

Answers to Church Problems

A Topical Study of the Problems in the church at Corinth

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Quotations from the New American Standard Bible

INTRODUCTION:

The church is composed of people, albeit imperfect people. As such, there is a need for all members to constantly be alert to be Christ-like every day in thinking and actions. Carnal thinking and spiritual immaturity can cause problems in the congregation. Corinth was a congregation that had many problems. From the letters that were written to them we learn the solutions to many of the problems the church faces today as well as then.

DIVISIONS

1 Corinthians 1:10-17

Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, that no man should say you were baptized in my name. Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, that the cross of Christ should not be made void.

TEXT

- :10 **agree:** no divisions, schisms, separateness within.
made complete: repaired to oneness (as fishing net).
same mind: same understanding.
Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus; that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 15:5-6
- :11-12 **same judgment:** conclusions based on mutual understandings.
- :11-12 **of Paul** who first preached in Corinth.
Some emphasized him being the first to evangelize the Gentiles.
- of Apollos** who followed Paul.
Now a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. Acts 18:24
His eloquence and might in the Scriptures appealed to the intellectuals and those who seek personalities to follow.
- of Cephas** (Jewish form).
He appealed to the Jewish brethren, as would the Judaizers.
(cf. 2Co.11:22)
- of Christ** (in some special connection). 2Co.11:13
- :13 **is Christ divided?** A rhetorical question (or "is He being divided?").
- :14-16 **baptism joins one to Christ**, not to the one teaching or baptizing.
- :17 **preaching emphasis is to be on the content**, not the presentation.

PROBLEM

They were still “babes” (carnal) in their thinking. 3:1-4

Their party spirit was a real danger to the church.

If not checked, they might destroy the “temple” of God. 3:16-17
[Spirit dwells in church and individuals. 6:19.]

ANSWER

Unity possible when members agree to be united.

United in doctrine (gaining knowledge of the truth through study).

United in practice (common agreement to work together).

United in fellowship (where spirit of letter is carried out by each member).

LESSONS

Factions have three elements:

A leader (self-appointed or unwittingly so) who is elevated to a position of prominence.

Own emphasis, particular views, and personal direction are primary.

Antagonism toward others.

Divisions give rise to:

Feelings of superiority (supposed or real).

Rivalries which prompt “deeds of flesh.” Gal.5:19-21

“let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you...” Ephesians 4:31

Elevation of the teacher (master). One can’t serve two masters.

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”
Matthew 6:24

Elevation of speaking ability over content of the message.

Division is worldly thinking, not godly thinking.

But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. James 3:14-16

Division is the work of “babes,” or spiritually corrupt.

Division is evidence of a greater zeal for a party than for the Lord and the church.

Division hurts the work of church.

New members are bewildered.

Weak members are discouraged.

Visitors are disinclined to return.

Division is not always the result of differences over doctrine.

More often it is over personalities and petty issues.

DISCUSS

The identifying characteristics of jealousy and selfish ambition.

Often the cause of division is masked by superficial issues.

WORLDLY WISDOM

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE." Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

WORLDLY WISDOM (human reasoning) "knowledge that is skillfully divorced from God."

When brought into the church it causes problems.

Problem of division (already mentioned).

Problem of being "puffed up" over one member having his father's wife.

Problem of taking personal disputes among brethren to civil courts for judgment.

Problem of still engaging in idol temple activities.

Problem of denying the resurrection. Etc.

TEXT

- :18 **word of the cross foolish to the Greeks.**
"How could God dwell in human body?"
Such "foolishness" actually was the power unto salvation. Rom.1:16
- :19-20 **wise man. Sage among men.** *Scribes*: those who read, write, interpret, and teach. *Debaters*: philosophers who dispute everything.
- :20b-24 **God has made foolish the wisdom of the world.** One doesn't come to know God through wisdom.
Jews stumbled. (Sign of Jonah given and rejected.)
Greeks saw the idea of an incarnate, suffering Lord as foolish.
- :25 **Man's highest thought lower than God's foolishness.**
- :26-29 **Not many wise, mighty, noble called.**
The Greeks saw this as a reason to reject the Gospel. The Apostle said it was God's way of preventing anyone from finding truth through reason; entering the kingdom of God by force; being righteous because of social standing.
- :30-31 **Jesus is the source of righteous, sanctification and redemption.**

PROBLEM

When worldly wisdom is used by members as the basis for moral, social, or religious behavior, godliness is compromised.

Worldly wisdom runs counter to the Gospel.

Live it up vs. die to sin that you might live (for Jesus).

Be free to do as you please vs. be "enslaved" to Christ.

What you think is right vs. the truth of the Gospel.

When the gospel is seen as something beyond comprehension by the common man, members are at the mercy of scribes, church leaders, etc. Doctrine is based on current thought or traditions.

When religion activity is based on human wisdom, there will be wrongdoing in the church: Worship is based on human reasoning; Activity is based on "the end justifies the means."

ANSWER

Heed the wisdom of God.

Don't let your own thinking label such as "foolishness."

Don't let "human wisdom" be the basis for your actions as a Christian or church.

Be sure that problems in the church are not caused by your "wisdom."

Do not be deceived by "Nothing is absolute, certain."

Do not buy into "If it doesn't sound reasonable, reject it."

DISCUSS

The use of "reason" or "reasonable" as a basis for beliefs and actions.

Wisdom (from above) helps one make the proper application of knowledge.

SELF-SERVING PREACHERS

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

The problem of divisions is mentioned in Chapter One. Division, when associated with self-serving preachers, results in "preacher-itis" where the messenger is seen as more important than the message.

Later, Paul wrote from Corinth to Rome describing self-serving proclaimers (Rom.16:17-18):
"Slaves of own appetites ... with smooth, flattering speech ... deceivers."

These men sought to be identified with truth proclaimers. 2Co.11:12

TEXT

- :1 **Proclaiming the testimony of God:** A servant of Christ (in action, not just claim)
- :2 **know Jesus Christ...crucified:** Revealed truth, not own wisdom.
- :3 **in weakness ... fear ... trembling:** Powerful message, "weak" messenger.
- :4 **not in persuasive words:** Spoke in demonstration of Spirit.
- :5 **faith rests on the power of God:** The power of God saves men. Paul's aim was to produce devotion to Christ (not himself). 2Co.11:3b

PROBLEM

Self-serving teachers rather than Christ-serving ministers

Contrasted:

Slaves of own appetites.	Servants of Christ.
Smooth, flattering speech.	Not persuasive words of wisdom.
Eloquent.	(If) unskilled. 2Co.11:6
Impressive appearance.	Unimpressive. 2Co.10:10
Deceived. Rom.16:17-18	Revealed (truth).1Co.2:12-13
Used power of reason.	Demonstrated the power of God.1Co.2: 4-5
Boastful. 2Co.10:12	Humble. 2Co.11:7b
Sought own followers. Act.20:30	Sought devotion to Christ. 2Co.11:3b
Impose burdens.	No unnecessary burden. 2Co.11:7-9, 12:12
Self-serving.	Willing to spend, be expended. 2Co.12:5

ANSWER

Know and be aware.

Know for certain God's wisdom cannot be discovered, only revealed.

Know the truth: buy it and sell it not. Pro.23:23

Be knowledgeable. 2Pe.1:5-6

Don't have "itching ears." 2Ti.4:3-4

Be aware that not all proclaimers and teachers are what they claim to be.

Don't be taken in by "saviors of the church."

Be aware of the “change artists” whose agenda reflects their own wisdom and pride.

Mark those who are proven to be self-serving preachers! Rom.16:17

LESSONS

Charismatic, suave, eloquent speakers can mislead followers.

Eloquence and flattery are tools whereby one may deceive.

Fleshly-minded men are prone to use them.

Such knowingly serve their own appetites.

Greed usually becomes apparent as they deteriorate. 2Ti.3:13

Self-serving proclaimers have disdain for revealed truth and truth-speakers.

2Co.10:10

Paul became a prime target. Phi.1:15-17

We are instructed to know, mark, and avoid such men because their own interests take precedent. Phi.3:19

Remember: Be not deceived.

Self-serving preachers hold sway when followers “look at things as they appear outwardly.” 2Co.10:7a

DISCUSS

Being “prominent” or “important” among brethren can inflate one’s ego.

Preachers are servants, nothing more, nothing less.

Eloquence can be beneficial or detrimental, depending how it is used.

ARROGANCE CONCERNING SINFUL BROTHER

1 Corinthians 5:1-13

It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. And you have become arrogant, and have not mourned instead, in order that the one who had done this deed might be removed from your midst. For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler— not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.

What should a congregation do when it finds "sin in the camp"? Especially when it is flagrant, and is being condoned? The church at Corinth had many problems, but this one stands out in bold relief.

TEXT

- :1-2 **The grievous sin and the arrogance of some members.**
- :3-5 **No question of guilt. No question as to what must be done.**
- :6-8 **The sin must be removed, so it won't affect the whole group.**
- :9-10 **"Disassociate" (dis-fellowship) doesn't apply to non-members.**
- :11-13 **It is confined to those in fellowship already.**

ANSWER

Sin flagrantly and defiantly engaged in must be dealt with swiftly.

It's not the time for "dialogue." It's time for action. *Remove old leaven!*

Note: Other problems in the congregation didn't require such drastic action. However, they required appropriate action.

Church discipline (corrective) has three goals:

Help the erring come to their senses and repent. Gal.6:1, 2Ti.2:25, 2Th.3:14

Keep such sin from spreading throughout the church. 2Ti.2:16-17a

Keep a good reputation among outsiders. Phi.2:14-16. (Elders: 1Ti.3:7)

"Not named among them"

Warning the erring is an act of love that must be done.

When one sins wilfully and knowingly, expect the wrath of God. Heb.10:26ff

Ignoring, coddling, condoning flagrant sin invites trouble.

Members need to be encouraged to "walk in a manner worthy."

LESSONS

"Freedom" in Christ has been misunderstood. (1Co.6:12ff) Gal.5:13

A Code of Conduct for members. Eph.4:1-3, 5:3-6

It may, and often does, vary greatly from society's norm.
Christians today are an "island in a sea of immorality."

Fellowship with other Christians and with Christ (Phi.3:20, Eph.2:19) has privileges and responsibilities. Such are granted on the basis of faithfulness, and are removed because of unfaithfulness.

Members in congregation must "keep the faith."

"Withdrawal" by members should send a warning to an erring member: That one cannot have part in the kingdom of God in such a condition. Gal.5:19-21

DISCUSS

A "holier-than-thou" attitude does little to help a wayward member.

Addressing flagrant sin committed by a member is necessary.

* **Cicero** (Roman writer, Pro Cluenito 5.14) concerning a mother-in-law and son-in-law marrying: "incredible, and apart from this one instance, unheard of."

Most civilizations found it repugnant.

O.T. prohibited it. Lev.18:8 "You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife."
Deu.22:30 "A man shall not takes his father's wife..."

PERSONAL DISPUTES

1 Corinthians 6:1-11

Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent *to constitute* the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, matters of this life? If then you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church? I say *this* to your shame. *Is it so, that* there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers? Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud, and that *your* brethren. Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

TEXT

- :1 **dare**
 unrighteous versus saints
- :2 **do you not know** (Are you willfully ignorant or defiant?)
 judge the world (in the manner of Noah)
 the Apostles judge the 12 tribes. Mat.19:28
 if to judge the world, surely they can judge these matters.
- :3 **judge angels**
 "Angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day." Jde 6.
 If judge heavenly beings, surely can judge human beings.
- :4 **those of no account among their own number are better suited to be arbitrators.**
- :5 **not one wise among you?** no one better than the heathen?
- :6 **brother against brother before unbelievers depicts a repugnant scene.**
- :7 **already defeat**
 brothers alienated
 church disrupted
 reputation of the church sullied among outsiders
 why not rather be defrauded?
 defraud: take what rightfully belongs to another (evidence of envy)
- :8 **wrong and defraud brethren** (i.e. the church by such litigation)
- :9-11 **any and all unrighteousness causes forfeiture of inheritance.**
 Including covetousness evidenced by such lawsuits.

PROBLEM

A tendency to follow the customs and habits of the day was causing problems.

Historians tell us that the Corinthians had a habit of litigating any and all matters (not unlike our suit-prone society). Personal disputes and differences had arisen among members. Brothers were taking brothers to court. There appears to be more than one instance of this happening.

ANSWER

Disputes are to be settled as the Lord directs. (Go to the brother. Mat.18:15-17)

Exhibitions of envy, hatred, etc. inconsistent with calling. 1Jo.4:21

Wise brethren should be used to arbitrate.

Such are in a position to give "righteous judgment" Joh.7:24
Even those of "no account" would be better than unbelievers.

Must decide if price too high in pursuing matter of judgment in court.

Better to lose a dispute rather than alienate a brother.

But courts are not ruled out completely.

Civil actions: legal matters involving civil law are the purpose of civil courts. They are set up by God for our good. Rom.13:1,3-4

Each member, as guided by the Spirit of the Lord, should:

Desire only what is right and fair.
Be willing to be content with less than what is felt due.
Not magnifying little differences.
Be willing to submit to arbitration by brethren.
Remember "we be brethren."

LESSONS

Expect differences and disputes to arise among brethren.

In civil matters there are few clear winners. Most all lose something.

The basic underlying problem is a carnal mind bent on being unrighteous.

The problem will not go away until the hearts of men are changed. The more brethren act like children of God, the fewer problems there will be.

DISCUSS

Personal differences must not escalate into personal disputes.

One must have "the mind of Christ" in such situations.

QUESTIONING THE PROPRIETY MARRIAGE

1 Corinthians 7:1-16

Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. But because of immoralities, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control. But this I say by way of concession, not of command. Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that. But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn. But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband (but if she does leave, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not send his wife away. But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, let him not send her away. And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, let her not send her husband away. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

PROBLEM

The Christians in Corinth lived in a society which condoned and encouraged immorality.

Concerns over the marriage relationship had arisen.

It appears some were looking to celibacy as a possible answer to greater spiritually.

Paul affirmed that under the present circumstances being "celibate" had its advantages, but it wasn't something most could accept.

Those who could would be "free from concern." (:32-35).

(The answers given must be understood in context of the "present distress") :26 (:32-35).

They are divine judgments given in the light of present circumstances.

There is a need, to some degree, to carefully reconstruct the questions.

ANSWER

The matter of not "touching a woman" has merit.

If one can exercise restraint (be continent), he can be free of distractions. 2Co.11:2

Perhaps "good," but not "best" for most. (cf. Mat.19:10-12)

Celibacy may have merit, but it is not for everybody.

For most it runs counter to human feelings and desires.

For most it is best to marry, fulfilling mutual obligations, so as not to nullify its benefits.

"Let": i.e., permit – do not view marriage as a sign of spiritual inferiority.

"Forbid to marry" is in direct opposition to the Lord's will. 1Ti.4:1-3

Gen.2:18 *"It is not good for man to be alone."*

Heb.13:4 *"Let marriage be held in honor among all..."*

1Co.8:5 *"Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the Apostles?"*

Eph.5:28-33 compares it to the relationship between Christ and His church.

What those who are unmarried and widows should do.

It is "good" to remain single considering the "present distress."

(This view must be harmonized with other plain passages. I.e., 1Ti.5:1)

"Better" to marry than burn (with passion).

What those who are married should do.

Remain married. They are not to break the bond.

Separation or divorce is not to be considered as means of enhancing spirituality.

Not just a "good" idea to remain married: it is commanded, not just commended.

Matter once-for-all settled. Mat.19:1ff

What one married to an unbeliever should do.

Not to seek separation to enhance spirituality.

"Sanctified": a holy union. Mate has part in this union. Children "holy" also.

If mate unwilling to remain and leaves, the Christian is not bound [to cohabit].

Not a "slave" that is bound to mate.

"Separation and peace" preferred to "together and conflict."

The unbeliever may be influenced favorably by the behavior of mate. 1Pe.3:1-2

LESSONS

Marriage is God's plan for man, but at times there may be merit in restraint.

Nothing in this passage is to be used to offset plain teachings elsewhere!

The marriage relationship has caused concern among God's people in all ages. The Lord has supplied the answers; they alone are to be considered.

This passage cannot be used as a second "cause" which allows remarriages (which is not mentioned).

It is untenable that a major teaching would be couched in such obscure language.

DISCUSS

The world will never completely adhere to the Biblical view of marriage.

Divorce may solve one problem, but it creates many more.

Our culture views individual happiness more important than sacred vows.

ARROGANCE AND KNOWLEDGE

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him. Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him. However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat. But take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. And thus, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, that I might not cause my brother to stumble.

Meat that was offered to idols and eaten in the temples and at public feasts, was often sold in the meat markets and served in private homes. Questions and disputes arose concerning the eating of such meats. Some saw it as simply meat to be graciously received. Others had difficulty dissociating it from idol worship. They appealed to Paul for clarification on the matter.

TEXT

- :1-3 **concerning things sacrificed to idols**
 Knowledge without love produces arrogance.
 Knowledge alone causes one to be puffed up, but love builds up.
- :4-6 **what is known:**
 Idols are nothing more than a creation of man; there is only one God.
 In Him we exist by Him and for Him.
- :7 **however, not all have this knowledge**
 It was difficult for some to dissociate the meat from the idol sacrifice.
- :8-12 **eating of meat makes one neither better nor worse**
 But eating idol meat may cause another to be harmed.
 Careless indifference may cause one to sin against a brother.
- :13 **If one has to choose between eating the meat and causing a brother to stumble, forgo eating the meat.**

PROBLEM

'Meat' may have been 'bone of contention' but it was not the problem.

Knowledge, not tempered with love, had made some arrogant. Cf. 1Co.13

Arrogance of "knowing" overrode "caring" for one another.

In their arrogance they were encouraging, intimidating, cajoling the weak to do what the weak believed was wrong.

Knowledge was being used as a "club" to injure others. Rom.14:15-16

ANSWER

Paul sides with those who eat meat: they have right to eat it.

But he limits the exercise of their right: they are not to sin against a brother.

One's conscience may allow it, but one should not to act with impunity toward another's conscience.

"I know I can, but should I under these circumstances?"

There is to be a judicious use of liberty based on knowledge tempered with love.

No one has the right to demand all others stop doing that which violates his conscience.

One person's conscience is not to be the guide for the congregation.

One is forbidden from condemning those who participate. Rom.14:3b-4

Expediency. Sometimes not doing what is allowed accomplishes the greater good.

LESSONS

It's possible for something to be right for one to do, and wrong for another.

In matters of conscience, there is no definitive right and wrong.

If one thinks it is wrong: to him (only) is it wrong. Rom.14:14-15

Some may find it hard to dissociate an activity from the previous connection.

A former gambler may feel all card playing is wrong.

A former Catholic may have pangs of conscience eating meat on Friday.

Those with backgrounds of oriental beliefs may have trouble disassociating wind-chimes (or other symbols) from evil spirits and gods.

The principle is not to be applied to an opinionated brother who sees wrong in what God has allowed. (He is definitely not a weak member!)

OBSERVATIONS

While the dispute was over "meat," the root of the problem was one of attitude.

Most "bones of contention," have as a "tap root" an improper spirit and attitude.

All need to have the spirit of Christ; an attitude of love.

Need to have knowledge which lifts others up, not puff up oneself.

DISCUSS

Consideration of those who lack knowledge.

Converts are to be lovingly taught to let go of "baggage" from their past.

MISCONCEPTION ABOUT COMPENSATION

1 Corinthians 9:1-27

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we not have a right to eat and drink? Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working? Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard, and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock? I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? For it is written in the Law of Moses, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING." God is not concerned about oxen, is He? Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops. If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we should reap material things from you? If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share with the altar? So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel. But I have used none of these things. And I am not writing these things that it may be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one. For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me. What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel. For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. And I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it. Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

TEXT

:1-14

the rights of those who labor in preaching.

The Apostles and others who preach have the right to receive support.
They have the right to be married and take along a wife.
Barnabas and Paul had the same rights.
Soldiers, laborers, and shepherds all are compensated for their work.
Even oxen are "paid" for work.
Priests received "food" as compensation for their labor.
Christ directed that preachers be supported.

- :15-18 **Paul's rights were not exercised by personal choice.**
 Paul deemed it expedient in his case not to marry.
 He chose not to receive compensation from those to whom he preached the good news, in order that no one could say he did it for the money. (He did receive support from members and churches.)
 He said he was called to preach and he had no choice but to preach.
 He did it willingly.
- :19-27 **Paul's willingness to be put out.**
 He gave up the right to compensation.
 He conceded the Jewish matters to be inconsequential.
 He condescended to the vantage point of the Gentiles, and those who were weak.
 He exercised self-control.
 He kept sight of the goal.
 He never compromised principle. Gal.2:1ff
 He conceded nothing at the expense of the Gospel, but gave up much to the benefit of the hearers. Rom.15:1-2, 1Th.5:14, Act.20:35 (10:33)
 Such concessions were maliciously misconstrued as weakness.
 But it really showed his powerful love and self-control. Pro.16:32

ANSWER

Christians are to have a proper view of preacher support.

Support is not to be considered a "gift" rather "what is due."

Whoever dedicates himself to preaching is to be supported.

A preacher who serves at own expense, by choice, is not necessarily inferior.

A highly-paid preacher is not necessarily superior.

LESSONS

The "big picture" must be kept in view, the overall good of the church and preachers.

Be willing to view things from the vantage point of the other person. Mat.7:12

Not demanding one's rights can be beneficial.

Brethren were helped because some willingly gave up their right to property.

Act.4:36-37 (5:4)

What is best for cause of Christ must take precedent over what is best for the individual.

What is best for the congregation must come before what is best for the individual.

The proper attitude promotes a willingness to bend, and a spirit of cooperation and unity is to be pursued.

Improper attitudes hinder progress and makes the congregation unattractive to outsiders.

Keeping one's eye on the goal is paramount.

DISCUSS

Misconceptions about preachers can do much mischief.

Misconceptions held by preachers can do much harm.

NOT LEARNING FROM THE MISTAKES OF OTHERS

1 Corinthians 10:1-13ff

For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. And do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY." Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.

TEXT

- :1-4 **Israelites shared in God's blessings and care.**
- :5 **Yet God displeased with most.**
- :6-10 **Because they craved evil things.**
 worshiped idols
 committed immorality (spiritual and sexual)
 grumbled against God ((What are you going to do about...?"))
- :11 **written as examples for our instruction.**
- :12 **take heed lest fall.**
- :13 **common to man.** (1) you are no exception, (2) you are not exceptional
- :14 **Therefore ...** (based on what has been said, the following conclusions are made in verses 17-22)

PROBLEM

The eating idol food in itself is not wrong, but it presented problems.

Is such not provoking God to jealously?

Is not this an occasion for one to take "one step beyond"? Take one step "too many"?

Is not such activity sure to cause a weak brother to sin?

ANSWER

One cup and one bread. (:17-22)

All things lawful do not edify. Why "play with fire?" Pro.6:27-28

One God, Lord, baptism, church. To associate with others is spiritual infidelity.

All activity is to be done to the glory of God.

LESSONS

God allows temptation as a means of strengthening faith. Jam.1:2-4,12

It becomes an exercise in faith-building. 1Pe.1:6-9

Satan uses temptation as a means of causes one to stumble. Mat.4:1

He presents sin in an attractive package. Gen.3:6 "good, delight, desirable."

He uses avenues common to all mankind: lust of eye, lust of flesh, pride of life.

Situations and circumstances arise where sin is timely and enticing.

One foot in church, one in world, insures that sin is but "one step beyond."

One who says "It won't happen to me!" needs to consider Peter.

One who says "I'm strong enough to resist" is but one step from a fall. Pro.16:18,
Rom.11:20-22

One who looks with disdain at a fallen brother or sister, and considers them an enemy, is failing to do what is right. Gal.6:1, 2Th.3:15

The surest way to handle temptation is to "Flee."

Refraining from activity or situations that can be an occasion to sin.

Removing from situations where principles may be compromised.

Keep in mind:

God's chosen ones have yielded to temptation and fallen from God's favor.

God's chosen ones can yield to temptation and fall from God's favor.

"Chosen ones" includes you and me.

We must learn from the mistakes of others to keep from making them ourselves. One step beyond, one step too many, and we cross the line...the limit of what pleases God.

DISCUSS

To find out what "lies ahead," look to those who have gone ahead.

Don't entertain the thought, "It'll be different with me."

SPIRITUAL EQUALITY MISUNDERSTOOD

1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Now I praise you because you remember me in everything, and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you. But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ. Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying, disgraces his head. But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head; for she is one and the same with her whose head is shaved. For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head. For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God. Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with head uncovered? Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering. But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.

TEXT

- :3 ranking of those subservient.**
- :4ff actions which reject proper symbols are disgraceful.**
- :11 such subservience of woman to man does not indicate inferiority.**
- :13ff symbols of ranking are seen in nature. So also in the church.**

PROBLEM

- Some had a distorted view of freedom in Christ.**
- Women were seeking to be liberated from customs exhibiting subservience.**

ANSWER

- The limits of "freedom" in Christ are clearly set forth.**
- Spiritual equality in Christ is clearly stated in Gal.3:28-29, 1Co.12:12-13, 1Pe.3:7b**
- Equality in Christ does not nullify God's order in natural, social, or religious realm.**
 - Eph.5:23 man is over woman, husband is over wife.
 - 1Ti.2:12 women are not to usurp man's authority.
 - 1Co.14:34 women to be in subjection in the churches.
- Subservient roles remain.**
 - Christ was subservient "doing Father's will." Phi.2:7 "bond-servant."
 - Angels are subservient to God. Heb.1:14
 - Position of servants, slaves and bond-servants remain. Eph.6:5
 - Rule of man over woman remains. Eph.5:22-23
 - Customs which symbolized woman's ranking remains.

“All one” in Christ does not mean all have the same social ranking.

Proper subordination as God commands and custom dictates are to be followed.

Passage is not a discussion of “hats.”

LESSONS FOR TODAY

Jesus did more to raise the status of women than all others.

He raised her from chattel to partner with husband.

He granted her salvation equal to man.

He commanded men to love, cherish and care for her.

He commended “motherhood.”

But “liberation” of women must not include breaking the commands of God.

Christian women must not forsake proper decorum as commanded by God and dictated by custom.

Any movement to “free” women from her God-decreed rank, must be resisted.

“Freed” may only mean enslavement to something else. 2Pe.2:19

Any movement promoting women preachers and leaders, is not of God.

Such efforts have been around ever since Corinth.

As Paul told them to resist such efforts then, so should we today.

The church of the 21st Century should not conform to winds of change in society, but to conform to God’s ways and ranking.

Equality in Christ for all is a wonderful thing. Just don’t confuse it with equality in all other matters.

DISCUSS

Equality is not “sameness.” All stand equal before God, but not all are the same.

The church must not be swayed by current cultural whims.

The teaching of Christ has done more to elevate women—more than any other teaching.

COMING TOGETHER FOR THE WORSE

1 Corinthians 11:17-22

But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part, I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, in order that those who are approved may have become evident among you. Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God, and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.

TEXT

- :17 **Came together for the worse, not better.**
:18-19 **Divisions exist among them.**
:20-22 **Their feasting was not the "Lord's supper," but "their own supper."**
:23 **Such feasting caused problems and could not be praised.**

PROBLEM

- They were eating their own food, rather than sharing bread and fruit of vine.**
They ate to be satisfied, rather than eat in remembrance of Jesus' sacrifice.
Some had too much to eat, other not enough, rather than sharing the elements of communion.
They ate divided, rather than eating together.
Their eating appeared more like a feast to the gods, rather than the "last supper."
They shamed their brothers, rather than having concern for them (tarry).

ANSWER

- Partake as it was revealed, following the example.** :23-26
Examine oneself. :27-30
Such will bring about correction and prevent the Lord's judgment. :31
Have a proper understanding of the purpose of the Lord's supper (communion).
Such prevents condemnation along with the world. :32
Maintain a proper attitude towards others in the church.
Such promotes consideration for others. Phi.2:3
Realize what was causing the problems.

LESSONS

- The Lord's supper is beneficial when the focus is on the Lord's sacrifice.**
The Lord's supper is intended to nourish the soul, not the body (communion 10:16, partaker 10:21)
Proper attitude toward "body" necessary to maintaining communion with God. 1Pe.3:8, 5:5-6
All brethren are equal in God's eyes. 1Co.12:25-26

Union and unity are not synonymous. ("church" 1:2 vs. "division" 1:10)
Contentions and unity cannot co-exist.

While there may be room for various opinions, there is no room for contentions.
Contentions only produce party spirits and divisions.
This includes contentions over night communion, one cup, etc.

Can't have fellowship with Christ without properly discerning "body."
If one despises a brother, he is no friend of Christ; he has nothing in common with the Lord. 1Jo.2:9-11, 3:10

It's strange and tragic that some let their zeal become the cause of strife and division.
cf. Joh.16:2-3

Assembling must be beneficial for all.

DISCUSS

One of the purposes in assembling is to commemorate the Lord's death-burial-resurrection.

LACK OF SYNERGISM*

1 Corinthians 12:1-12

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

PROBLEM

A "me versus them" attitude was prevalent among the members. Such mentality was keeping the church from working together in an harmonious way.

They contended over the possession and use of spiritual gifts, which were given for their mutual benefit.

They considered some gifts greater than others, and some members were envious.

They thought that having a gift made one better, and more important than others.

They thought those with inferior gifts (or those not having any gift) were unnecessary or less important. 1Co.12:14-19

ANSWER

The body is so composed so as to be synergistic.

The physical body's parts must be joined, and work in harmony.

The foot and hand cannot do what the other one does.

The ear can't see, and the eye can't hear.

Head and feet work together to walk and or run.

Arms and legs working together make for better running, swimming, etc.

Coordination of each part benefits the whole body. 12:20-23

Parts differ in design, function and appearance, but none are useless.

The church is a body, and is designed to be synergistic.

Combined effort in congregation produces greater results than individual effort.

Leadership of elders (pastors) provides care for all members.

Deacons working to serve the needs of the body.

Teachers informing and exhorting benefits all.

Members pooling their individual abilities are able to do more than each alone.

***SYNERGISM:** mutually reinforcing action of separate parts which together produce an effort greater than all of the parts working separately

LESSONS

"Many are one" (cohesion produced by mutual concern and cooperation) 1Co.12:14, 25
Just as in the human body.

Gifts don't make a church synergistic, it takes "faith working through love." Gal.5:6b
It's love causing each to work for the "common good." 1Co.12:7

Gifts come from God.

Spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit given by "laying on of hands." Rom.1:11, 2Ti.1:6

Natural gifts that God gives us at birth are to be developed. 1Co.9:25

Great intelligence and mental capacity isn't something we decided to have.

If one has it, it's a God-given ability that needs to be developed.

Song-leading ability is not something we wish into existence.

If one has it, it's a God-given ability that needs to be developed and used.

Ability to lead or teach is not within everyone.

This is not to say that one cannot develop these. But one must have the "raw material."

Time spent and effort expended causes a tremendous growth in ability.

Fishermen, tax collector, Pharisee "raw" material for Apostles.

Paul said "I have learned..." (Phi.4:11) through work-experience.

Each member needs to identify own "talent" and develop it for common good.

Remember, the greater gift or ability, the greater the expectation.

"...And from everyone who has been given much, shall much be required..."

Luk.12:27

It takes love coupled with abilities to make a church synergistic. 1Co.13:1-13

Love is the "magnetism" which pulls (and keeps) parts together.

Love is that which makes unity and harmony possible.

When members combine their talent, ability and effort out of love for the Lord, love for each other, and for lost souls, the church truly becomes synergistic.

DISCUSS

Love of brother(s)

Undeveloped "raw material" in the church

Five, two, and one talent members in church today

LACK OF ORDER

1 Corinthians 14

Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying. But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what shall I profit you, unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching? Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp? For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me. So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church. Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also. Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified. I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind, that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue. Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature. In the Law it is written, "BY MEN OF STRANGE TONGUES AND BY THE LIPS OF STRANGERS I WILL SPEAK TO THIS PEOPLE, AND EVEN SO THEY WILL NOT LISTEN TO ME," says the Lord. So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers, but to those who believe. If therefore the whole church should assemble together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you. What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and let one interpret; but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God. And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says. And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church. Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only? If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner.

TEXT

- :1-4 **love applied in a practical manner.**
- :5-19 **all gifts have a purpose and a place.**
Exercise gift for the benefit of all.
Tongues without interpretation offer no benefit to others.
Prophecy is of benefit to all.
- :20-25 **tongues are a sign for unbelievers (visitors and strangers).**
However, they do not edify (teach), inform.
- :26-33 **all is to be done for edification.**
Two or 3 speak in tongues, in turn—if interpreted.
Two or 3 prophecy, in turn (avoid confusion).
- :34-35 **women are not to speak** (tongues, prophecy, or other public way).
- :36-38 **God's "order": follow it!**
- :30-40 **summation:** let all be done in an appropriate and becoming manner.
A general rule and guide for all churches.

PROBLEM

A lack of synergism (as mentioned in the last lesson) demonstrated the need for "an orderly manner."

Chapter 14 continues the problems mentioned in chapter 12, with thoughts of chapter 13 used as basis for the prescribed action).

ANSWER

Love is to be pursued and practiced in all churches.

All is to be done for the edification of church (as whole).

Use of gifts is to be regulated (used and limited) for the good of the congregation.

Nothing is to be done that causes confusion.

Women are not to take a public part.

Follow the above orders which come from God.

LESSONS

Whatever is beneficial to the whole congregation is emphasized.

Results are more important than "demonstration" or "use" of gifts.

Singing from heart more important than technically correct. Eph.5:19, Col.3:16

Praying sincerely from heart more important than eloquence. Mat.6:5-7

Giving cheerfully more important than the "amount" given. 2Co.9:6-7

Edification of group comes before edification of one.

One's "edification" is not to be pursued at the expense of others.

I.e., a demand for classes or studies that benefits only one person.

Exercises or activities may not be desirable for a few, but the "tail is not to wag the dog." Rom.15:1-2

There is a need for a systematic way of doing things.

Without it there is disorder, producing discord, resulting in disharmony.

Services are to be arranged in an orderly fashion.

Not rigid conformity: order can be varied and changed and still be orderly.

Grooves can become ruts, ruts can become the "scriptural way."

Not necessary to conform to a "brotherhood" order.

The background (national, cultural, social) of people will dictate what order is best.

What benefits the group is to be the desire of all members.

Such order will show reverence, not only for God, but for His will. :37
Members edified, God glorified. The only way to conduct services!

DISCUSS

Traditional (a handing down) order not necessarily bad.

"Contemporary" service not necessarily good.

Effect of cultural norms of our society upon the order of worship.

QUESTIONING THE RESURRECTION

1 Corinthians 15:1-19ff

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

TEXT

- :1-4 **Paul preached the sacrificial death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.**
:5-8 **There are many witnesses to His resurrection.**
:9-19 **No resurrection? Then there is no hope and no reason to believe.**

PROBLEM

Some questioned the resurrection because it seemed preposterous.

Such an event was unacceptable to their way of thinking.

Questions that seemed unanswerable: "How?" "What kind of body?" (:35)

ANSWER

Christ has risen, no doubt about it.

If He wasn't resurrected, what is your hope?

If He wasn't resurrected, why were you baptized?

As in nature, what is sown differs from what grows up. :35ff

Having been in the physical (seed) form, we will come forth in the spiritual (plant) form. The corruptible nature of human body not fit for eternity. A change is necessary: :50ff

LESSONS

Jesus is not the only person to die on a cross; many others have. In 519 B.C. King Daris crucified 3000 Babylonians, In 66 A.D. the Romans crucified 3,600 Jews.

Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection:

He predicted his death and resurrection. Mat.16:21, Joh.2:19-22

His enemies knew of his fantastic statements. Mat.27:63

He was crucified and buried. Mat.27:50, 57-61

The tomb was sealed and guarded. Mat.27:62-66

His body was missing on the first day of week.

Officials contrived a report that the body was stolen. Mat.28:13

The disciples' account: He was resurrected. Act.2:32

The heavenly account: He is risen. Mat.28:1-7

The account of more than five hundred: Many saw Him.

The body was not stolen by the Romans or Jews, as this would give credence to Jesus' claims.

His body was not taken away by the disciples, who for fear had fled. Joh.20:9

The resurrection is the cornerstone of Christianity.

It was prophesied in Old Testament.(as quoted in Act.2:25-28).

It was preached and believed by the Apostles and disciples.

It is the "basis of hope" for our resurrection. 2Co.4:14, Phi.3:10-11

The emptiness of Christianity without Jesus' resurrection. 1Co.15:12-19

The surety of His resurrection.1Co.15:20-28

If there is no resurrection, explain why people are baptized? And why do the Apostles and others who proclaim the word endanger themselves?

If one denies the resurrection, then one must also reject the whole Bible, and hold that the Apostles were liars, Jesus was an imposter, and Christians are deceived.

"Unless you believe that I am, you shall die in your sins." Joh.8:24

If one affirms the resurrection, then Jesus was deity in the flesh and the account is true.

"Confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." Rom.10:9

Jesus gives us the victory over sin and death.

DISCUSS

Suffering and crucifixion on account of beliefs s not uncommon.

Pre-conceived beliefs or previously taught beliefs may confound.

Religious bias and prejudice may blind.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE COLLECTION

1 Corinthians 16:1-4

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come. And when I arrive, whomever you may approve, I shall send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem; and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me.

TEXT

:1-4 **"Now concerning" the collection for the needy saints.**

PROBLEM

Some saints were in need of aid. This need must be supplied.

Earlier there had been a famine in Judea. Act.11:27ff. The church in Jerusalem continued to have need for whatever reasons. The Gentiles, who now shared in the spiritual bounty, are directed to share their material bounty. Rom.15:26-27. It's a matter of sharing (which bonds people together). 2Co.8:13-15. This passage, along with 2Co.8-9, gives a clear picture of "fund-raising" by the churches.

ANSWER

The reason to contribute. The method of how to contribute is presented. Accountability on the part of the contributors and those in charge of the contributions is set forth.

LESSONS

Christianity is founded on giving (charity).

Any temporary need or on-going need is to be taken care of by the members. If not possible, then possibly by other caring congregations.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." 2Co.8:9

"Deny self." Luk. 9:23

"More blessed to give than receive." Act.20:35. (Phi.4:17)

"Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others." Phi.2:4

Principles of "fund-raising" as found in the Scriptures.

When? When gather together on first day of week. 1Co.16:2

Who? Each one of you. All are to participate.

What (how much)? As one may prosper. According to ability. Proportional. 2Co.8:12

How? Bountifully (generous). 2Co.9:6; as purpose in heart. 2Co.9:7; Cheerfully.

Why? Supply the needs of members, preachers (1Co.9:14), work of the church.

How to be done? In an accountable fashion. 2Co.8:18-22

Giving is not to be done to receive the praise of men (Mat.6:2), but to benefit others.

Examples of giving.

Eager, willing and generous. 1Co.8:1-5

Support sent to the Apostle Paul on numerous occasions. Phi.4:15-16

Fund-raising methods not mentioned (authorized).

Tithing (Old Testament practice).

Assessing members.

Arm-twisting, pressure tactics.

"Tear-stained" pleas.

Gimmicks, gadget-selling, celebrity-drawing.
Fun-Food-Frolic.
Solicitation of funds from outsiders.
Such only hurt and divert the true work and nature of the church.

DISCUSS

The need to secure funds must not lead to activities that violate Bible principles.

NEED TO WORK TOGETHER

1 Corinthians 16:10-21

Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid; for he is doing the Lord's work, as I also am. Let no one therefore despise him. But send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me; for I expect him with the brethren. But concerning Apollos our brother, I encouraged him greatly to come to you with the brethren; and it was not at all his desire to come now, but he will come when he has opportunity. Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love. Now I urge you, brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints), that you also be in subjection to such men and to everyone who helps in the work and labors. And I rejoice over the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus; because they have supplied what was lacking on your part. For they have refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men. The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. The greeting is in my own hand – Paul.

TEXT

- :10-11 **do not despise Timothy.**
- :12 **Apollos will come [when best].**
- :13 **be on guard against arrogance.** 3:18, 5:2, 8:2, 10:12,15, 14:20, 15:34
Stand firm in faith in message, not in the messenger. 3:5-6
Act like men, not like children (as some were). 3:1-3
Be strong, not spiritually weak (as in 11:30).
- :14 **all to be done in love.** (agape) cf. 13:1ff lack of love was at the root of their problems
- :15-18 **be in subjection to the likes of Stephanas and Achaicus.**
show proper regard, respect and honor (acknowledge) all workers.
[A military term referring to cooperation of soldiers with leaders]
- :19-20 **Greetings from (1) churches of Asia, (2) Aquila and Priscilla, (3) the church in their house, all the brethren.**
Greet one another with holy kiss (fellowship, kinship).
- :21 **Greeting in "own hand."**

PROBLEM

The church in Corinth was not a perfect church.

Problems of rivalry and jealousy, lack of discipline of self and others, questioning vital teachings on marriage, demanding rights, questioning the resurrection, and others, were not to be reasons for giving up, but reasons for correcting. And in this spirit Paul wrote to the Corinthians. He now closes with various admonitions, summed up: "work together for the common good."

The problems needed immediate correction.

Paul had not "written them off." He believed the best concerning them. He believed in them – that they would respond properly.

He still considered them the "church of God at Corinth."

ANSWER

A delicate balance must be maintained between:

Hating the sinful actions of brothers, while still maintaining a love for them.

Rooting out error without destroying those who are in error.

Being sympathetic without compromising principles. 2Co.2:4

LESSONS

Correction may not be pleasant but worthy of our effort. More than that—it is a must!

Note eloquence of Paul's final words: "My love be with you."

We can, and must, work together for the common good (mutual edification).

Rom.14:1,10; Rom.15:1-2; Gal.6:1-2; Heb.13:1

DISCUSS

How mutual edification is achieved.
