



The Book Of First Corinthians

Writes To Heal
Divisions

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1 Corinthians

OVERVIEW:

The Christians in Corinth were struggling with their environment. Surrounded by corruption and every conceivable sin, they felt the pressure to adapt. They knew they were free in Christ, but what did this freedom mean? How should they view idols or sexuality? What should they do about marriage, women in the church, and the gifts of the Spirit? These were more than theoretical questions—the church was being undermined by immorality and spiritual immaturity. The believers' faith was being tried in the crucible of immoral Corinth, and some of them were failing the test.

Paul heard of their struggles and wrote this letter to address their problems, heal their divisions, and answer their questions. Paul confronted them with their sin and their need for corrective action and clear commitment to Christ.

After a brief introduction (1 Cor. 1:1-9), Paul immediately turns to the question of unity (1 Cor. 1:10-4:21). He emphasizes the clear and simple gospel message around which all believers should rally; he explains the role of church leaders; and he urges them to grow up in their faith.

Paul then deals with the immorality of certain church members and the issue of lawsuits among Christians (1 Cor. 5:1-6:8). He tells them to exercise church discipline and to settle their internal matters themselves. Because so many of the problems in the Corinthian church involved sex, Paul denounces sexual sin in the strongest possible terms (1 Cor. 6:9-20).

Next Paul answers some questions that the Corinthians had. Because prostitution and immorality were pervasive, marriages in Corinth were in shambles, and Christians weren't sure how to react. Paul gives pointed and practical answers (1 Cor. 7:1-40). Concerning the question of meat sacrificed to idols, Paul suggests that we show complete commitment to Christ and sensitivity to other believers, especially weaker brothers and sisters (1 Cor. 8:1-11:2).

Paul goes on to talk about worship, and he carefully explains the role of women, the Lord's Supper, and spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 11:3-14:39). Sandwiched in the middle of this section is his magnificent description of the greatest gift—love (1 Cor. 13). Then Paul concludes with a discussion of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-58), some final thoughts, greetings, and a benediction (1 Cor. 16:1-24).

In this letter Paul confronted the Corinthians about their sins and shortcomings. And 1 Corinthians calls all Christians to be careful not to blend in with the world and accept its values and life-styles. We must live Christ-centered, blameless, loving lives that make a difference for God. As you read 1 Corinthians, examine your values in light of complete commitment to Christ.

THE BLUEPRINT

A. PAUL ADDRESSES CHURCH PROBLEMS (1 Cor. 1:1-6:20)

Without Paul's presence, the Corinthian church had fallen into divisiveness and disorder. This resulted in many problems, which Paul addressed squarely. We must be concerned for unity and order in our local churches, but we should not mistake inactivity for order and cordiality for unity. We too must squarely address problems in our churches.

1. Divisions in the church
2. Disorder in the church

1 Cor. 1:1-6:20

This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from our brother Sosthenes.

[2] We are writing to the church of God in Corinth, you who have been called by God to be his own holy people. He made you holy by means of Christ Jesus, just as he did all Christians everywhere—whoever calls upon the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and theirs.

[3] May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you his grace and peace.

[4] I can never stop thanking God for all the generous gifts he has given you, now that you belong to Christ Jesus. [5] He has enriched your church with the gifts of eloquence and every kind of knowledge. [6] This shows that what I told you about Christ is true. [7] Now you have every spiritual gift you need as you eagerly wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. [8] He will keep you strong right up to the end, and he will keep you free from all blame on the great day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns. [9] God will surely do this for you, for he always does just what he says, and he is the one who invited you into this wonderful friendship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

[10] Now, dear brothers and sisters, I appeal to you by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ to stop arguing among yourselves. Let there be real harmony so there won't be divisions in the church. I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose. [11] For some members of Chloe's household have told me about your arguments, dear brothers and sisters. [12] Some of you are saying, "I

am a follower of Paul." Others are saying, "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Peter," or "I follow only Christ." [13] Can Christ be divided into pieces?

Was I, Paul, crucified for you? Were any of you baptized in the name of Paul? [14] I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, [15] for now no one can say they were baptized in my name. [16] (Oh yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. I don't remember baptizing anyone else.) [17] For Christ didn't send me to baptize, but to preach the Good News—and not with clever speeches and high-sounding ideas, for fear that the cross of Christ would lose its power.

[18] I know very well how foolish the message of the cross sounds to those who are on the road to destruction. But we who are being saved recognize this message as the very power of God. [19] As the Scriptures say,

"I will destroy human wisdom
and discard their most brilliant ideas."

[20] So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world's brilliant debaters? God has made them all look foolish and has shown their wisdom to be useless nonsense. [21] Since God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never find him through human wisdom, he has used our foolish preaching to save all who believe. [22] God's way seems foolish to the Jews because they want a sign from heaven to prove it is true. And it is foolish to the Greeks because they believe only what agrees with their own wisdom. [23] So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended, and the Gentiles say it's all nonsense. [24] But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the mighty power of God and the wonderful wisdom of God. [25] This "foolish" plan of God is far wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God's weakness is far stronger than the greatest of human strength.

[26] Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes, or powerful, or wealthy when God called you. [27] Instead, God deliberately chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose those who are powerless to shame those who are powerful. [28] God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing

at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important, [29] so that no one can ever boast in the presence of God.

[30] God alone made it possible for you to be in Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made Christ to be wisdom itself. He is the one who made us acceptable to God. He made us pure and holy, and he gave himself to purchase our freedom. [31] As the Scriptures say,

"The person who wishes to boast
should boast only of what the Lord has done."

[2:1] Dear brothers and sisters, when I first came to you I didn't use lofty words and brilliant ideas to tell you God's message. [2] For I decided to concentrate only on Jesus Christ and his death on the cross. [3] I came to you in weakness—timid and trembling. [4] And my message and my preaching were very plain. I did not use wise and persuasive speeches, but the Holy Spirit was powerful among you. [5] I did this so that you might trust the power of God rather than human wisdom.

[6] Yet when I am among mature Christians, I do speak with words of wisdom, but not the kind of wisdom that belongs to this world, and not the kind that appeals to the rulers of this world, who are being brought to nothing. [7] No, the wisdom we speak of is the secret wisdom of God, which was hidden in former times, though he made it for our benefit before the world began. [8] But the rulers of this world have not understood it; if they had, they would never have crucified our glorious Lord. [9] That is what the Scriptures mean when they say,

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard,
and no mind has imagined
what God has prepared
for those who love him."

[10] But we know these things because God has revealed them to us by his Spirit, and his Spirit searches out everything and shows us even God's deep secrets. [11] No one can know what anyone else is really thinking except that person alone, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. [12] And God has actually given us his Spirit (not the world's spirit) so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us. [13] When we tell you this, we do not use words of human wisdom. We speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths. [14] But people who aren't Christians can't understand these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them because only those who have the Spirit can understand what the Spirit means. [15] We who have the Spirit

understand these things, but others can't understand us at all. [16] How could they? For,

"Who can know what the Lord is thinking?
Who can give him counsel?"

But we can understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ.

[3:1] Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to mature Christians. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in the Christian life. [2] I had to feed you with milk and not with solid food, because you couldn't handle anything stronger. And you still aren't ready, [3] for you are still controlled by your own sinful desires. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your own desires? You are acting like people who don't belong to the Lord. [4] When one of you says, "I am a follower of Paul," and another says, "I prefer Apollos," aren't you acting like those who are not Christians?

[5] Who is Apollos, and who is Paul, that we should be the cause of such quarrels? Why, we're only servants. Through us God caused you to believe. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. [6] My job was to plant the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God, not we, who made it grow. [7] The ones who do the planting or watering aren't important, but God is important because he is the one who makes the seed grow. [8] The one who plants and the one who waters work as a team with the same purpose. Yet they will be rewarded individually, according to their own hard work. [9] We work together as partners who belong to God. You are God's field, God's building—not ours.

[10] Because of God's special favor to me, I have laid the foundation like an expert builder. Now others are building on it. But whoever is building on this foundation must be very careful. [11] For no one can lay any other foundation than the one we already have—Jesus Christ. [12] Now anyone who builds on that foundation may use gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw. [13] But there is going to come a time of testing at the judgment day to see what kind of work each builder has done. Everyone's work will be put through the fire to see whether or not it keeps its value. [14] If the work survives the fire, that builder will receive a reward. [15] But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builders themselves will be saved, but like someone escaping through a wall of flames.

[16] Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you? [17] God will bring ruin upon anyone who ruins this temple. For God's temple is holy, and you Christians are that temple.

[18] Stop fooling yourselves. If you think you are wise by this world's standards, you will have to become a fool so you can become wise by God's standards. [19] For the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. As the Scriptures say,

"God catches those who think they are wise
in their own cleverness."

[20] And again,

"The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise,
that they are worthless."

[21] So don't take pride in following a particular leader. Everything belongs to you: [22] Paul and Apollos and Peter; the whole world and life and death; the present and the future. Everything belongs to you, [23] and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

[4:1] So look at Apollos and me as mere servants of Christ who have been put in charge of explaining God's secrets. [2] Now, a person who is put in charge as a manager must be faithful. [3] What about me? Have I been faithful? Well, it matters very little what you or anyone else thinks. I don't even trust my own judgment on this point. [4] My conscience is clear, but that isn't what matters. It is the Lord himself who will examine me and decide.

[5] So be careful not to jump to conclusions before the Lord returns as to whether or not someone is faithful. When the Lord comes, he will bring our deepest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives. And then God will give to everyone whatever praise is due.

[6] Dear brothers and sisters, I have used Apollos and myself to illustrate what I've been saying. If you pay attention to the Scriptures, you won't brag about one of your leaders at the expense of another. [7] What makes you better than anyone else? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if all you have is from God, why boast as though you have accomplished something on your own?

[8] You think you already have everything you need! You are already rich! Without us you have become kings! I wish you really were on your thrones

already, for then we would be reigning with you! [9] But sometimes I think God has put us apostles on display, like prisoners of war at the end of a victor's parade, condemned to die. We have become a spectacle to the entire world—to people and angels alike.

[10] Our dedication to Christ makes us look like fools, but you are so wise! We are weak, but you are so powerful! You are well thought of, but we are laughed at. [11] To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, without enough clothes to keep us warm. We have endured many beatings, and we have no homes of our own. [12] We have worked wearily with our own hands to earn our living. We bless those who curse us. We are patient with those who abuse us. [13] We respond gently when evil things are said about us. Yet we are treated like the world's garbage, like everybody's trash—right up to the present moment.

[14] I am not writing these things to shame you, but to warn you as my beloved children. [15] For even if you had ten thousand others to teach you about Christ, you have only one spiritual father. For I became your father in Christ Jesus when I preached the Good News to you. [16] So I ask you to follow my example and do as I do.

[17] That is the very reason I am sending Timothy—to help you do this. For he is my beloved and trustworthy child in the Lord. He will remind you of what I teach about Christ Jesus in all the churches wherever I go.

[18] I know that some of you have become arrogant, thinking I will never visit you again. [19] But I will come—and soon—if the Lord will let me, and then I'll find out whether these arrogant people are just big talkers or whether they really have God's power. [20] For the Kingdom of God is not just fancy talk; it is living by God's power. [21] Which do you choose? Should I come with punishment and scolding, or should I come with quiet love and gentleness?

[5:1] I can hardly believe the report about the sexual immorality going on among you, something so evil that even the pagans don't do it. I am told that you have a man in your church who is living in sin with his father's wife. [2] And you are so proud of yourselves! Why aren't you mourning in sorrow and shame? And why haven't you removed this man from your fellowship?

[3] Even though I am not there with you in person, I am with you in the Spirit. Concerning the one who has done this, I have already passed judgment [4] in the name of the Lord Jesus. You are to call a meeting of the church, and I will be there in spirit, and the power of the Lord Jesus will be with you as you meet. [5] Then

you must cast this man out of the church and into Satan's hands, so that his sinful nature will be destroyed and he himself will be saved when the Lord returns.

[6] How terrible that you should boast about your spirituality, and yet you let this sort of thing go on. Don't you realize that if even one person is allowed to go on sinning, soon all will be affected? [7] Remove this wicked person from among you so that you can stay pure. Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us. [8] So let us celebrate the festival, not by eating the old bread of wickedness and evil, but by eating the new bread of purity and truth.

[9] When I wrote to you before, I told you not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin. [10] But I wasn't talking about unbelievers who indulge in sexual sin, or who are greedy or are swindlers or idol worshipers. You would have to leave this world to avoid people like that. [11] What I meant was that you are not to associate with anyone who claims to be a Christian yet indulges in sexual sin, or is greedy, or worships idols, or is abusive, or a drunkard, or a swindler. Don't even eat with such people.

[12] It isn't my responsibility to judge outsiders, but it certainly is your job to judge those inside the church who are sinning in these ways. [13] God will judge those on the outside; but as the Scriptures say, "You must remove the evil person from among you."

[6:1] When you have something against another Christian, why do you file a lawsuit and ask a secular court to decide the matter, instead of taking it to other Christians to decide who is right? [2] Don't you know that someday we Christians are going to judge the world? And since you are going to judge the world, can't you decide these little things among yourselves? [3] Don't you realize that we Christians will judge angels? So you should surely be able to resolve ordinary disagreements here on earth. [4] If you have legal disputes about such matters, why do you go to outside judges who are not respected by the church? [5] I am saying this to shame you. Isn't there anyone in all the church who is wise enough to decide these arguments? [6] But instead, one Christian sues another—right in front of unbelievers!

[7] To have such lawsuits at all is a real defeat for you. Why not just accept the injustice and leave it at that? Why not let yourselves be cheated? [8] But instead, you yourselves are the ones who do wrong and cheat even your own Christian brothers and sisters.

[9] Don't you know that those who do wrong will have no share in the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, who are idol

worshipers, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexuals, [10] thieves, greedy people, drunkards, abusers, and swindlers—none of these will have a share in the Kingdom of God. [11] There was a time when some of you were just like that, but now your sins have been washed away, and you have been set apart for God. You have been made right with God because of what the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God have done for you.

[12] You may say, "I am allowed to do anything." But I reply, "Not everything is good for you." And even though "I am allowed to do anything," I must not become a slave to anything. [13] You say, "Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food." This is true, though someday God will do away with both of them. But our bodies were not made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies. [14] And God will raise our bodies from the dead by his marvelous power, just as he raised our Lord from the dead. [15] Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which belongs to Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never! [16] And don't you know that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? For the Scriptures say, "The two are united into one." [17] But the person who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

[18] Run away from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. [19] Or don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, [20] for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

B. PAUL ANSWERS CHURCH QUESTIONS (1 Cor. 7:1-16:24)

The Corinthians had sent Paul a list of questions, and he answered them in a way meant to correct abuses in the church and to show how important it is that they live what they believe. Paul gives us a Christian approach to problem-solving. He analyzed the problem thoroughly to uncover the underlying issue and then highlighted the Biblical values that should guide our actions.

1. Instruction on Christian marriage
2. Instruction on Christian freedom
3. Instruction on public worship
4. Instruction on the resurrection

1 Cor. 7:1-16:24

Now about the questions you asked in your letter. Yes, it is good to live a celibate life. [2] But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband.

[3] The husband should not deprive his wife of sexual intimacy, which is her right as a married woman, nor should the wife deprive her husband. [4] The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband also gives authority over his body to his wife. [5] So do not deprive each other of sexual relations. The only exception to this rule would be the agreement of both husband and wife to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time, so they can give themselves more completely to prayer. Afterward they should come together again so that Satan won't be able to tempt them because of their lack of self-control. [6] This is only my suggestion. It's not meant to be an absolute rule. [7] I wish everyone could get along without marrying, just as I do. But we are not all the same. God gives some the gift of marriage, and to others he gives the gift of singleness.

[8] Now I say to those who aren't married and to widows—it's better to stay unmarried, just as I am. [9] But if they can't control themselves, they should go ahead and marry. It's better to marry than to burn with lust.

[10] Now, for those who are married I have a command that comes not from me, but from the Lord. A wife must not leave her husband. [11] But if she does leave him, let her remain single or else go back to him. And the husband must not leave his wife.

[12] Now, I will speak to the rest of you, though I do not have a direct command from the Lord. If a Christian man has a wife who is an unbeliever and she is willing to continue living with him, he must not leave her. [13] And if a Christian woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he is willing to continue living with her, she must not leave him.

[14] For the Christian wife brings holiness to her marriage, and the Christian husband brings holiness to his marriage. Otherwise, your children would not have a godly influence, but now they are set apart for him. [15] (But if the husband or wife who isn't a Christian insists on leaving, let them go. In such cases the Christian husband or wife is not required to stay with them, for God wants his children to live in peace.) [16] You wives must remember that your husbands might be converted because of you. And you husbands must remember that your wives might be converted because of you.

[17] You must accept whatever situation the Lord has put you in, and continue on as you were when God first called you. This is my rule for all the churches. [18] For instance, a man who was circumcised before he became a believer should not try to reverse it. And the man who was uncircumcised when he became a believer should not be circumcised now. [19] For it makes no difference whether or not a man has been circumcised. The important thing is to keep God's commandments.

[20] You should continue on as you were when God called you. [21] Are you a slave? Don't let that worry you—but if you get a chance to be free, take it. [22] And remember, if you were a slave when the Lord called you, the Lord has now set you free from the awful power of sin. And if you were free when the Lord called you, you are now a slave of Christ. [23] God purchased you at a high price. Don't be enslaved by the world.

[24] So, dear brothers and sisters, whatever situation you were in when you became a believer, stay there in your new relationship with God.

[25] Now, about the young women who are not yet married. I do not have a command from the Lord for them. But the Lord in his kindness has given me wisdom that can be trusted, and I will share it with you. [26] Because of the present crisis, I think it is best to remain just as you are. [27] If you have a wife, do not end the marriage. If you do not have a wife, do not get married. [28] But if you do get married, it is not a sin. And if a young woman gets married, it is not a sin. However, I am trying to spare you the extra problems that come with marriage.

[29] Now let me say this, dear brothers and sisters: The time that remains is very short, so husbands should not let marriage be their major concern.

[30] Happiness or sadness or wealth should not keep anyone from doing God's work. [31] Those in frequent contact with the things of the world should make good use of them without becoming attached to them, for this world and all it contains will pass away. [32] In everything you do, I want you to be free from the concerns of this life. An unmarried man can spend his time doing the Lord's work and thinking how to please him. [33] But a married man can't do that so well. He has to think about his earthly responsibilities and how to please his wife. [34] His interests are divided. In the same way, a woman who is no longer married or has never been married can be more devoted to the Lord in body and in spirit, while the married woman must be concerned about her earthly responsibilities and how to please her husband.

[35] I am saying this for your benefit, not to place restrictions on you. I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few distractions as possible. [36] But if a man thinks he ought to marry his fiancée because he has trouble controlling his passions and time is passing, it is all right; it is not a sin. Let them marry.

[37] But if he has decided firmly not to marry and there is no urgency and he can control his passion, he does well not to marry. [38] So the person who marries does well, and the person who doesn't marry does even better.

[39] A wife is married to her husband as long as he lives. If her husband dies, she is free to marry whomever she wishes, but this must be a marriage acceptable to the Lord. [40] But in my opinion it will be better for her if she doesn't marry again, and I think I am giving you counsel from God's Spirit when I say this.

[8:1] Now let's talk about food that has been sacrificed to idols. You think that everyone should agree with your perfect knowledge. While knowledge may make us feel important, it is love that really builds up the church. [2] Anyone who claims to know all the answers doesn't really know very much. [3] But the person who loves God is the one God knows and cares for.

[4] So now, what about it? Should we eat meat that has been sacrificed to idols? Well, we all know that an idol is not really a god and that there is only one God and no other. [5] According to some people, there are many so-called gods and many lords, both in heaven and on earth. [6] But we know that there is only one God, the Father, who created everything, and we exist for him. And there is only

one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom God made everything and through whom we have been given life.

[7] However, not all Christians realize this. Some are accustomed to thinking of idols as being real, so when they eat food that has been offered to idols, they think of it as the worship of real gods, and their weak consciences are violated. [8] It's true that we can't win God's approval by what we eat. We don't miss out on anything if we don't eat it, and we don't gain anything if we do. [9] But you must be careful with this freedom of yours. Do not cause a brother or sister with a weaker conscience to stumble.

[10] You see, this is what can happen: Weak Christians who think it is wrong to eat this food will see you eating in the temple of an idol. You know there's nothing wrong with it, but they will be encouraged to violate their conscience by eating food that has been dedicated to the idol. [11] So because of your superior knowledge, a weak Christian, for whom Christ died, will be destroyed. [12] And you are sinning against Christ when you sin against other Christians by encouraging them to do something they believe is wrong. [13] If what I eat is going to make another Christian sin, I will never eat meat again as long as I live—for I don't want to make another Christian stumble.

[9:1] Do I not have as much freedom as anyone else? Am I not an apostle? Haven't I seen Jesus our Lord with my own eyes? Isn't it because of my hard work that you are in the Lord? [2] Even if others think I am not an apostle, I certainly am to you, for you are living proof that I am the Lord's apostle.

[3] This is my answer to those who question my authority as an apostle. [4] Don't we have the right to live in your homes and share your meals? [5] Don't we have the right to bring a Christian wife along with us as the other disciples and the Lord's brothers and Peter do? [6] Or is it only Barnabas and I who have to work to support ourselves?

[7] What soldier has to pay his own expenses? And have you ever heard of a farmer who harvests his crop and doesn't have the right to eat some of it? What shepherd takes care of a flock of sheep and isn't allowed to drink some of the milk? [8] And this isn't merely human opinion. Doesn't God's law say the same thing? [9] For the law of Moses says, "Do not keep an ox from eating as it treads out the grain." Do you suppose God was thinking only about oxen when he said this? [10] Wasn't he also speaking to us? Of course he was. Just as farm workers who plow fields and thresh the grain expect a share of the harvest, Christian workers should be paid by those they serve.

[11] We have planted good spiritual seed among you. Is it too much to ask, in return, for mere food and clothing? [12] If you support others who preach to you, shouldn't we have an even greater right to be supported? Yet we have never used this right. We would rather put up with anything than put an obstacle in the way of the Good News about Christ.

[13] Don't you know that those who work in the Temple get their meals from the food brought to the Temple as offerings? And those who serve at the altar get a share of the sacrificial offerings. [14] In the same way, the Lord gave orders that those who preach the Good News should be supported by those who benefit from it. [15] Yet I have never used any of these rights. And I am not writing this to suggest that I would like to start now. In fact, I would rather die than lose my distinction of preaching without charge. [16] For preaching the Good News is not something I can boast about. I am compelled by God to do it. How terrible for me if I didn't do it!

[17] If I were doing this of my own free will, then I would deserve payment. But God has chosen me and given me this sacred trust, and I have no choice. [18] What then is my pay? It is the satisfaction I get from preaching the Good News without expense to anyone, never demanding my rights as a preacher.

[19] This means I am not bound to obey people just because they pay me, yet I have become a servant of everyone so that I can bring them to Christ. [20] When I am with the Jews, I become one of them so that I can bring them to Christ. When I am with those who follow the Jewish laws, I do the same, even though I am not subject to the law, so that I can bring them to Christ. [21] When I am with the Gentiles who do not have the Jewish law, I fit in with them as much as I can. In this way, I gain their confidence and bring them to Christ. But I do not discard the law of God; I obey the law of Christ.

[22] When I am with those who are oppressed, I share their oppression so that I might bring them to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone so that I might bring them to Christ. [23] I do all this to spread the Good News, and in doing so I enjoy its blessings.

[24] Remember that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize. You also must run in such a way that you will win. [25] All athletes practice strict self-control. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. [26] So I run straight to the goal with purpose in every step. I am not like a boxer who misses his punches. [27] I discipline my body like an athlete,

training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.

[10:1] I don't want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters, what happened to our ancestors in the wilderness long ago. God guided all of them by sending a cloud that moved along ahead of them, and he brought them all safely through the waters of the sea on dry ground. [2] As followers of Moses, they were all baptized in the cloud and the sea. [3] And all of them ate the same miraculous food, [4] and all of them drank the same miraculous water. For they all drank from the miraculous rock that traveled with them, and that rock was Christ. [5] Yet after all this, God was not pleased with most of them, and he destroyed them in the wilderness.

[6] These events happened as a warning to us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did [7] or worship idols as some of them did. For the Scriptures say, "The people celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged themselves in pagan revelry." [8] And we must not engage in sexual immorality as some of them did, causing 23,000 of them to die in one day. [9] Nor should we put Christ to the test, as some of them did and then died from snakebites. [10] And don't grumble as some of them did, for that is why God sent his angel of death to destroy them. [11] All these events happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us, who live at the time when this age is drawing to a close.

[12] If you think you are standing strong, be careful, for you, too, may fall into the same sin. [13] But remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it.

[14] So, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols. [15] You are reasonable people. Decide for yourselves if what I am about to say is true. [16] When we bless the cup at the Lord's Table, aren't we sharing in the benefits of the blood of Christ? And when we break the loaf of bread, aren't we sharing in the benefits of the body of Christ? [17] And we all eat from one loaf, showing that we are one body. [18] And think about the nation of Israel; all who eat the sacrifices are united by that act.

[19] What am I trying to say? Am I saying that the idols to whom the pagans bring sacrifices are real gods and that these sacrifices are of some value? [20] No, not at all. What I am saying is that these sacrifices are offered to demons, not to God. And I don't want any of you to be partners with demons. [21] You cannot

drink from the cup of the Lord and from the cup of demons, too. You cannot eat at the Lord's Table and at the table of demons, too. [22] What? Do you dare to rouse the Lord's jealousy as Israel did? Do you think we are stronger than he is?

[23] You say, "I am allowed to do anything"—but not everything is helpful. You say, "I am allowed to do anything"—but not everything is beneficial. [24] Don't think only of your own good. Think of other Christians and what is best for them.

[25] Here's what you should do. You may eat any meat that is sold in the marketplace. Don't ask whether or not it was offered to idols, and then your conscience won't be bothered. [26] For "the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it."

[27] If someone who isn't a Christian asks you home for dinner, go ahead; accept the invitation if you want to. Eat whatever is offered to you and don't ask any questions about it. Your conscience should not be bothered by this. [28] But suppose someone warns you that this meat has been offered to an idol. Don't eat it, out of consideration for the conscience of the one who told you. [29] It might not be a matter of conscience for you, but it is for the other person.

Now, why should my freedom be limited by what someone else thinks?

[30] If I can thank God for the food and enjoy it, why should I be condemned for eating it? [31] Whatever you eat or drink or whatever you do, you must do all for the glory of God. [32] Don't give offense to Jews or Gentiles or the church of God. [33] That is the plan I follow, too. I try to please everyone in everything I do. I don't just do what I like or what is best for me, but what is best for them so they may be saved.

[11:1] And you should follow my example, just as I follow Christ's.

[2] I am so glad, dear friends that you always keep me in your thoughts and you are following the Christian teaching I passed on to you. [3] But there is one thing I want you to know: A man is responsible to Christ, a woman is responsible to her husband, and Christ is responsible to God. [4] A man dishonors Christ if he covers his head while praying or prophesying. [5] But a woman dishonors her husband if she prays or prophesies without a covering on her head, for this is the same as shaving her head. [6] Yes, if she refuses to wear a head covering, she should cut off all her hair. And since it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut or her head shaved, then she should wear a covering. [7] A man should not wear anything on his head when worshiping, for man is God's glory, made in God's own image,

but woman is the glory of man. [8] For the first man didn't come from woman, but the first woman came from man. [9] And man was not made for woman's benefit, but woman was made for man. [10] So a woman should wear a covering on her head as a sign of authority because the angels are watching.

[11] But in relationships among the Lord's people, women are not independent of men, and men are not independent of women. [12] For although the first woman came from man, all men have been born from women ever since, and everything comes from God.

[13] What do you think about this? Is it right for a woman to pray to God in public without covering her head? [14] Isn't it obvious that it's disgraceful for a man to have long hair? [15] And isn't it obvious that long hair is a woman's pride and joy? For it has been given to her as a covering. [16] But if anyone wants to argue about this, all I can say is that we have no other custom than this, and all the churches of God feel the same way about it.

[17] But now when I mention this next issue, I cannot praise you. For it sounds as if more harm than good is done when you meet together. [18] First of all, I hear that there are divisions among you when you meet as a church, and to some extent I believe it. [19] But, of course, there must be divisions among you so that those of you who are right will be recognized!

[20] It's not the Lord's Supper you are concerned about when you come together. [21] For I am told that some of you hurry to eat your own meal without sharing with others. As a result, some go hungry while others get drunk. [22] What? Is this really true? Don't you have your own homes for eating and drinking? Or do you really want to disgrace the church of God and shame the poor? What am I supposed to say about these things? Do you want me to praise you? Well, I certainly do not!

[23] For this is what the Lord himself said, and I pass it on to you just as I received it. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took a loaf of bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." [25] In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant between God and you, sealed by the shedding of my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as

you drink it." [26] For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again.

[27] So if anyone eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily, that person is guilty of sinning against the body and the blood of the Lord. [28] That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking from the cup. [29] For if you eat the bread or drink the cup unworthily, not honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself. [30] That is why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died.

[31] But if we examine ourselves, we will not be examined by God and judged in this way. [32] But when we are judged and disciplined by the Lord, we will not be condemned with the world. [33] So, dear brothers and sisters, when you gather for the Lord's Supper, wait for each other. [34] If you are really hungry, eat at home so you won't bring judgment upon yourselves when you meet together.

I'll give you instructions about the other matters after I arrive.

[12:1] And now, dear brothers and sisters, I will write about the special abilities the Holy Spirit gives to each of us, for I must correct your misunderstandings about them. [2] You know that when you were still pagans you were led astray and swept along in worshiping speechless idols. [3] So I want you to know how to discern what is truly from God: No one speaking by the Spirit of God can curse Jesus, and no one is able to say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

[4] Now there are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all. [5] There are different kinds of service in the church, but it is the same Lord we are serving. [6] There are different ways God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work through all of us. [7] A spiritual gift is given to each of us as a means of helping the entire church.

[8] To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another he gives the gift of special knowledge. [9] The Spirit gives special faith to another, and to someone else he gives the power to heal the sick. [10] He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and to another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to know whether it is really the Spirit of God or another spirit that is speaking. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, and another is given the ability to interpret what is being said.

[11] It is the one and only Holy Spirit who distributes these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.

[12] The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up only one body. So it is with the body of Christ. [13] Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into Christ's body by one Spirit, and we have all received the same Spirit.

[14] Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. [15] If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body. [16] And if the ear says, "I am not part of the body because I am only an ear and not an eye," would that make it any less a part of the body? [17] Suppose the whole body were an eye—then how would you hear? Or if your whole body were just one big ear, how could you smell anything?

[18] But God made our bodies with many parts, and he has put each part just where he wants it. [19] What a strange thing a body would be if it had only one part! [20] Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. [21] The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you."

[22] In fact, some of the parts that seem weakest and least important are really the most necessary. [23] And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect from the eyes of others those parts that should not be seen, [24] while other parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together in such a way that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. [25] This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other equally. [26] If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.

[27] Now all of you together are Christ's body, and each one of you is a separate and necessary part of it. [28] Here is a list of some of the members that God has placed in the body of Christ:

First are apostles,
Second are prophets,
Third are teachers,
Then those who do miracles,
Those who have the gift of healing,
Those who can help others,
Those who can get others to work together,
Those who speak in unknown languages.

[29] Is everyone an apostle? Of course not. Is everyone a prophet? No. Are all teachers? Does everyone have the power to do miracles? [30] Does everyone have the gift of healing? Of course not. Does God give all of us the ability to speak in

unknown languages? Can everyone interpret unknown languages? No! [31] And in any event, you should desire the most helpful gifts.

First, however, let me tell you about something else that is better than any of them!

[13:1] If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth but didn't love others, I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal. [2] If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I knew all the mysteries of the future and knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would I be? And if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, without love I would be no good to anybody. [3] If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever.

[4] Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud [5] or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. [6] It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. [7] Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

[8] Love will last forever, but prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will all disappear. [9] Now we know only a little, and even the gift of prophecy reveals little! [10] But when the end comes, these special gifts will all disappear.

[11] It's like this: When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child does. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. [12] Now we see things imperfectly as in a poor mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God knows me now.

[13] There are three things that will endure—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.

[14:1] Let love be your highest goal, but also desire the special abilities the Spirit gives, especially the gift of prophecy. [2] For if your gift is the ability to speak in tongues, you will be talking to God but not to people, since they won't be able to understand you. You will be speaking by the power of the Spirit, but it will all be mysterious. [3] But one who prophesies is helping others grow in the Lord, encouraging and comforting them. [4] A person who speaks in tongues is

strengthened personally in the Lord, but one who speaks a word of prophecy strengthens the entire church.

[5] I wish you all had the gift of speaking in tongues, but even more I wish you were all able to prophesy. For prophecy is a greater and more useful gift than speaking in tongues, unless someone interprets what you are saying so that the whole church can get some good out of it.

[6] Dear brothers and sisters, if I should come to you talking in an unknown language, how would that help you? But if I bring you some revelation or some special knowledge or some prophecy or some teaching—that is what will help you.

[7] Even musical instruments like the flute or the harp, though they are lifeless, are examples of the need for speaking in plain language. For no one will recognize the melody unless the notes are played clearly. [8] And if the bugler doesn't sound a clear call, how will the soldiers know they are being called to battle? [9] And it's the same for you. If you talk to people in a language they don't understand, how will they know what you mean? You might as well be talking to an empty room.

[10] There are so many different languages in the world, and all are excellent for those who understand them, [11] but to me they mean nothing. I will not understand people who speak those languages, and they will not understand me. [12] Since you are so eager to have spiritual gifts, ask God for those that will be of real help to the whole church.

[13] So anyone who has the gift of speaking in tongues should pray also for the gift of interpretation in order to tell people plainly what has been said. [14] For if I pray in tongues, my spirit is praying, but I don't understand what I am saying.

[15] Well then, what shall I do? I will do both. I will pray in the spirit, and I will pray in words I understand. I will sing in the spirit, and I will sing in words I understand. [16] For if you praise God only in the spirit, how can those who don't understand you praise God along with you? How can they join you in giving thanks when they don't understand what you are saying? [17] You will be giving thanks very nicely, no doubt, but it doesn't help the other people present.

[18] I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. [19] But in a church meeting I would much rather speak five understandable words that will help others than ten thousand words in an unknown language.

[20] Dear brothers and sisters, don't be childish in your understanding of these things. Be innocent as babies when it comes to evil, but be mature and wise in understanding matters of this kind. [21] It is written in the Scriptures,

"I will speak to my own people
through unknown languages
and through the lips of foreigners.
But even then, they will not listen to me,"
says the Lord.

[22] So you see that speaking in tongues is a sign, not for believers, but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for the benefit of believers, not unbelievers. [23] Even so, if unbelievers or people who don't understand these things come into your meeting and hear everyone talking in an unknown language, they will think you are crazy. [24] But if all of you are prophesying, and unbelievers or people who don't understand these things come into your meeting, they will be convicted of sin, and they will be condemned by what you say. [25] As they listen, their secret thoughts will be laid bare, and they will fall down on their knees and worship God, declaring, "God is really here among you."

[26] Well, my brothers and sisters, let's summarize what I am saying. When you meet, one will sing, another will teach, another will tell some special revelation God has given, one will speak in an unknown language, while another will interpret what is said. But everything that is done must be useful to all and build them up in the Lord. [27] No more than two or three should speak in an unknown language. They must speak one at a time, and someone must be ready to interpret what they are saying. [28] But if no one is present who can interpret, they must be silent in your church meeting and speak in tongues to God privately.

[29] Let two or three prophesy, and let the others evaluate what is said. [30] But if someone is prophesying and another person receives a revelation from the Lord, the one who is speaking must stop. [31] In this way, all who prophesy will have a turn to speak, one after the other, so that everyone will learn and be encouraged. [32] Remember that people who prophesy are in control of their spirit and can wait their turn. [33] For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the other churches.

[34] Women should be silent during the church meetings. It is not proper for them to speak. They should be submissive, just as the law says. [35] If they have

any questions to ask, let them ask their husbands at home, for it is improper for women to speak in church meetings.

[36] Do you think that the knowledge of God's word begins and ends with you Corinthians? Well, you are mistaken! [37] If you claim to be a prophet or think you are very spiritual, you should recognize that what I am saying is a command from the Lord himself. [38] But if you do not recognize this, you will not be recognized.

[39] So, dear brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and don't forbid speaking in tongues. [40] But be sure that everything is done properly and in order.

[15:1] Now let me remind you, dear brothers and sisters, of the Good News I preached to you before. You welcomed it then and still do now, for your faith is built on this wonderful message. [2] And it is this Good News that saves you if you firmly believe it—unless, of course, you believed something that was never true in the first place.

[3] I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me—that Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. [4] He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, as the Scriptures said. [5] He was seen by Peter and then by the twelve apostles. [6] After that, he was seen by more than five hundred of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died by now. [7] Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. [8] Last of all, I saw him, too, long after the others, as though I had been born at the wrong time. [9] For I am the least of all the apostles, and I am not worthy to be called an apostle after the way I persecuted the church of God.

[10] But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favor on me—and not without results. For I have worked harder than all the other apostles, yet it was not I but God who was working through me by his grace. [11] So it makes no difference whether I preach or they preach. The important thing is that you believed what we preached to you.

[12] But tell me this—since we preach that Christ rose from the dead, why are some of you saying there will be no resurrection of the dead? [13] For if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either. [14] And if Christ was not raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your trust in God is useless. [15] And we apostles would all be lying about God, for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave, but that can't be true if there is no resurrection of the dead.

[16] If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. [17] And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless, and you are still under condemnation for your sins. [18] In that case, all who have died believing in Christ have perished! [19] And if we have hope in Christ only for this life, we are the most miserable people in the world.

[20] But the fact is that Christ has been raised from the dead. He has become the first of a great harvest of those who will be raised to life again.

[21] So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, Adam, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man, Christ. [22] Everyone dies because all of us are related to Adam, the first man. But all who are related to Christ, the other man, will be given new life. [23] But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised first; then when Christ comes back, all his people will be raised.

[24] After that the end will come, when he will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having put down all enemies of every kind. [25] For Christ must reign until he humbles all his enemies beneath his feet. [26] And the last enemy to be destroyed is death. [27] For the Scriptures say, "God has given him authority over all things." (Of course, when it says "authority over all things," it does not include God himself, who gave Christ his authority.) [28] Then, when he has conquered all things, the Son will present himself to God, so that God, who gave his Son authority over all things, will be utterly supreme over everything everywhere.

[29] If the dead will not be raised, then what point is there in people being baptized for those who are dead? Why do it unless the dead will someday rise again?

[30] And why should we ourselves be continually risking our lives, facing death hour by hour? [31] For I swear, dear brothers and sisters, I face death daily. This is as certain as my pride in what the Lord Jesus Christ has done in you. [32] And what value was there in fighting wild beasts—those men of Ephesus—if there will be no resurrection from the dead? If there is no resurrection,

"Let's feast and get drunk,
for tomorrow we die!"

[33] Don't be fooled by those who say such things, for "bad company corrupts good character." [34] Come to your senses and stop sinning. For to your shame I say that some of you don't even know God.

[35] But someone may ask, "How will the dead be raised? What kind of bodies will they have?" [36] What a foolish question! When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn't grow into a plant unless it dies first. [37] And what you put in the ground is not the plant that will grow, but only a dry little seed of wheat or whatever it is you are planting. [38] Then God gives it a new body—just the kind he wants it to have. A different kind of plant grows from each kind of seed. [39] And just as there are different kinds of seeds and plants, so also there are different kinds of flesh—whether of humans, animals, birds, or fish.

[40] There are bodies in the heavens, and there are bodies on earth. The glory of the heavenly bodies is different from the beauty of the earthly bodies. [41] The sun has one kind of glory, while the moon and stars each have another kind. And even the stars differ from each other in their beauty and brightness.

[42] It is the same way for the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies, which die and decay, will be different when they are resurrected, for they will never die. [43] Our bodies now disappoint us, but when they are raised, they will be full of glory. They are weak now, but when they are raised, they will be full of power. [44] They are natural human bodies now, but when they are raised, they will be spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, so also there are spiritual bodies.

[45] The Scriptures tell us, "The first man, Adam, became a living person." But the last Adam—that is, Christ—is a life-giving Spirit. [46] What came first was the natural body, then the spiritual body comes later. [47] Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the earth, while Christ, the second man, came from heaven. [48] Every human being has an earthly body just like Adam's, but our heavenly bodies will be just like Christ's. [49] Just as we are now like Adam, the man of the earth, so we will someday be like Christ, the man from heaven.

[50] What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. These perishable bodies of ours are not able to live forever.

[51] But let me tell you a wonderful secret God has revealed to us. Not all of us will die, but we will all be transformed. [52] It will happen in a moment, in the blinking of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, the Christians who have died will be raised with transformed bodies. And then we who are living will be transformed so that we will never die. [53] For our

perishable earthly bodies must be transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die.

[54] When this happens—when our perishable earthly bodies have been transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die—then at last the Scriptures will come true:

"Death is swallowed up in victory.

[55] O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?"

[56] For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. [57] How we thank God, who gives us victory over sin and death through Jesus Christ our Lord!

[58] So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and steady, always enthusiastic about the Lord's work, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.

[16:1] Now about the money being collected for the Christians in Jerusalem: You should follow the same procedures I gave to the churches in Galatia. [2] On every Lord's Day, each of you should put aside some amount of money in relation to what you have earned and save it for this offering. Don't wait until I get there and then try to collect it all at once.

[3] When I come I will write letters of recommendation for the messengers you choose to deliver your gift to Jerusalem. [4] And if it seems appropriate for me also to go along, then we can travel together.

[5] I am coming to visit you after I have been to Macedonia, for I am planning to travel through Macedonia. [6] It could be that I will stay awhile with you, perhaps all winter, and then you can send me on my way to the next destination. [7] This time I don't want to make just a short visit and then go right on. I want to come and stay awhile, if the Lord will let me. [8] In the meantime, I will be staying here at Ephesus until the Festival of Pentecost, [9] for there is a wide-open door for a great work here, and many people are responding. But there are many who oppose me.

[10] When Timothy comes, treat him with respect. He is doing the Lord's work, just as I am. [11] Don't let anyone despise him. Send him on his way with your blessings when he returns to me. I am looking forward to seeing him soon, along with the other brothers.

[12] Now about our brother Apollos—I urged him to join the other brothers when they visit you, but he was not willing to come right now. He will be seeing you later, when the time is right.

[13] Be on guard. Stand true to what you believe. Be courageous. Be strong.
[14] And everything you do must be done with love.

[15] You know that Stephanas and his household were the first to become Christians in Greece, and they are spending their lives in service to other Christians. I urge you, dear brothers and sisters, [16] to respect them fully and others like them who serve with such real devotion. [17] I am so glad that Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus have come here. They have been making up for the help you weren't here to give me. [18] They have been a wonderful encouragement to me, as they have been to you, too. You must give proper honor to all who serve so well.

[19] The churches here in the province of Asia greet you heartily in the Lord, along with Aquila and Priscilla and all the others who gather in their home for church meetings. [20] All the brothers and sisters here have asked me to greet you for them.

Greet each other in Christian love.

[21] Here is my greeting, which I write with my own hand—Paul.

[22] If anyone does not love the Lord, that person is cursed. Our Lord, come!

[23] May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.

[24] My love to all of you in Christ Jesus.

MEGATHEMES

THEME: Loyalties

EXPLANATION:

The Corinthians were rallying around various church leaders and teachers—Peter, Paul, and Apollos. These loyalties led to intellectual pride and created a spirit of division in the church.

IMPORTANCE:

Our loyalty to human leaders or human wisdom must never divide Christians into camps. We must care for our fellow believers, not fight with them. Your allegiance must be to Christ. Let him lead you.

THEME: Immorality

EXPLANATION:

Paul received a report of uncorrected sexual sin in the church at Corinth. The people had grown indifferent to immorality. Others had misconceptions about marriage. We are to live morally, keeping our bodies ready to serve God at all times.

IMPORTANCE:

Christians must never compromise with sinful ideas and practices. We should not blend in with people around us. You must live up to God's standard of morality and not condone immoral behavior even if society accepts it.

THEME: Freedom

EXPLANATION:

Paul taught freedom of choice on practices not expressly forbidden in Scripture. Some believers felt certain actions—like eating the meat of animals used in pagan rituals—were corrupt by association. Others felt free to participate in such actions without feeling that they had sinned.

IMPORTANCE:

We are free in Christ, yet we must not abuse our Christian freedom by being inconsiderate and insensitive to others. We must never encourage others to do wrong because of something we have done. Let love guide your behavior.

THEME: Worship

EXPLANATION:

Paul addressed disorder in worship. People were taking the Lord's Supper without first confessing sin. There was misuse of spiritual gifts and confusion over women's roles in the church.

IMPORTANCE:

Worship must be carried out properly and in an orderly manner. Everything we do to worship God should be done in a manner worthy of his high honor. Make sure that worship is harmonious, useful, and edifying to all believers.

THEME: Resurrection

EXPLANATION:

Some people denied that Christ rose from the dead. Others felt that people would not physically be resurrected. Christ's resurrection assures us that we will have new, living bodies after we die. The hope of the resurrection forms the secret of Christian confidence.

IMPORTANCE:

Since we will be raised again to life after we die, our lives are not in vain. We must stay faithful to God in our morality and our service. We are to live today knowing we will spend eternity with Christ.

An invitation is given to open your heart's door.

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*.

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