very useful purpose in the early Church. We see it in Acts 11.<sup>27-30</sup> and 21.<sup>10, 11</sup>. This gift *might* have been continued to us till now, but the disunity forbids it.

Prophecy does not only consist in foretelling events, it includes the making known of the mind of God on any matter which has not already been made known. It is seen in Acts 13.<sup>1-3</sup> in this aspect. At the same time, to confuse it with preaching and ministry is wrong (Rom. 12. 6-8).

Prophecy was the supreme gift for *edification*. The present movement which claims to have these gifts is so characterised by what is claimed to be the gift of tongues that it has come to be known as the "Tongues Movement."

Throughout this chapter we find the word "unknown" preceding the word "tongues": it is printed in italics to indicate that it is not in the Greek.

Where the translators of the Authorized Version have done a thing like this it is usually with a good reason. It is too frequent to be a slip. Their object in such cases has been to give the sense of the statement in consistency with the context. The context makes clear that at Corinth the tongues spoken were unknown to the speaker or to those who (usually) heard, being in the local church. And this is what the translators have endeavoured to shew.

But the present day tendency is, it seems, to regard this term "unknown tongue" as meaning a language which no one knows or can know. And by this means to justify utterances which cannot be proved to be an actual language at all.

If one found some buried treasure which looked like gold, would he not wish to have the articles tested to prove that they were gold? So, if "the gift of tongues" is really the recovery of a long lost treasure, ought not those who possess it desire to have it tested to the utmost lest they have been mistaken. And this applies to everything. For we are told to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. Where is the wisdom of holding fast to something that will not stand the test?

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H. G. HOBBS, St. Catherine's Road, Long Melford, Sudbury, Suffolk.



# I CORINTHIANS 14 (continued).

It is evident from this chapter as a whole that "tongues" had come into an undue prominence in the church and Paul reproved this and put the emphasis on prophecy; because by that the whole were edified and the understanding was made fruitful (verses 14, 15).

Understanding is a very important factor in the spiritual growth of a child of God. The Book of Proverbs lays repeated emphasis on getting wisdom and knowledge and understanding. And Paul's prayers for the saints were on the same line (Eph. 1.<sup>17</sup>, 18; Col. 1.<sup>9</sup>). So in ver. 20 of our chapter he says, "Be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men". Children readily forgive, and it is good for us to be like them. But in understanding "men". From the context here, it is evident that Paul intended them to understand that to be content with tongues without an interpretation was childlike. It amounted to little more than an entertainment. But prophecy was understood, and thus they would be edified and come to manhood. Verse 11 of the last chapter carries a somewhat similar thought with a wider application. Now must it not be admitted that the tongues' movement of the present day is largely a matter of childish glorying in that which is not understood?

But further, to be men in understanding involves an ability to prove a thing; which we are told to do. But in these days there is a sad lack of appreciation of what constitutes proof. What is regarded as proof of a thing is very frequently only assumption. For instance, regarding "tongues" at the present time. Those who profess to have this gift are very sure that it is a real spiritual gift. But what is it that makes them sure? Their own experience of liberty in utterance which gives them joy. But that is not proof. The Lord in Matt. 24, Paul in this Epistle, ch. 12.<sup>3</sup>, and John in 1st Ep. 4.<sup>1</sup>, all warn about being deceived with these things. We ought, therefore, to be *particularly* critical about them; and not take anything for granted, but test it out thoroughly, and refuse anything that will not answer to the severest test.

Now suppose one speaks in a "tongue" in my presence, how am I to know that it is really a language that is being spoken and not merely gabble? It may be as well here to say that some, as soon as reference is made to the mention of false gifts in the Scriptures, become indignant and *assume* that we imply that their experience is the work of the Devil. No such thing. Although when we read that "Satan himself is transformed as an angel of light" we ought to be more concerned to prove everything. The writer's experience of this matter has been exclusively in connection with children of God whom he would be very loth to think were speaking by demon inspiration.

There is another alternative to this matter, it is the

person himself. Some children can utter a lot of gabble with the utmost fluency. And in adults there can be the same thing when the circumstances favour it. Some who are usually free with the tongue will easily lapse into it, and others who are hesitant will also find relief in it. When one is pent up before God, it may be "with groanings which cannot be uttered", he may find relief and enter into an ecstasy of delight by breaking out into this. It has also been known that some, in endeavouring to lead others into this "gift", have urged them strongly, "let yourself go", and "speak, speak". But in all this there is no proof that it is an actual language. Feelings prove nothing.

Moreover, if one speaks in a "tongue" in a meeting and another gives an interpretation of it, how can it be known that that really is the interpretation? Remember we *must* be critical. A person may have a thought which he truly believes is the interpretation. That thought may be truth and of spiritual value, but there is no *proof* that it is the interpretation of the first utterance.

But in the chapter before us Paul does give us a test which can be applied, and which does constitute proof. In ver. 22 He tells us that "tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not". And it was with this proof that the gift was established in the first instance on the day of Pentecost. God "confirmed the word with the signs following". But where would have been the confirmation if they had spoken in an *unknown* tongue and one of their own company had interpreted? The unbelievers would have said it was a put up affair. But when the people heard them speak every man in the dialect in which he was born, they marvelled. The passage which Paul quotes in ver. 21 is from Isa. 28.<sup>11</sup>, where the prophet goes on to speak of the scornful men that "rule" in Jerusalem. This aptly fits the day of Pentecost for whereas there were three thousand converted on that day, the rulers were only the more embittered.

Now this test is never out of date, except that in the last days, when Satan will be working real miracles, he may cause men to speak in a language that will be understood by the hearers; in which case the tests of 1 Cor. 12.<sup>3</sup> and 1 John 4.<sup>1</sup> would be applied. But for the present, we can apply the test of the day of Pentecost. If that fails, then the claim to a spiritual gift should be rejected. Indeed it should not be allowed until it has been fully tested by this means. Then there is the further point, that if one speaks by a spiritual gift, his words are equal to the words of Scripture—being inspired by the Holy Spirit. In view of this no departure from sound doctrine whatever can be allowed; otherwise we make the Holy Spirit to contradict His own words in the Scriptures.

This last is an important rule in view of Satan's counterfeit work, not only in view of what we have seen as to

the last days, but Deut. 13.<sup>1-3</sup> gave the same rule to Israel. There it is the case of a sign or wonder being prophesied, and it does come to pass. This shews us that God will allow such things and many will be deceived. This only the more emphasizes the need of being men in understanding, being established in the true doctrine of Christ as taught by Himself and His apostles.

Coming to the end of Paul's rather lengthy emphasis on prophecy as of more value than tongues, we come to ver. 25 and the case of one coming in and having "the secrets of his heart made manifest". This gives us further guidance as to what is involved in prophecy. We see it illustrated in Acts 5, where Peter declared what Annanias and Saphira had done.

In verses 16, 23, 24 we have references to the "unlearned". There is something to be learned from this. In verses 23 and 24 we notice that the unlearned is not an unbeliever; he is mentioned as being distinct. It is also clear that he is not one that is recognised as a member of the church. He comes in casually and by the prophecy is convinced and falls down and worships God.

The word "unlearned" comes from the word for "one's own" and has the meaning of "a private individual". That is, one who stands in a position of his own, as distinct from standing in the community of the church.

This may have a bearing on being "baptized into the one body". But it has its application wherever "a church of a living God" is found, which is "a pillar and ground of the truth".

In those times, when any errors occurred, they remained in the church and were dealt with by apostolic discipline. In these days we have errors of many kinds which have split up the children of God into the many sects and denominations which are too numerous to mention. If there be a company of God's children who are progressing toward that blessed description "a pillar and ground of the truth", here is guidance for them as to receiving one into their fellowship. We have no apostles, no miraculous gifts, to give us the guidance. But whereunto we have attained we must stand fast in keeping the company free from intruding error. Therefore, the position of the "private individual" should be accorded to the new comer. He can be present and say "Amen", as ver. 16 shews, but he should not be regarded as a member of the gathering till he shews that he is free from positive error, and at least willing, to go on as a disciple (a learner) till he becomes established in the truth. If he can give evidence that he is established in the truth—so much the better.

Verses 26-33 give rules for the guidance of the saints where there are spiritual gifts in operation; and it is a mistake to apply these at the present time when the gifts are not in operation: which some are doing in what is termed "open ministry".

The departure from apostolic teaching (2 Tim. 1.<sup>15</sup>) already referred to, makes a turning point in Church history. Not only do we find no further reference to elders or miraculous gifts, but we find a change of ministry and oversight from that time onwards. In 2 Tim. 2, Paul charges him to commit the things that he had learned to faithful men with a view to their teaching others. And later in the chapter he charges him to separate from those in error and find his fellowship with the few that remained faithful.

Timothy and Titus were both given sole responsibility for the saints where they were. And in Rev. ch. 2 and 3 we find the same rule in operation, one "angel" (messenger) was held responsible by the Lord for what was done in each church. This is the last view afforded in Scripture of church oversight.

There is nothing in Scripture to imply that miraculous gifts or elders would continue to the end of this age. But in Eph. 4.<sup>8-16</sup> we have the gifts of Christ and their functions which are to operate till the body of Christ is complete: "the fulness of the measure of the stature of Christ".

These gifts are four (ver. 11). Apostles and prophets are the foundation (ch. 2.<sup>20</sup>). They have passed off the scene, but their writings remain; so that we have no further need of inspired writings or utterances. "Evangelists" and "pastors and teachers" remain.

It is upon the "pastor and teacher" that this responsibility now falls to feed the flock—one in each church, wherever a true church may be found. And in a transition period leading up to the formation of a church we would expect the same principle to apply. The passage cited in Eph. 4 is a blessed encouragement from the Lord to any that grieve over the present disunity, by its clear testimony as to the unity that must come before the Lord returns.

The plain teaching of ver. 34, however, remains. The woman's position of subjection has never been altered by God from the time that Eve was made until the end of time. Note the reference to the law in this verse, and note too that the same rule applies in 1 Tim. 2. 12,13. The woman's sphere of service is set forth in Titus 2.<sup>3-5</sup>, and there is plenty of scope for them there without intruding into the man's position.

The emphasis on the word "*you*" in ver. 36 helps us to see the puffed up condition they had fallen into, with all their gifts. But Paul rightly asserted his authority from the Lord; and we ought to readily acknowledge that these things are *His* commandments. If this is done, each one will fit into his proper position, all will be done "decently and in order" and others will be "prepared for the ministry" according to the appointment of Christ our head (Eph. 4.12).

# I CORINTHIANS 15.

In opening this subject of resurrection, the apostle declares to them "the gospel" (the good announcement) which he preached. Thus asserting that the resurrection of Christ is an essential part of the Gospel. Rom. 1.<sup>4</sup> shews it to be God's testimony to the person of Christ and the efficacy of His death. And the power of God in the Gospel is associated with His resurrection in Phil. 3.<sup>10</sup>, and throughout the Epistle to the Hebrews. Salvation and justification should always be distinguished. Justification is by the blood of Christ—His death (Rom. 5.<sup>9</sup>). Salvation, specially as presented in the Epistle to the Hebrews, is from the power of sin, and that is by the power of the risen Christ. And as we proceed through this chapter we shall see how Paul demonstrates the powerlessness of the gospel if Christ were not raised from the dead. Verse 2 being the first expression of this where the present (continuous) tense is used—"being saved".

It is also necessary that this resurrection should be established as a fact, that the preaching might have a basis. So in verses 5-8 we have the "witnesses" mentioned; these in turn being supported by the power of the risen Christ in the working of miracles as demonstrated among themselves (ch. 12.<sup>5</sup>).

Then Paul proceeds to establish his own authority as an apostle in that he had seen the Lord in resurrection and been sent by Him. And while acknowledging his unworthiness, at the same time asserting the abundance of his labours in the preaching of this resurrection, which preaching had been so effectual among them. And in view of all this we feel the force of the question, "How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (verse 12).

The force of the argument in ver. 13 that if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is not Christ raised, is in the fact that Christ was verily man (ver. 47); a truth which they were familiar with, but which is amplified in Heb. 2. He being a partaker of flesh and blood was in all things made like His brethren. Therefore if men are not raised Christ was not raised. And if Christ be not raised our gospel is empty. But they themselves were the evidence of its power. But he says "if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain".

The whole of these verses, 14-17, are making the resurrection of men essential to the resurrection of Christ; so truly did He become man.

There are also other issues to this; for he says, if Christ be not raised we are false witnesses of God. And could God give such confirmation of the gospel in the miracles if they were bearing false witnesses to Him?

And further, if Christ be not raised, he says, "ye are yet in your sins". This is not a matter of the forgiveness of sins being questioned; that cannot be seen with the natural eye. But in ch. 6.<sup>9-11</sup> he has reminded them of what some of them were, but they were washed. This deliverance from the power of sin can be seen by the natural eye, and therefore is an undeniable evidence of the resurrection of Christ, and therefore of those who are in Christ.

It is good to note the mode of argument adopted in some of these cases. In Gal. 5.<sup>4</sup> the object, far from being to assert that one can fall from grace (eternally), is to shew the impossibility of being justified by the law. So here, the argument is that Christ must have been raised, because it was evident that they were not still in their sins; a mighty deliverance had been wrought.

And so with ver. 18, far from asserting the extinction of the man if there be no resurrection; it is holding up the *impossible* to prove the falsity of the teaching that there is no resurrection.

The fact that we have a "hope" is next made the basis of argument in the same direction. The Corinthians, with Paul, had a hope for the future. They did not entertain the thought of extinction at death. But if Christ be not raised there is no hope. And if there is no hope beyond this life "we are of all men most miserable". What were Paul and his associates suffering for? Away with such thoughts! We are not of all men most miserable. Those that have fallen asleep in Christ are not perished. Those who believe in Him are not still in their sins. We are not false witnesses of God. Now IS Christ risen from the dead—the first fruits of them that have fallen asleep. Here is the ground of our hope; and we emerge from the argument into a shout of triumph: because the argument is sound and therefore in perfect accord with truth.

But there is yet something further to be added to shew the reasonableness of the position. Rom. 5.<sup>12</sup> says "By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned". Sin and death (physical death) go hand in hand; even in the case of the believer. For physically we are still in Adam. But when we get beyond sin we shall also be beyond death. We wait for the redemption of the body. So then, here in ver. 22 we see the reasonableness of the plan of God that as in Adam all die (according to Rom. 5.<sup>12</sup>),

Adam being the first man and he brought in death by his sin. So in Christ shall all be made alive; through the Second Man, who being sinless, must needs be raised from the dead: (for it was for our sins that He died.)

The words "in Christ shall all be made alive" do not teach a universal salvation. The chapter is dealing with the resurrection of believers only and ver. 22 must not be divorced from verses 42-57. So in ver. 23 the "order" in resurrection does not go beyond "those that are Christ's at His coming". From thence he goes on to speak of the reign of Christ, but says nothing about the last resurrection of Rev. 20.<sup>12</sup>; *but it is implied in the word "end"; v. 24.*

Moreover we see in this verse how Christ is identified with manhood. "Every man in his own order—Christ the firstfruits". Verily man, and verily God.

But resurrection has a relationship to this life. So verses 24-28 speak of the "reign" of Christ when He comes again. We note that it is the earthly reign of Christ that is spoken of here. "The righteous shall be recompensed in the earth." God has committed all judgment unto His Son "because He is the Son of man" (John 5.<sup>27</sup>). And to those who continued with Him in His temptations He promised a share in that reigning, in a special sense (Luke 22.<sup>28-30</sup>). But all who are His will share in that reign in some measure (Rom. 8.<sup>17</sup>; 2 Tim. 2.<sup>12</sup>; Rev. 5.<sup>10</sup> and 20.<sup>4</sup>). But this earthly reign does not exclude the fact of a heavenly reign: the earthly will be for a thousand years; but the heavenly will be for ever and ever (2 Cor. 4.<sup>17</sup>; Rev. 11.<sup>15</sup>; 22.<sup>5</sup>).

At the "end" of that earthly reign all authority and power will have been put down. The Devil released from the abyss will have gathered his forces for the last attack, and will have been destroyed by fire from heaven (Rev. 20.<sup>9</sup>). But there still remains the "last enemy" to be destroyed—death. For us that enemy will have been destroyed a thousand years before, at the coming of Christ. But during that thousand years there will be those who die in faith and obedience to Christ. They must be raised; and death (as an enemy) will then be destroyed finally for the glory of the eternal kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth.

Again let us notice that it is believers only that are dealt with in this chapter, therefore the statements about death here are not to be used in opposition to those concerning the *second* death in Rev. 20 which is after the destruction spoken of here, and the death is of a different kind.

Death is an enemy to Christ because it is standing in the way of the fulfilment of God's purpose to conform

His children (in resurrection) to the image of His dear Son. It cannot be so regarded in connection with the ungodly for death to them is one step in fulfilment of God's purpose, the second death—the lake of fire being the completion of that purpose.

In verse 26 the “destruction” of death at the *end* of Christ's earthly reign must be the resurrection of those who die in faith during that time. Just as victory over death in verses 54, 55 is the resurrection of those who have died in faith up to the last trump—when the Lord comes.

That there will be those who die in faith during Christ's reign on earth seems clear from Isa. 65.<sup>20-22</sup>; *Isa. 48/14*; *Isa. 48/14*;

In view of the clear meaning of the destruction of death (ver. 26) according to the context, how ugly a distortion is the teaching seen to be that “the second death” is to be destroyed; that is the annihilation of it and all that are in it. For the word “destroy” does *not* mean annihilation.

Those who deny the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ lay hold of the passages of Scripture which speak of His subjection and stress them while ignoring or explaining away those that assert or imply His deity. Verses 27 and 28 have been misused in this way. But they by no means prove that He is not essentially God.

The One who “thought it not robbery to be equal with God”, “emptied Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant”. But He still was God—“God manifest in flesh”. In resurrection He is still both God and man, and as man will ever be subject to God.

It is no dishonour to be subject. It is a glory when it is the right subjection. Who can fail to see the glory of those words in John 8.<sup>42</sup>, “neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me”? So when He has subdued all things and all are put under His feet, and the kingdom is delivered up to God the Father, then God shall be all in all, the Father and the Son—both equally God—occupying their related positions in the new heavens and the new earth. And if we look at Rev. 21.<sup>22, 23</sup> we see the glory of that New Jerusalem. Here we have Christ spoken of as “the Lamb”. This not only expresses His humanity, but the fact that He died to redeem His people, which was an act of obedience on His part to the Father. But who can fail to see, at the same time, an equality in Godhead in the words, “for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it”? And again, “the glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof”? Surely none but the benighted and void of spiritual understanding.

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H. G. HOBBS, St. Catherine's Road, Long Melford, Sudbury, Suffolk.



The question arises as to whether ver. 32 refers to fighting with beasts literally or to contending with men of a fierce disposition. The marginal suggestion "to *speak* after the manner of men" has no warrant from the actual wording in the Greek. It is true that in the Acts there is no mention of Paul fighting with beasts in the arena, but neither is there of "fighting" (contending) with men. In ch. 19.<sup>30</sup> when there was a great disturbance made at Ephesus against the disciples, Paul would have gone in among the people but "the disciples suffered him not". So we cannot argue from what is not stated in the Acts. There are other things in 2 Cor. 11 that Paul endured that are not recorded in the narrative of his journeyings. So there is no reason why this should not be taken to refer literally to fighting with beasts in the arena, and God gave him power over the beasts so that he was allowed to go free.

But if there be no resurrection why go to such lengths "let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die".

"Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness and sin not". Here is a most important principle. Some are very indifferent as to the errors that are held and taught among God's children today. But the evil communication "no resurrection" has its effect in the life—"let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die". So is it with all error, whether the evil effects are traceable or not. The truth alone sancti-

Through all eternity the Son of God—glorified with that glory which He had with the Father before the world was, and also glorified with that additional glory which the Father will give Him—will ever be the delight of His Father, who will never lose sight of all that He went through in the days of His flesh in that perfect subjection to His will.

From other parts of the Epistles as well as from the Lord's own words it is abundantly evident that He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. And if we do, we are assured of sharing that future glory with Him. Paul realized this and looking back he said "ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price", and again, "we thus judge, that if one died for all then all died, and that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again". And looking forward he pressed toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore baptized to fill up the ranks of the dead, his life was continually in jeopardy. Yea, he could say, "I die daily".

fies. A corrupt tree *cannot* bring forth good fruit. Hence the need for every child of God to exercise himself to hold the truth and nothing but the truth.

From what follows in ver. 34 it seems that they had settled down and neglected the gospel testimony. The Thessalonians were an encouraging contrast to this, for from them "sounded out the word of the Lord".

Ver. 36 "Fool". This seems to be contrary to the teaching of the Lord in Matt. 5.<sup>22</sup>: but there it is not the word "fool", it is the word which Moses used for "rebel" ("moreh" Numb. 20.<sup>10</sup>).

There seems to be a far reaching implication attaching to this word. A *brother* may be a fool, but he cannot be a rebel—that would deny his reconciliation to God. It hardly needs to be said, however, that such expressions as "Thou fool" are better avoided among saints.

But here Paul has put forth the question himself on behalf of a supposed "someone", with the object of shewing the foolishness of it: because such a question implies that it is foolish to think that the body *can* be raised. To King Agrippa Paul said "*Why* should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" The foolishness is not with the one who believes in resurrection, but with the one who believes not.

Already he has *proved* the doctrine in the earlier part of the chapter: but in answering this question, "*How* are the dead raised up" he gives us a description of that body that shall be which is sufficient to cause us to rejoice and triumph in anticipation of that day.

For this he makes his appeal to nature. Not that nature is sufficient apart from revelation; but that nature is the work of Him who created all things with a view to Christ (Col. 1.<sup>16</sup>).

We note the difference in ver. 37 between the "body" that shall be and the "grain" which is sown. The word "grain" is not to be limited to such as wheat or barley. It is the word used for "a grain of mustard seed", and therefore includes plants of a more complicated and beautiful growth. Every plant has a beauty of its own but those which have the flowers (as we usually speak of them) have a glory which exceeds that of the cereals (the grass-like ones). This, like the stars, illustrates the differences that will be in the resurrection. The word "other" in ver. 37 implying all sorts of grain that may be sown.

The caterpillar and the butterfly are often used to illustrate resurrection. But it is a rule with all insects that the last stage of life is always on a higher level. And it is this rule which is used here, in connection with the grain, to shew the superiority of the resurrection body over

the present one. That which is sown is bare grain, but that which comes up is called a "body". A plant is very much like a body; it breathes through its leaves; it feeds through its roots; there is a flow of sap throughout every part; there are stages of growth and development of parts; there are the genitive organs which produce the fruit; the whole constituting it a living organism. These different parts are not mentioned in the inspired use of the illustration because they cannot be compared to the resurrection body, detail for detail. They are mentioned here simply to emphasize the excellence of the "body that shall be" over the "bare grain" that is sown. John tells us that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be *like Him*". That is sufficient for the time being.

As to this difference in resurrection we have a four-fold emphasis. In ver. 38 "to every seed his own body". In ver. 39 the different kinds of "flesh": of men, of beasts, of fishes, of birds. In passing we might notice here the witness against evolutionary theories. The flesh is not "the same flesh", it is of a different kind. No matter how much similitude there may be between the construction and functioning of a man's body and that of some of the beasts, they are not the same, they are of another kind.

In ver. 40 there is the difference between the heavenly bodies (angels, cherubs, and seraphs) and the earthly (men).

Then in ver. 41 there is the difference between the sun, moon and stars. All these combining to shew that the resurrection body will be raised according to the rule of ver. 38. It will correspond in some way to that which is sown.

We are told plainly that our bodies will be like the body of Christ; that applies to all. But we shall recognize Abram, Isaac and Jacob, their features will correspond to those of their earthly bodies. But there is something else being asserted here, it is a difference in *glory*, according to ver. 41. It confronts us with a blessed yet solemn principle, that if this body is kept as a vessel "sanctified and meet for the Master's use" it will be raised in corresponding glory. Paul's body bore the marks of the Lord Jesus, from stripes and other forms of persecution and strain, but all will appear unto praise and honour and glory in that day (Gal. 6.17; 1 Pet. 1.7).

There seems to be a further thought in ver. 41 regarding the sun, moon and stars. Christ is definitely called the "Sun of Righteousness" in Mal. 4.2 He is "the Light of the world", the source of light. The moon receives its light from the sun and reflects it to the earth. Thus it is

a type of the Church. But whereas the sun is constant (though at times obscured, and its heat and light vary according to the *earth's* position) the moon itself varies in the amount of light it reflects. Many details of the moon's variableness can be seen with a little knowledge of astronomy and it reminds us sadly of the Church's failure in reflecting the glory of Christ to the world. The stars are always a figure of individual saints or angels; each with its own degree of glory.

Verses 42-44 continue the thought of the seed "sown" and lead up to the fact of a spiritual body. And we need to be clear as to the difference between a "spirit" and a "spiritual body", see Luke 24.<sup>36-40</sup>.

This in turn leads on to the comparison of Christ with Adam. Adam the head of the first creation, Christ the head of the new creation. Adam, a living soul, imparted natural life to his seed: Christ, in resurrection life, imparts spiritual life to all who believe in Him, and in resurrection we shall have an immortal body (a body that cannot die) by His life imparted to us.

There is an exactness of expression in verses 45 and 47 which we do well to notice. It impresses us with the importance of keeping to the actual words of the Holy Spirit. Adam was the "*first*" man (verses 45 and 47), but whereas Christ is called the "*last Adam*" in ver. 45, He is called the "*second man*" in ver. 47. The reason is that after Christ there will be no other *head* of the human race. He is the *last Adam*. But He is the "*second man*" and not the last. Although there were godly men before He came such as Abraham, Moses, Jacob, etc., Christ is the second man because none of those were perfect.

Adam was created by God, in His own image, sinless and perfect. But he fell and there was not another like him until Christ came. But Christ is not the last man, for all who are in Him will be like Him in sinless perfection in the resurrection. What grace! But may the exactness of the words used lead us to a reverence for God's words throughout Scripture.

# I CORINTHIANS 15 (cont.)

This likeness to Christ is asserted in ver. 49. What a satisfaction this will be to God Himself. Adam, the first man, quickly lost the glory he had, and a race of suffering and disfigured beings has been the result, through sin. But through the death of Christ the Devil's attempt to frustrate the work of God will itself be frustrated in that a race of perfect men will be brought in through righteousness in atonement. And that race will be on a higher level than Adam, possessing all the glory of the resurrection body. It does our hearts good to meditate on God's side of these things. His glory as the Author of the plan of redemption. His satisfaction in the great multitude that will be conformed to the image of His dear Son. His delight in seeing His Son possessed of a bride that will answer His heart. His triumph over all the work of the Devil, even using his working through wicked men to accomplish what He has purposed.

The chapter so far has been dealing with the resurrection of the *dead* in Christ. But the Corinthians knew that there would be some still living when the Lord comes. What of them? This point Paul now proceeds to explain.

Flesh and blood (the natural body) cannot inherit the kingdom of God. A corruptible body cannot be allowed in that sphere of incorruption. And we may add that a body with a law of sin in its members could not be allowed in heaven. Therefore he shews them a mystery—a secret. "We shall not all sleep (in death), but we *shall all* be changed". Living or dead will make no difference, we must all bear the image of the Heavenly One, we *must* have bodies of glory like unto His.

Now when will this change take place? The Corinthians were waiting for the revelation of Jesus Christ (ch. 1.7). But Paul does not say "at the coming, or revelation, of Christ" in this chapter: but he gives another time mark, it is "at the last trump". We have seen the need for observing the exact use of the words "first" and "last" in ver. 45 and we must allow that same exactness to the word last in ver. 52, "the last trump".

The word "last" implies one or more of the same thing preceding. It also implies that there are no more to follow. There is therefore only one way in which this statement can be understood in agreement with the later revelation, and that is, that the seventh trumpet of Rev. 11.<sup>15</sup> is the

"last trump" of this chapter. And in confirmation of this Rev. 10.<sup>7</sup> tells us that the "mystery of God" (the expression used in the Greek being exactly the same as in Col. 2.<sup>2</sup>) will be finished when the seventh trumpet begins to sound. These are plain statements in words whose meaning is unquestionable, given by the Holy Spirit. They must therefore outweigh all the "interpretations" and "explanations" of men.

Blessed hope! Glorious consummation! The trumpet will sound (no "secret coming" for the Church. 1 Thess. 4 presents the very opposite of a secret thing) and living and dead will be caught up to meet the Lord in new and glorified bodies like unto His. It will happen in a moment, at the first sound of the last trumpet.

In view of the error of total extinction at death and the annihilation of the ungodly after the last resurrection and judgment, we do well to remember that this chapter says nothing whatever about the soul. It is the body that is being dealt with and that of the believer only. To argue about what Paul does *not* say is obviously foolish. The words "corruptible" and "mortal" are applied to the body as it is now. "Incorruption" and "immortality" apply to the resurrection body. And though we have plenty of evidence that the soul continues to live after the body dies, to speak of an "immortal soul" gives a handle to the errorist because that expression is not found in Scripture.

Moreover ver. 55 should read, "O death where is thy sting? O death where is thy victory?" The manuscript evidence is certainly in favour of this, and it is so rendered in most of the later translations. The margin says "or hell", from the word "Hades". But there is good manuscript evidence that the word in the original was not "Hades" but "death". This passage is quoted by some as proof that Hades is the grave. But as the word "Hades" is not used here, they have no case.

The death of the body is the subject of the passage; let us not introduce other matters that are not mentioned then all will be clear.

Death has a sting. Often it is evident in the faces of those who die without hope. But for the believer the sting is gone. Our Redeemer took that for us. For our sins were laid upon Him and the strength of it (the law) was not diminished in the least, the full demands were met when God's sword awoke against Him. Hence the note of triumph in ver. 57 "But thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ".

And what should be the effect of such wonderful doctrine as this? Does the blessed hope of resurrection move us to faithful and devoted service? It should do. And with the certainty of resurrection there is the certainty of reward. And our labour, if it is "in the Lord" cannot be in vain.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 16.

In verses 1 & 2 Paul establishes an ordinance for the saints in general. For the Corinthians were given the order as it had been given to the churches of Galatia. It was that they should put aside on the first day of the week, each one according as God had prospered him. Systematic giving is thus appointed in contrast to that which is spasmodic and on special occasions. Paul's presence among them might stir them to liberality on that one occasion, but that was not what he sought. That kind of giving would tend to honour Paul, but that he did not seek. This collection was not for himself as a servant of the Lord. His standpoint as to that is made clear in chap. 9. But as he desired for the Philippians (4.<sup>16</sup>) so he desired for them—fruit that would abound to their account. The collection was for the poor saints of Jerusalem. It was not to build up a large organisation, with trustees and a staff of administration. It was a gift pure and simple to the poor saints. And with such sacrifices God is well pleased. It is quite reasonable to expect that the regular weekly giving would amount to more than the spasmodic method would produce: and we do well to remember in such matters that there is a weekly outgoing on the part of the needy that has to be met. The same rule would apply to all giving for all the various parts of God's work.

Paul does not say what percentage of our income should be given, nor do we find anything to that effect in the New Testament. Jacob promised to give a tenth and Israel were afterwards commanded to give tithes. But Zaccheus could affirm to the Lord that the *half* of his goods he gave to the poor (Luke 19.<sup>8</sup>).

The matter is left to the decision of the individual. From one standpoint *we* are not our own we are bought with a price. From another standpoint, it was said to Annanias (Acts 5.<sup>4</sup>) "Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?" The redeemed one is thus faced with a challenge which will prove his love. And "God loveth a cheerful giver".

Obviously, a man with a small income and a large family is not in the position to give the same percentage as one who has a large income and a small family. But we remember the poor widow who cast in the "two mites"; it was "all she had".

We do well to remember too that the child of God has not the drain on his pocket that the worldling has. What some spend on drink, tobacco, amusements and luxuries which are not in keeping with our pilgrim calling must take a heavy toll on their income. There are also insurances and other safeguards which a child of God may feel are not consistent with the walk by faith. But if we are going to trust God for the future and to preserve from accidents and we pocket what would have gone in insurances, we need not be surprised if He permits something to come that quickly consumes our reserves.

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H. G. HOBBS, St. Catherine's Road, Long Melford, Sudbury, Suffolk.



# I CORINTHIANS 16 (cont.)

Incidentally to the chief purpose of these verses, the mention of "the first day of the week" in ver. 2 is helpful. In Rev. 1.<sup>10</sup> we have mention of the Lord's Day. But we are not told which day that was. The verse before us and Acts 20.<sup>7</sup> together are sufficient to give the guidance we need. And as we are forbidden to keep the Sabbath (the seventh day) in Col. 2.<sup>16</sup> we are not left in doubt as to the will of the Lord. The first day of the week is not a sabbath, it is "the Lord's day"; and as God has given us that name surely it is better to use it than the name which comes from Sun worship—Sunday.

There is another expression of Paul's meekness in ver. 3. Though there is the sign of his apostolic authority in the fact that *he* would send whom *they* approved; yet he left it for them to take the gift even if they went with him. It is just one of those touches which shew the character of God's servant, and his likeness to his Master. Authority properly exercised but balanced by self-abnegation, even as his severity was balanced by his love.

The statements in ver. 5 as to coming to them when he passed through Macedonia will be considered when we come to the Second Epistle where there are other statements that need to be considered with this one.

But verses 5-8 are important from another standpoint. Here Paul is planning for months ahead; but he makes no suggestion of the possibility of the Lord coming in the meanwhile. He uses no such expression as "if the Lord tarry". Nor do we find the words, nor anything that suggests that standpoint anywhere in the New Testament. What he does say is "if the Lord permit". And that is explained in 2 Cor. 1.<sup>15-17</sup>, where referring to the same thing he shews that his purposes were not with a fleshly decision that allowed of no alteration. He kept an open mind for the Lord to cancel or alter anything. (See Acts 16.<sup>6-10</sup>.)

To travel as a messenger of a church or a messenger of Paul to a church was no pleasure outing in those days. Often it meant that the life was endangered, specially when they were carrying gifts of money as was often the case. And Paul was always careful as to whom he sent from the standpoint of spiritual fitness. Hence his oversight in ver. 3. Timothy is one who stands out prominently as a faithful servant in this work: and Paul commends him highly in verses 10, 11; in striking contrast to Apollos, who

though Paul greatly desired him to come, *his will* was otherwise. And one wonders if the "convenient time" ever came.

In bringing this epistle to a close Paul gives the exhortation, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong". They had not watched and the enemy had done his work of undermining the doctrine of Christ and bringing them down in their conduct. If we believe that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, then the scriptures which speak of perilous times must be upon us. We need therefore to take the same exhortation to heart. And not to forget the further exhortation, "Let all your things be done with love".

The salutations to and from the various ones mentioned, together with the reference to Macedonia in ver. 5 lead to the conclusion that Paul was in Asia when he wrote this epistle. The footnote, which says "written from Philippi" is not part of the original letter, but has been added later. Philippi was a chief city of Macedonia, and if he were there he would hardly say, "when I *pass through* Macedonia. And he would hardly send salutations from the churches in Asia if he were not there. This is not the only case where these footnotes to epistles seem to be in error, and it reminds us that we need to be wary of everything that is not found in the inspired text.

Before passing on to the Second Epistle it may be well to glance back at the contents of this one. It will help as to the general view of the Second when we come to consider it.

In spite of the evils that called for the writing of this letter, the beginning of ch. 1 shews that Paul had not lost confidence in them and that there was still much for which he could thank God.

Chaps. 1-4 are dealing throughout with the wisdom of God in contrast to the wisdom of this world. And all other matters referred to in those chapters are subservient, though they be very important in themselves. This discourse is intended to be a blow at their pride.

Chaps. 5 & 6 are one subject: the matter of judgment among themselves being dealt with in the middle of it shews that the two evils are related. For if there had been proper judgment among them the evil of ch. 5 would have been dealt with before Paul had occasion to write. Discipline among saints is essential at all times.

Ch. 7, the married state, is a self-contained subject.

Chaps. 8-10 are one subject, the prime thought being the consideration of the consciences of others. Paul's position as an apostle in ch. 9 being introduced to emphasize the principle by his own willingness to forego things which he had a perfect right to.

Ch. 11.<sup>1-16</sup>. The appointment of covering or uncovering the head in prayer and prophesying, according to sex.

Ch. 11.<sup>17-34</sup>. Concerns behaviour at the Lord's Supper.

Chaps 12-14 Deal with the exercise of spiritual gifts, ch. 13 coming in the middle to emphasize love in this matter in contrast to self-gratification.

Ch. 15 is the subject of resurrection as to which some of them were in error.

Ch. 16, the collection for the saints in need and details concerning journeying, and the conclusion.

It is evident from this that there were various wrongs among them and that Paul spared nothing in order to make each matter perfectly clear to them. He had decided, upon hearing of these things, not to see them at that time. But he wrote in such style and at such length upon each matter that they would have full opportunity of being convinced of the truth and putting things in order before he came to them.

Nor was he disappointed. For the Second Epistle shews that there was deep repentance among them upon the receiving of his letter.

How blessedly refreshing it would be if today there were found the same response to apostolic teaching. Instead, we find that each sect cleaves to its own traditions with the tenacity of a leach. Each one assumes that they are right (a proper attitude in one sense, for we would not expect any to do what they think to be wrong). But the present day attitude is that they *cannot* be wrong. Consequently when errors are pointed out the Scriptures are wrested to support them or the matter is avoided.

And this brings us to that which pervades the whole Epistle—Paul's witness against the party spirit, which is sectarianism. Denominational names are denounced in the first chapter; but the refusal of them by no means ensures the removal of the party spirit. This attitude of defending one's own sect and one's own leaders as if it were impossible for them to be wrong is one of the greatest hindrances to unity in the present day.

It seems that children of God need something very drastic to happen to arouse them from sleep, to realise the dishonour that is being brought upon the name of the One they love; and the dishonour that it will mean to themselves at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

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H. G. HOBBS, St. Catherine's Road, Long Melford, Sudbury, Suffolk

# THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

This second epistle is, in its general outline and content, quite different from the first. The first deals with specific wrongs among the saints at Corinth, whether of their general condition—worldly wisdom and party spirit, or of matters of practice among them, or of doctrine. This second is one subject throughout, which naturally divides into sub-headings, but all with direct bearing upon the main subject. It is the apostle's explanation of the reason why he wrote the first letter as he did, and his attitude toward them in view of their repentance and self-judgment: giving them further instructions as to how they should conduct themselves, and still further exhorting them with a view to his coming to them, that he might find them such as he would.

However, it is impossible but that such a letter, and of such a length, should contain subjects and statements which are in themselves of great value to us; some of them being of such a character as to be decisive on some points of doctrine. These will be considered in this way as we come to them: but, as with all Scripture, the main purpose of the Epistle must be kept in mind throughout if we are to receive the instruction which the Holy Spirit has for us.

## CHAPTER I

Paul addresses himself to them in usual terms, but in fellowship with Timothy. Evidently Timothy was with Paul at the time of writing, and was not to be sent with the letter to them, as in the case of the first letter. The close fellowship between the two is seen in that it is not that Timothy is one among others, named at the end of the epistle, who send greetings, but the letter is written as from Paul and Timothy jointly. In the first epistle Sosthenes is in a similar position; and this shews the humility of Paul, in that though he asserts his authority as an apostle, he takes others subordinate to himself into consort. The fact that Timothy is not mentioned in this way in the first epistle is because he was going with the letter, and being well known to them needed no introduction. But when we note the circumstances, that Timothy was sent when things were in such a confused state, and that it was not necessary to send him after they had shewn repentance, it speaks volumes as to Paul's estimation of this young man. (See Phil. 2.<sup>19, 20</sup>: 1 Tim. 4.<sup>11-16</sup>: 6.<sup>11-14</sup>: 2 Tim. 2.<sup>1-7</sup>.)

The epistle is addressed to the church of God at Corinth "with all the saints which are in all Achaia". From this we see that all the believers in the province of Achaia were included under the one oversight of the church in Corinth.

After wishing them grace and peace in ver. 2 he at once embarks upon the purpose of the letter by thanking God for the comfort and consolation that he had received by hearing of their attitude toward him and the first letter, compare ch. 7.6, 7.

But wrapped up in this we find the principle which stands for all time, that "as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ".

Suffering on account of our own eccentricities or our self-chosen course we may expect to lack this precious balance of consolation, though God is gracious and grants us blessing, many blessings, quite undeserved.

Passing on we notice his devotedness to their good in ver. 6. Then in ver. 8 he recounts his sufferings in Asia. Referring to 1 Cor. 16.<sup>19</sup> we note that the first letter contained greetings from the churches in that part; so that we may conclude that on the receipt of that letter they not only amended their ways but bore up God's servant by prayer (ver. 11), and God answered those prayers in that though he "despaired even of life" he was delivered from death.

Every verse is precious food for thought and is worth pausing over, to get a fuller appreciation of the heart standpoint of this outstanding servant of God. But we pass on to ver. 15 and note that these earlier verses are leading up to this explanation of his conduct toward them, in not going at that time. He was "minded" to go to them, before he heard of the state of affairs there. But on hearing of it he changed his mind. But this change of mind was not with lightness, he would plan according to what he believed to be the will of God. But on the other hand he did not purpose according to the flesh, with a fixity of mind that must not be altered, with a "Yea, yea" or a "Nay, nay". (Ver. 17.)

But at once he thinks of the Gospel which he preached. He might change his mind about a journey: but never about the Gospel. That he had received by revelation, and there is no doubt about it at all—it is not yea and nay. It is all yea and amen in Christ.

Then after assuring them again as to his confidence that they were really stablished in Christ, and sealed by the Holy Spirit, he comes back to the object of his writing and says plainly in ver. 23 "that to spare you I came not as yet to Corinth".

The next chapter continues, "But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness". The word "sorry", occurring twice in ver. 2 and once in ver. 3, is the same as the word for "heaviness" in ver. 1. And considering these verses together it is clear that he would not go to them while that state which made him sorry continued. His confidence that they were sealed by the Holy Spirit, and that they would respond to his reproof was not allowed to override his holy discipline in dealing with them. And though they were still addressed as a "church" in the first epistle, fellowship with them was suspended for the time being. The principle of "space to repent" is God's appointment throughout Scripture. But if there is no repentance the cutting off must take place. (Rev. 2.4, 5.)

The verses we are considering are Paul's explanation of his action when writing the first letter, but at the time of writing this one he was rejoicing that the repentance had taken place. He therefore hastens to assure them of his forgiveness and exhorts them to comfort the offender "lest he should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow".

If we look back to ch. 5 of the first epistle we see how severe was the action which Paul enjoined upon them, identifying himself with the Lord and with them in it. It is therefore fitting that he too should forgive "in the person of Christ".

It is precious to see here the difference between a spiteful or vengeful spirit which tends to widen a breach, and a severe attitude toward an offender with a view to his being restored. In Matt. 18.<sup>15-18</sup> the Lord gave instructions on the same line in order to "gain" a brother. So, says Paul in ver. 11, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices. Satan would either have us to gloss over sin, or bear ill feeling that severs true fellowship though the outward form of it remains".

But God's method is to have everything brought out in a proper way that there may be repentance and forgiveness toward each other and the wrongs put away for ever and true fellowship restored.

The coming of Titus had been Paul's great consolation (ch. 7.6, 7). So in 2.<sup>12, 13</sup> he tells them of his unrest when he came to Troas and found him not there. Evidently he expected to meet him there with the news of the effect of his first epistle; but no, God permitted a disappointment and continued suspense: and he would have them know that his severity was not one of hardness of heart, but of loving concern for their welfare.

Moreover, it is good to see that though Paul had miraculous gifts of prophecy and revelations, God did not reveal the effect of his letter to him, but allowed him to have the suspense. This is one of the trials of a true pastor, for which there will be a reward. And it also encourages the sheep to know that such an one is over them who has feelings as they themselves have.

Then again, we notice that though Paul's original intention had been to go from Asia via Corinth into Macedonia (ch. 1.<sup>16</sup>), when he came to Troas and found not Titus, he did not cross over to Corinth, which was very little farther than Macedonia, to relieve his suspense by a personal visit; no, he avoided them and went direct into Macedonia and waited for the Lord to bring the news, rather than break the disciplinary action.

But now the news had come. And though he had left an "open door" for the Gospel in Troas he could rejoice that God had caused him and them to triumph in Christ. But what was it that caused him to triumph? Ver. 17 answers. It was because he handled the word of God faithfully and thus was a sweet savour of Christ to Him. The Lord is called "The Faithful and True Witness". He was always faithful in speaking the words that His Father gave Him to speak. And Paul was like His Master. Whether the words were a savour of life or of death was not his responsibility: it was his to speak and leave the issues with God. And in this case he had been faithful in dealing with God's children and God had blessed his words to their conversion. So that in the preaching of the Gospel some were saved, and in the church at Corinth Satan's purpose had been defeated though he had already gained a strong foothold. God has no room for compromise in His workings, He requires us to be faithful to His Word and leave the issues in His hands.



## 2 CORINTHIANS 3 & 4.

We need to bear in mind while reading through this epistle that though the church at Corinth as a company had repented, there were still certain individuals who had not. A condition of things which is the more easily understood when we consider that they were a large company, and that the whole of the province of Achaia was included in the one church.

In view of this we can understand Paul's changing from one attitude to another toward them in this lengthy letter. Otherwise we might wonder why he should begin ch. 3 in such a way after expressing himself as he has in chapters 1 and 2 as to confidence and joy in them.

The reference to "letters of commendation" here shews that it was the practice to use these to safeguard the position against the intrusion of those who were not true believers or were holding error. And if it was necessary then, how much more is it so in the present degenerate state of affairs. It is a marked contrast to the practice of today of receiving anyone who comes forward, solely on his own testimony.

Paul raises the question concerning himself with something of sarcasm, on account of their divided condition, some saying they were of one leader, and some of another; and some definitely belittling him. But he had an authority from the Lord and he held to it: for that authority carried with it a responsibility to the One who had called him. In view therefore of the work of the Holy Spirit among them through his ministry, what could they answer him?

But this assertion of his authority brings out some wonderful truth by way of contrast between the old dispensation and the new. Things that surely appeal to our hearts and obviously was intended to appeal to theirs.

Think what it means to be an epistle of Christ, known and read of all men. Is it not something to be striven after with all our might? Then think of the contrasts. The ten commandments were "engraven in stones" by the finger of God. The whole law was written in a book with ink. But neither provided any power to help a man to keep the edicts of God. How blessedly different when the will of God is written in the heart, so that the desire to do it is there and the Holy Spirit who writes it is present to give the power to do it.

But before going further with this glorious theme he is careful to make clear his entire dependence upon God who had given him this authority.

The "letter" and the "spirit", in ver. 6, obviously refers to the contrasted things of ver. 3. The written letters of

the old covenant, and the work of the Spirit in the new. And this contrast is carried right through the passage. Ver. 7 death, ver. 8 the Spirit, ver. 9 condemnation, contrasted to righteousness, and so on. Now in view of this it is sad that some children of God, when exhorted to simple obedience to the word of the Lord, retort that "the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life". A most palpable perversion to justify disobedience, while they themselves will stress the literality of other parts of Scripture, emphasizing that the words mean exactly what they say. It is this stubborn resistance of the truth that contributes so much to the disunity of the present time, militating against the Lord's prayer in John 17.

But let us note the *object* of these contrasts. All through we see that the new covenant is shewn to exceed in glory. The glory of the old was transitory, the glory of the new is eternal. There is no glory in death, but there is in life. Nor in condemnation, but there is in righteousness. And with such a hope revealed, even eternal glory, there was no need for Paul to veil anything. He could use plainness or boldness of speech.

That Moses should veil his face is shewn to be a symbolic action as well as because of their fear. Israel could not look to the end, their minds were blinded and they remain so till this day. But there is a day coming when they will look on Him whom they pierced and the veil will be removed and Israel will be saved.

But what a contrast, though we have not seen Him we believe and we know Him and Love Him, because of the ministration of the Spirit whose office it is to take of His things and shew them to us. (See John 20.<sup>29</sup> and 1 Pet. 1.<sup>8</sup>.)

Ver. 18 brings us to the real object of the passage. What does this glorious new covenant mean to us? With the veil removed we behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord. We may look in a mirror and see ourselves (Jas. 1.<sup>23, 24</sup>). We may also look and see someone else. So the Word of God wherein the New Covenant is found, reflects us, just as we are. And it reflects Christ just as He is. And the more we behold Him, the more we shall be changed into His image.

We have no third epistle to the Corinthians and no further record as to the effect of this one; but whatever it was the words remain for us. May the effect be increasingly manifested in us till we see Him no longer as in a mirror, but face to face, and changed completely in a moment to be like Him entirely and for ever.

So then in view of ver. 18 it is clear that the glory of the new covenant is Christ Himself. It is worthy of note that in Ezek. 1, though we have the vision of the living

creatures and the wheels which are so wonderful in working, there is no mention of the *glory* of the Lord till after the view of the "likeness of the appearance of a Man" upon the throne in heaven. And when we come to Rev. 21, the New Jerusalem, we find that the *Lamb* is the light thereof. Thus there would be no glory in that wonderful eternal city but for Christ—all would be darkness.

#### CHAPTER 4.

No wonder that Paul continues "having this ministry . . . we faint not". His view of Christ was sufficient to uphold against everything. And not only so, it taught him to renounce everything that could not be brought out into the light. The manifestation of the truth required no craftiness or deceitful handling of the Word of God; it commended itself and those who handled it to the consciences of *all*, except the lost—whom the God of this world had blinded.

"The glorious Gospel of Christ" (ver. 4) is literally "the Gospel of the glory of Christ": one of the several names for the one Gospel, chosen to suit the context of the previous chapter.

In 1 Cor. 1.<sup>23</sup> he says, "We preach Christ crucified"; but here, "We preach . . . Christ Jesus the *Lord*". Obviously not a variation of preaching, he preached *both* in all places. But the terms are chosen according to the context as a glance at 1 Cor. 1 will shew. In like manner, the Gospel of the kingdom and the Gospel of the grace of God are not two Gospels but two parts of the one Gospel. Paul preached both wherever he went (Acts 20.<sup>24</sup>, 25: 28: 30, 31.)

All the glory is Christ's: Paul is but a *servant* for His sake. Another blow at their parties and names.

Then in ver. 6 we see a further similitude to Ezek. 1. There the vision of the Man upon the throne is said to be the glory of the Lord. Here, it is the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. He is the brightness of God's glory, the express image of His person.

This same verse also emphasizes the sovereignty of God's working in grace, just as in creation. The original creation "became" without form and void and darkness reigned. But God commanded the light and it came. So in the hearts of men darkened by sin, the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ shines in and all is changed; a new creation takes place, a new order of life and activity commences.

But we have this treasure in *earthen vessels*. A reference to the fact that we come from the earth and return to the earth. The earthen vessel here should be distin-

guished from the earthen vessel in the types. There it is contrasted to the brazen vessel and is a type of the unsaved (Psalm 2.9).

The context here shews Paul's experience of a dying body. Weakened through persecution and strain of labour he was continually conscious of being in *mortal flesh*.

But we may ask what has all this to do with the purpose of the letter? Much. What must have been their feelings at reading the words, "So then death worketh in us, but life in you"? They had known his manner of life among them, but they had become high minded in his absence and despised him. Surely such recounting of the glory of his ministry and his sufferings on account of it must have touched their hearts!

Ver. 13 shews us what it is that provides the impulse for this labour, it is *faith* (which worketh by love). He believes, he knows. Not only that his sins are forgiven, but that if death overtakes him he will rise again *with them*. They are the objective all through. But beyond them the glory of God. If through his labour they are blessed, it will redound in thanksgiving to Him, of whom and through whom and to whom is glory for ever.

But the last three verses refer to himself and his co-workers only, so far as the wording goes. Surely they should have been stirred to make it apply to themselves, and what of ourselves.

The renewal of the inner man—the soul—is part of the earnest of the resurrection and in view of that all his sufferings were but light, and for a moment. The secret of it all is that he "looked" at things which are not seen. Yes, it is possible to do this, if our eyes have been enlightened by the Spirit of God. These things are ours who believe if we like to make them so.

## 2 CORINTHIANS 5.

There is an obvious connection between this chapter and the preceding one which the chapter division is likely to obscure. Let us keep in mind that the epistle is one, with one object throughout. The opening words "For we know" shew that Paul is here giving a reason for, or explanation of, the statements at the end of ch. 4. Why could he regard his "light affliction" as he did, and look not at the things which are seen, but at those which are not seen? Because he knew that if the body, which he calls the "earthly house" were destroyed he had another that would take its place, an eternal and heavenly one.

Therefore, we may argue rightly that if we keep in mind the fact of that glorious body that awaits us we shall be able to regard all affliction as light, and glory in tribulation for Christ's sake.

But Paul knew what tribulation was. We know it rather in theory than in actual fact. Can we really say that in this tabernacle we *groan, earnestly desiring* to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven? Probably if we knew more of tribulation we would. And along that line would look more at the things not seen. And this groaning is mentioned again in ver. 4.

So continuing, he speaks of being "absent from the Lord" while we are at home in the body, and he willed rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. And this again is made to reflect upon the earthly experience: it was an incentive to him to *labour* that he might be acceptable to Him whether here or at His judgment seat.

Now these are things which most true Christians acknowledge, and we rejoice in them. But Paul did not waste words. Passing on to ver. 12 we see in the word "commend" a connection with ch. 3.<sup>1</sup>. And this twelfth verse is giving the reason why he writes in this strain. These three chapters are all one. All that he has said about the two covenants; about ourselves with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord; about his own dying daily, and the blessed hope of the resurrection body; leading up to the fact that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, is with the object of impressing upon them the "ministry" which he had received of the Lord. Some at Corinth were still speaking disparagingly of him; the party spirit which he condemned so strongly in the first epistle was not altogether dead and there were still those who gloried in appearance and not in heart.

These chapters, then, are a fuller evidence of what he claimed in the first epistle, ch. 9. Did those who were taking prominence at Corinth manifest the same characteristic as he? Were they not, as a company "reigning as kings" before the time? (1 Cor. 4.8). How these words must have spoken to their consciences. They themselves being the epistle of commendation to his ministry.

Considering the epistle from this standpoint is interesting, is it not? We note the masterful way in which God's servant vindicates his own position and puts them to shame. Yes, it is interesting; but has not the epistle the same message to us? It is nice to think of that "house from heaven" when we feel a little tired, but are we not reigning as kings before the time? What do we know of Paul's "light affliction" in view of ch. 4.8-11? And why the difference? Why are God's children not persecuted today as then? Because they have departed from Him and made void His word by their traditions. Look at the worldliness, earthlimindedness, indifference as to the Lord's ordinances; and when these things are pointed out—"He that reproveth a scorner getteth himself a blot". One may look on the Corinthians as being in a very low state; but let us remember that they had only a few years before been in idolatry that allowed them to live in open sin (1 Cor. 6.9-11). We have had generations of godly testimony and example. When Paul rebuked them they repented: but when God's children today are reprovved they are highly indignant. Compare any movement or sect of today with what it was at its commencement. Has the position improved spiritually, or has it deteriorated? Is there not a sad settling on the lees.

The reformers stood and suffered for the truth they saw; but where is Protestantism today? Wesley was used of God to call many out of their backslidden condition; but where is Wesleyanism today? The Baptists took a stand for Scriptural baptism; but what is it today? Simply an ordinance of admission; the original meaning—crucified to the world—is practically unknown. The Brethren movement—men impelled by a realisation of the simplicity of the Church's calling took a stand and set an example of separation from the world; and so far as they saw the truth they lived up to it. But none of these leading men saw all the truth, that is patent. And the differences of doctrine and practice among them all witness that none of them have attained to it yet. But where is the humility that is manifested in a willingness to reconsider one's belief? It is sadly lacking. Each sect is its own criterion. What we have done we will continue to do, is the standpoint; for

actions speak louder than words: and when errors are pointed out the Scriptures are wrested to support them. But—"*We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*".

Don't let us look down on the Corinthians; let us rather sigh and cry for the abominations of today, and examine ourselves and awake to righteousness and sin not.

But Paul doesn't finish his discourse with this chapter: there is a lot more to come. Who would think of using such language as ver. 13 today in exhorting the saints? "*The love of Christ*" constrained Him. (The plural "*we*" and "*us*" must be understood to refer to Paul and his co-workers: ch. 1.<sup>19</sup>). Paul had an appreciation of the love of Christ that produced effects in him. Indeed, there will always be a proportion: in the measure that we appreciate the love of Christ, so we shall love Him and serve Him. Paul judged that "*If One on behalf of all died, then the all died*" (lit.). Not that they *were* dead before. True, we were dead in sins: but the reasoning here is that if Christ died for all, then the all for whom He died must be judged to have died. Baptism, according to Rom. 6, is the act whereby we take this stand. No longer to live to ourselves but to *Him* who died for us and rose again. For in that He lives again, we live again to walk in newness of life. We may well ask ourselves whether we are living up to our baptismal profession. To Paul it was indeed a new life. Ver. 16 says "*henceforth know we no man after the flesh*". Why, some seem to have more joy in the hope of meeting relatives in the flesh than of meeting the Lord Himself; yet all these relationships are but secondary now to those who are born again, and in the resurrection they will disappear entirely (Matt. 22.<sup>30</sup>). Oh that the members of Christ had the due concern for one another that members of a body should have. That we should all be one in harmonious fellowship in the truth: instead of being content each to go his own way and let the other do the same.

To what extent are the old things passed away and all become new? Are we manifesting that we are "*new creatures*" or "*a new creation*"? Paul could say it was so with him.

And with this he returns to speak of the "*ministry*" which had been entrusted to him: and what a ministry! But we can still see the bearing that all this had upon them, for ch. 6 is still a continuation: they needed, as it were, to be reconciled to God again. May the Holy Spirit apply the words effectually today.

The last verses of this chapter, and the opening ones too, afford an example of how errors when examined in the light of God's word help to bring out the truth more clearly by leading, or compelling, us to scrutinize the actual words that are used. Verse 21 has been used by many to teach that Christ's righteousness is imputed to those who believe. But in the first place it is not the righteousness of Christ here but the righteousness of God. But, further, the translators have failed to give the true sense of this passage. For instance, in ver. 20 the word "you" has been put in twice (the italics shew this). If we leave the word "you" out we can see that Paul is referring to the preaching of this "ministry of reconciliation" in a general sense, wherever he went. The application to the Corinthians is brought in in ch. 6.<sup>1</sup>.

In ver 21 the word "made" occurs twice, but in the second instance it should not be "made" but "become". There are quite a lot of places where the translators have given the word "made" where it should be "become". In John 1.<sup>14</sup> the word *became* flesh" shews that Christ was not only passive in His incarnation (John 8.<sup>42</sup>). Gal. 4 "becoming of a woman", "becoming under law" has the same force. Gal. 3.<sup>13</sup> "becoming a curse" helps us to see His voluntary act in taking and drinking that awful cup. This word "become" always implies an actual experience, usually a change from one state to another. The word "made" usually does the same *but not always*. In 1 John 1.<sup>10</sup> and 5.<sup>10</sup> it is impossible for it to mean an actual experience. God cannot lie. It must therefore mean "made Him a liar *by imputation*". So it is in 2 Cor. 5.<sup>21</sup>. The Lord had our sins reckoned or imputed to Him that He might pay the penalty for them. But He did not "become" sin: that word is not used. "He hath *made* Him to be sin" (by imputation) is the statement, that we might "become" (in actual experience) the righteousness of God".

Paul's great concern was that the Corinthians should manifest this righteousness in their lives. Just as he wrote to the Galatians, ch. 1.<sup>4</sup>, Christ "died for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil age". He passes over the forgiveness of sins in these contexts, and uses the death of Christ, which is essential to this newness of life, as a lever to cause them to do as he did in verses 14, 15. The love of Christ being the motive power whereby they brought forth fruit unto holiness, righteousness and truth.

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H. G. HOBBS, St. Catherine's Road, Long Melford, Sudbury, Suffolk



## 2 CORINTHIANS 5 (contd.)

Reverting to the opening verses of the chapter, we have another passage which is of great value to us today in that they not only encourage us with that which we are to receive at the revelation of Jesus Christ, but they afford us clear testimony against the error that at death the soul ceases to exist until the body is raised again. Quite a number of true children of God are being misled by this teaching, which is accompanied usually by a denial of eternal torment for the ungodly. It is therefore worth while noting just what Paul says here.

The "building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" is not the eternal city, the Father's house of many mansions. The verses that follow make clear that it is the resurrection body. "This tabernacle" in which we groan being the present body. Therefore we see the distinction, which is maintained throughout, between the house and the "we" who occupy it.

Moreover, in ver. 2 "*we*" desire to be *clothed* upon. And in ver. 3, not wishing to be "*found naked*". In view of the fact that it is "*we*" who are distinguished from the clothing as well as from the house, what else can be meant but that "*we*" refers to the inner man—the soul, and the house or the clothing to the body? Ver. 4 continues the same thought with the added words "that mortality might be swallowed up of life": an evident reference to I Cor. 15.

If it were not possible for the soul to exist in an "unclothed" state, that is, without a body, the whole of the language here would be unfitting.

There is also a very close similarity between verses 6 and 8 and Phil. 1.<sup>21-25</sup> in thought and standpoint, though expressed in different words. Because of Paul's manner of life—dying daily—he could wish to be absent from the body and present with the Lord, or, to depart and be with Christ which is far better (not "will be"). The words "to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" shew that his "departure" would leave them behind, and therefore he cannot have the rapture in mind. It is not resurrection that he has in view, but that he would be far better off *now* if he departed, but for the sake of the saints he would rather continue here.

Another point is that though death is so clearly in the apostle's mind as the gateway into the presence of the Lord, the "unclothed" state (soul without a body) is not the desired condition; but to be clothed with the immortal body, which will be when the Lord comes. His reference also to the judgment seat of Christ shews the same outlook. Therefore his thought of the possibility of death intervening does not detract from the value of "that

blessed hope". Those who believe the Lord may come at any moment cannot appreciate this standpoint, but it was Paul's. In this connection it is helpful to see that the words "looking for that blessed hope, &c" are found in Titus 2, an epistle that was written at the same time as 2 Tim. 4.<sup>6-8</sup> when he knew he was about to die.

In both epistles to the Thessalonians Paul associates himself with the *living* when Christ comes, but in those to the Corinthians he associates himself with the *dead* who will be raised up. Corinthians was written some years later than Thessalonians and 2 Tim. later still; the development of his thoughts concerning himself can be seen as the years go by, but nothing made any difference to him as to the blessed hope being his outlook. In 2 Cor. 5 he laboured in view of the judgment seat of Christ, and in Phil. 1 his desire to depart does not detract from the real hope expressed in ch. 3 with the climax of verses 20, 21, the coming of the Lord.

These incidental expressions of the apostles are of great value. If the "any moment" teaching had come up then, doubtless Paul would have written as clearly to refute it as he did to assert the resurrection; but the indirect testimony is quite as strong if we enter into the attitude of the writer and note the details.

## 2 CORINTHIANS 6.

"We then, workers together, beseech also to receive not the grace of God in vain you". That is not an exactly literal translation of the words of ver. 1, but it puts the word "you" where the Greek puts it, and it will readily be seen that its position gives it an emphasis. Thus making a distinction of application between them and the general proclamation in 5.<sup>20</sup>.

The Greek also makes it clear in ver. 3 that the word "giving" refers to Paul and his co-workers, not to the Corinthians. "We beseech you . . . giving no offence . . . but in all things commending ourselves". That is how the passage runs. And what a commendation for the ministry. To repeat it would be only to occupy space to no advantage, and to attempt to expound would be to spoil the flow of this outpouring which leads up to ver. 11. Let the whole passage be read with the opening verses as above and one feels the force of the words "O Corinthians". Thus would God's servant and fellow worker exhort them with open mouth (freedom of speech) and enlarged heart. The straightening (restriction) was not from his side but from their own.

He longed for them to be enlarged. They "came behind in no gift, waiting for the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ". How then did they need to be enlarged? Gifts, miraculous or otherwise, do not *make* spirituality. It needs spirituality to use the gift. And waiting for the coming of

the Lord does not guarantee it either, specially if the thought is to escape the tribulation that we are to expect in the world. Those who "*went out to meet the bridegroom*" all slumbered and slept.

The Corinthians themselves were a witness to the truth of this; hence these letters of reproof. And what is the exhortation here? "*Be not unequally yoked*"; "*Come out*"! Do we as we read the words feel any application of them to ourselves? Perhaps we have "*come out*", the words are often heard these days. But let us look at the added words. "*and be ye separate saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.* The feast of the sun god has just passed (wrongly called "*Christmas*"). There is not much value in testifying against Rome in Gospel service if we have the sun god idol in the home. Alas some have it even in the meeting rooms where they gather, and make it a feature on their programmes. It is vain to come out if we bring idolatry with us.

But the principle goes further. If children of God would only obey the words "*touch not the unclean thing*", instead of searing their consciences by continuing to be partakers with those who persist in things that are seen to be wrong, we would soon see a move toward the unity of the faith. Let the chapter be read through as if it applied directly to us as to the Corinthians; dwell on Paul's commendation of his ministry; enter into his yearning of heart; and let the words have their full force and breadth of application, "*touch not the unclean thing*".

Then, and not till then, have we right to appropriate the promises that follow. Ch. 7.<sup>1</sup> says "*having therefore these promises*". Yes, but the "*and*" in 6.<sup>17</sup>, "*and I will receive you*" must govern the position. If we do not obey the words that precede, the promises are *not* given to us. But one may say "*I am a child of God, I have the witness of the Spirit, and I have come out from the sects*". There are many, dear friend, who, from your own standpoint are still *in* the sects, and they would claim the same "*Spirit of sonship*". Therefore, it is only fair to conclude that God has withdrawn much of His disciplinary action among His people in these days of utter confusion. Those who are in the most obviously unscriptural circumstances have the witness of the Spirit that they are children of God. If one may say so, the cupboard door is open. We have an open Bible and children of God help themselves to all the sweets, pick out the pearls, and leave the rest. Obedience does not matter. To check one's beliefs and ways by the word of God is unnecessary. We are right: because it is *we*. And God suffers long and does not shew His hand. But there is a judgment coming, and many that are first shall be last. But apart from that, where is the constraining of the love of Christ? Do we live unto Him or unto ourselves?

## 2 CORINTHIANS 7.

But if we claim these promises, then let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, *perfecting holiness* in the fear of God. Surely if Christ is worthy of anything at all, He is worth all we have and are.

This verse is one example of the use of the word "spirit" for the soul. 1 Thess. 5.<sup>23</sup> uses the three terms "spirit and soul and body". The soul is the inner man which we have from birth. The spirit is that which is born of the Spirit (John 3.<sup>6</sup>). But obviously there is no filthiness of that which is born of the Spirit. Therefore 2 Cor. 7.<sup>1</sup> must refer to the soul, the natural inner man, which does need to be cleansed.

If this use of the word "spirit" is borne in mind it will help to guard against some of the modern errors on that subject.

Having followed the line of thought in the apostle's mind through chaps. 3-6 we see how he leads up, via his own authority from the Lord, to the exhortation to come out and be separate and touch not the unclean thing. His words in some places are severe, but it is all the evidence of his love to them. Now he comes to the other side of the matter. Why the boldness of speech? Because they were *in his heart*. Hence his joy when the tension of waiting was broken by the coming of Titus with the report of their repentance and discipline on the receiving of his first letter.

During the waiting period, he "repented" at having written so sharply to them; but on hearing of their reception of it he no longer repents, but rejoices. From this we see that though he was inspired to write as he did, misgivings came in afterwards: but the results proved that there was a Mind superior to his which was handling the matter.

Thus we see in the summing up of these chapters the beautiful blending of care for them (ver. 12), confidence in them (ver. 16), faithfulness to the trust of ministry from God, boasting to Titus of them, concern lest he had been too severe (ver. 8), and joy in God and in them (~~2.14-6.16~~).<sup>16</sup>

How natural, yet how spiritual. The human instrument, but God's inspiration. And the faithfulness of a spiritual father (1 Cor. 4.<sup>15</sup>) rewarded.

Let those who argue wrongfully from the fact that Corinth was still a church though there were evils present, consider the repentance as set forth in this second epistle, and note too Paul's confidence that it would be so; and then let them contrast present day conditions where evils continue without repentance.

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H. G. HOBBS, St. Catherine's Road, Long Melford, Sudbury, Suffolk.

## 2 CORINTHIANS 8 & 9

These two chapters are occupied with what may be called "the grace of giving". For repeatedly this practice is referred to as a "grace". It was no grace for the Pharisees to put their money into the temple treasury, or to give alms; it was that they might be seen of men, and the Lord said they *had* their reward. But in the sight of God, the widow that cast in the two mites had cast in more than they all.

So in ver. 1 we read of the *grace* of God *bestowed* on the churches of Macedonia. It was God that put it into their hearts to give so liberally. Now grace is something to which we have no legal right. And when the heart is moved by God to give, where there is no claim, the giving is an act of grace on the part of the giver. Hence in verses 6 and 7, "the same grace", and "this grace". This grace of giving.

In the Macedonians the grace was very pronounced. Let us note the factors that combined in their experience to bring it about. There was a great trial of affliction. When Paul took the Gospel to them it was with affliction: beaten and put in the stocks in prison. Now the converts themselves were suffering (Acts 16.<sup>23</sup>, 24; Phil. 1.<sup>28</sup>, 29). But in this affliction there was an "abundance of joy". They did not grieve at having a hard lot, like the apostles they rejoiced that they were *counted worthy* to suffer for the name of Christ. And added to their affliction there was "a *deep* poverty". Boycotted and ostracized many would doubtless find it difficult to find employment—with no governmental relief. Do we thank God sufficiently for His overruling, so that a Christian's conscience is respected to such a large extent in this land? Oh for more praise and less grumbling! And it was this combined condition of things that "abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, and beyond their power, says Paul, they were willing of themselves. And this condition continued until Paul was a prisoner at Rome, as the epistle to them indicates (Phil. 2.<sup>30</sup>; 4.<sup>10-18</sup>).

This bounty on the part of the Macedonians Paul would use to encourage the Corinthians. Not that they were selfish or indifferent; he says in 9.<sup>1</sup> that it was superfluous for him to write to them on the matter, and that he was boasting to others of their forwardness. Yet he did write. And why?

These chapters bring out a number of sidelights on this grace. First let us notice Paul's side of it. This giving is to the saints, not for his own support as the Lord's ser-

vant. The remembrance of the poor was always prominent in his mind (Acts 11.<sup>30</sup>: 24.<sup>17</sup>: 1 Cor. 16.<sup>3</sup>: Gal. 2.<sup>10</sup>). But for himself he sought nothing. There is one place where he does exhort along this line, it is Gal. 6.<sup>6</sup>, where the word "communicate" is the same as in Phil. 4.<sup>15</sup>, evidently referring to personal support. But there is a reason for this in the conditions of Galatia. There were those who were seducing them into error, and he therefore exhorts them to communicate to him that instructed them in *all* good things. That might be himself or any who held to the apostle's doctrine. But not to those who taught *some* good things and some bad.

But generally he left it to the heart impulse of the saints themselves. The Epistle to the Philippians shews their spontaneous action toward him, while he speaks of it toward the poor saints in writing to the Corinthians: "willing of themselves; praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints".

But to the Corinthians he wrote, "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them to do you service" (ch. 11.<sup>7-12</sup>). There was a particular reason for this attitude toward the Corinthians, though his usual method was to make the Gospel "without charge" (1 Thess. 2.<sup>9</sup>: Acts 18.<sup>3</sup>). Ch. 11 speaks more fully of this, chapters 8 and 9 deal with giving to the saints.

A further point about the Macedonians was that they first gave themselves to the Lord and to His servants, through the will of God. We might ask, what did it mean for them to give themselves thus? When such expressions are used they are often associated with thoughts of whole time service in the Gospel or some related work. Some of the Macedonians did thus dedicate themselves, and became fellow travellers with Paul, being sent by the churches at their charge (if that be not misunderstood, for there was no thought of a salary) to be his messengers, such are called "apostles of churches" in ver. 23. But these were very few.

Their giving of themselves meant a full surrender of their lives and all they had to God, for His use, in His way. Their secular labour, their homes, all was for Him. Hence, gifts were sent to Paul out of a full heart, as the Lord directed, so that Paul could say of such, "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God."

Such a surrender is beautiful to contemplate, but according to Rom. 12.<sup>1</sup> it is our reasonable service. If we are bought with a price, we are not our own, and we should shew in a practical way that we acknowledge it.

But the epistles to the Corinthians shew that they hardly attained to this. He says, "Ye have reigned as kings without us": hardly an acknowledgement of being *bought*. This was one reason why he practically refused their support of himself. What an example for those who bear the testimony of the Lord today.

That they were ready to give, when he wrote the first epistle, is clear from 1 Cor. 16.<sup>1-5</sup>; 2 Cor. 8.<sup>10</sup>: 9.<sup>2</sup>; but they were still "straightened", and he wished for their "enlargement". Very few in these days attain to Paul's standard as to receiving support, or even think of it.

Therefore he exhorts them in ver. 7 "as ye abound in everything, faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also". This grace of giving.

Ver. 8 shews one of the apostle's motives in thus exhorting them—to prove the sincerity of their love: and goes straight on to speak of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich". His own principle of action he has already expressed in ch. 5.<sup>14, 15</sup>, and thus he would impress the same upon them.

Surely we realize that these things were not written for the Corinthians only. To write to them was "superfluous" from the standpoint of merely giving a gift, but he wanted a deeper work, and God has overruled this elaboration of the matter for the generations that have followed. Are we not all conscious of the need of exhortation as to "performing" that which we have "willed" (ver. 11)?

The principle of "equality" in verses 13-15 was exemplified at the beginning in Jerusalem. The ingathering of souls at Pentecost seems to have resulted in many remaining instead of returning to the lands from which they had come up for the feast. And to meet this need, no man said ought that he possessed was his own (Acts 4.<sup>32</sup>). But to Ananias, Peter said, "Whiles it remained, was it not thine own?" God does not put a tax upon us. Our possessions are our own, in that sense. But he loves a "cheerful giver". And in view of all that we have received, and shall receive, surely we should say, "*I am not mine own, I am bought with a price*".

This principle was in operation at Jerusalem, so that "breaking bread according to the houses, they ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart". Like the "quality of mercy" this grace is "twice blessed; it blesses him that gives and him that takes". What a difference between this grace and socialism (so called). Enforced equality will never succeed, nor indeed be realized.

The importance of this "grace" was so felt by Paul that he deemed it necessary to have certain brethren who exhorted the saints in the many churches along this line. He also sending with them this written exhortation.

In ver. 12 we read that these gifts were accepted of the Lord according to that a man hath and not according to that he hath not, but in 9.<sup>6</sup> he reminds them that he that soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly; so that everything is made to depend upon the condition of the heart as in ver. 7.

In ver. 8 we see that this grace is linked with faith by implication. How often the conditions associated with promises are overlooked. We ought not to separate Phil. 4.<sup>19</sup> from the verses that precede it. So here, God is able to supply and will, if there be the conditions, and the object of abounding to *every good work*, like the "good" and "righteous" man in Psalm 112. So Paul prays not only for their food and increase of seed sown, but for the increased fruit of their righteousness.

That they might be "enriched in all bountifulness" (ver. 11). For this bountifulness has fruit of its own. It causes thanksgiving to God (ver. 12). When one has a regular income and is without need, the tendency is to be less thankful to God than when, in need, supplies come from unexpected sources. It should not be so, but it is. So then, this grace of giving causes thanksgiving to God. And the more the persons who receive, the more thanksgivings there are ascend.

There is also the glorifying of God (ver. 13) for that He has put it into their hearts to give; one of the many evidences of subjection to the Gospel of Christ.

It is also an incentive to prayer. The heart of the recipient desires to respond, but what can it render in such circumstances? It can only take of the cup of blessing and call upon the name of the Lord for blessing on the giver.

It also causes a longing or yearning for those who manifest this grace. A desire to see them and to know them. That which ought to be among those who are members of the same body. And thanks be to God, no matter how far apart on this earth we shall see and know in that day. But what if we have "shut up our bowels of compassion"? How shall we meet our brethren then?

The closing words of the chapter bring us back to the root cause again. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift". How shall He not with *Him* freely give us all things (Rom. 8.<sup>32</sup>). So that with David we must say "All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee" (1 Chron. 29.14).

Addresses of others who would like these papers, and correspondence from any concerned for the unity of the faith, welcomed. H. G. HOBBS, St. Catherine's Road, Long Melford, Sudbury, Suffolk.



## 2 CORINTHIANS 10 - 13

We have already seen that both these Epistles are constructed in such a way that two, three, or even four chapters must be considered together as one if we are to get the true purpose of them. There are no chapters or verses in the original writings; therefore the different subjects dealt with form themselves into chapters whether they contain one or even four of our chapters. The wording indicates where these divisions occur. For instance, the beginning of ch. 9 clearly shews a continuation of ch. 8; but ch. 10.<sup>1</sup>, after the concluding words of ch. 9, clearly indicates the beginning of another subject. And from this point to the end of the Epistle it is one subject. Of course we find that such a lengthy chapter is subdivided, but where Paul speaks, for instance, of his sufferings in ch. 11 and his revelations in ch. 12, it is all part of the one theme. And what is that theme? And is it worth while to make an effort to grasp it?

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for discipline in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3.<sup>16</sup>). Surely in the light of these words it is worth while. These two lengthy epistles are full of "discipline in righteousness": and this is one of the most grievous failures of the present day. In fact some use, or rather misuse, the fact that the believers at Corinth were still called a "church" in spite of the existing errors to justify so called "fellowship" where there is variance and the party spirit and an unwilling heart to be corrected. Whereas if the epistles are given proper consideration it will be seen that Paul will not identify himself with them till he sees the wrongs rectified.

We have seen from 1 Ep. ch. 16 and 2 Ep. chs. 1 and 2 that though he had planned to go to them when he went to Macedonia, when he heard of their condition he altered his programme and would not go. Ch. 1.<sup>23</sup> is clear that to spare them he remained away, because if he went he would be obliged to act in severe discipline, either by excommunication, or delivering to Satan, or delivering to the Judge according to Matt. 5.<sup>25</sup>. Nor must we associate this severity of discipline only with the moral evil of 1 Ep. ch. 5. In 2 Tim. 4.<sup>14, 15</sup>, we see a like severity toward one who had withstood his word.

Some may argue that we have no apostles present today and we therefore cannot act with this severity. But why have the Epistles in general, or indeed any of the Scriptures, been preserved for us. God's children are ready to acknowledge Paul's writings as authoritative as to the way of salvation. Quoting his words as "Thus saith the Lord". And rightly so. Why then are not his words as to discipline treated in the same way? Have we not seen that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and that this matter of discipline is one of the specific purposes of it? So then, although the apostles have gone, the clear instruction remains for us today.

But there are some who have endeavoured to carry out this discipline, but who, on examination on other matters are themselves found not to be consistent with the word of God. Such things should never be misused as an argument against such discipline; nor any other failures that may have been manifested in endeavouring to carry it out. No amount of failure should be used to justify the surrendering of one of God's principles. The right course is for us all to go softly before the Lord, with bowed heads and open hearts to be corrected on any point that may come up for investigation. The fact is that in the absence of apostles children of God have come to regard venerated brethren as equal to apostles. They would not admit it if confronted with it, but it is undeniable that in all sects there are those whose words, in actual fact, are given greater reverence than the Word of God. To attempt to exercise the discipline we are considering on such a basis must of course lead to disaster. The only circumstances in which such discipline can rightly be maintained is where the Word of God is given its true authority against all the "findings of godly men", and the "traditions of the elders". And if this is the condition obtaining then these chapters are of great importance in shewing what our attitude should be toward all error. Holding back the truth to preserve the peace is not God's method. Compromise is one of the great factors in producing the present state of chaos.

Perhaps it would be a good method of considering these four chapters to go through them noting all the statements of the same character; and thus we may appreciate what stress is laid on particular points. For instance, as to the severity we have in mind, we find it expressed in, 10.2, 6, 11: 13.1, 2, 4, 6, 10. Here we notice that such expressions occur at the beginning and the end. This shews that matters that come in between are but parts of the one whole. It also shews the importance of this matter of

discipline, seeing that it commences in ch. 1 and concludes in ch. 13. It is the chief matter of the Epistle.

Perhaps the next thing we should consider is his protest of love. (11.2, 9-11, 29; 12.13-15; 13.9.) Here is ample evidence that his severity is not opposed to love but the outcome of it. He only sought their good. And we would not overlook the fact that the opening word is that of "beseeching", and that with "the meekness and gentleness of Christ". Truly this is a reflection of God Himself: for He beseeches men to be reconciled, but if they continue to refuse, His severity comes into operation. And even toward the saints something of this was shewn, for in 1 Ep. 11.<sup>30</sup>, we see that many were sick and that many had fallen asleep because of His displeasure. His discipline may not be seen today in the same way, but the judgment seat of Christ will be strictly righteous, and the Lord has foretold that many that are first shall be last. Let us beware of pride and stubbornness.

Love and severity are thus seen to be interwoven. Now we might see some of the means by which he beseeches them. Chs. 11 and 12 have the words "fool" and "folly" repeatedly, applied to himself; ch. 11. 1, 16, 17, 23; 12.6, 11. These words are used in connection with his boasting or glorying; and after all there is real wisdom in his foolishness. When he speaks of his sufferings, his revelations, his signs, his independence of them, his authority from the Lord, with what crushing weight his words must have fallen upon their pride and glorying in men.

We can see by this analysis that the whole theme is intended to reduce them to nothing. By severity? Yes, but by love too. And by shame, not only at their own sin, but their own folly too; for there were those who said his letters were weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence weak, and his speech contemptible. But who and what were these others who were leading the parties among them? Could they in any way compare with the one who had been the means of bringing them out of darkness into light, and of establishing them in the truth?

But there is just as much folly among Christians today. Because one is brought up in a certain sect, *to him* that sect is right. He must not leave it no matter how much error is exposed to his view by the light of Scripture. And another takes a similar stand because he is sure that the Lord "led" him there. And no matter how much error he admits is found there he still continues to be identified with the position. The fact that the Scripture tells us plainly not to be partakers of other men's sins (1 Tim. 5.22), and to purge oneself from such as teach error (2 Tim.

2.<sup>21</sup>), has no effect upon him. Instead, these very Epistles to the Corinthians are made use of to justify continuance in the fellowship after that errors have been pointed out repeatedly but with no effect.

Surely the second Epistle makes it plain that Paul would not go to them while there were still some among them who had not repented. Or, if he did go and find them still unrepentant, he would use sharpness, and exercise discipline upon them according to the authority that the Lord had given him.

Before leaving the Epistle we might consider a little the contents of chs. 11 and 12. A general principle is set forth in ch. 1.<sup>5</sup>, "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. God has a wonderful way of balancing out things both in this life and in that which is to come.

The fact that Paul had such wonderful revelations of the Lord in glory must have been a means of great strength and purpose of heart, upholding him through all those sufferings which are listed in this eleventh chapter, so that he could say before King Agrippa, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision", referring to that first vision on the road to Damascus. And later, when a prisoner at Rome he wrote to the Philippians setting forth in ch. 3 the same principle, counting all things but loss because of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord; going on to say. "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection out from the dead."

The glory without the cross is Satan's suggestion, but it is a delusion. May we enter more whole heartedly into Paul's standpoint. Though we may never expect the same degree of either sufferings or glory, we cannot obtain the one without the other.