

The First Epistle to the Corinthians

Introduction

The two Epistles addressed to the Corinthians follow, in our New Testament, the Epistle to the Romans. A more logical arrangement would be to put the Epistle to the Galatians next to Romans, for the Galatian Epistle contains the defense of the Gospel and its message is closely linked with the truths unfolded in Romans. Ephesians and Colossians lead upon still higher ground, and if the arrangement of the Pauline Epistles is to be made according to progressive revelation, these two documents should follow the Epistle to the Galatians. While Romans, Galatians, Ephesians and Colossians are preeminently doctrinal Epistles, the Epistles to the Corinthians, while not excluding Christian doctrines, are more of a practical character, dealing with very grave and serious conditions which had arisen in the church at Corinth.

The Church at Corinth

Corinth was one of the foremost Grecian cities, the capital of the Province of Achaia. The Roman proconsul resided there (Acts 18:12). Corinth had a very excellent situation, which gave to the city commercially a great advantage and was therefore known for its vast commerce and great wealth. Its large population had a cosmopolitan character, thousands of traders and mariners of all nations visited the far-famed city. Greek civilization flourished here in all its branches. The fine arts were cultivated, athletic games as well as schools of philosophy and rhetoric flourished in this proud city. But the worst feature was an open and very gross licentiousness. The whole city was steeped in immoralities of various kind. Drunkenness, gluttony, and above all religiously licensed prostitution were in Corinth at its worst. The Greek worship of Aphrodite was of the most degraded nature. So great was the moral corruption that the Greek word "Corinthiazesthai," which means "to live like a Corinthian," had become a byword of shame and vileness among the profligate heathen of that time. The horrible picture of vileness as given in the Epistle to the Romans (chapter 1), written by the Apostle in Corinth, describes some of these moral conditions prevailing in Corinth. It has well been said, "The geographical position of Corinth was its weal and its woe."

The Apostle Paul had been in Athens first and then came to Corinth (Acts 18:1). While the origin of the church in Rome is obscure, we know that the Corinthian assembly was founded by the Apostle. The record of it we find in Acts 18. He labored there under great blessing for a year and six months. Jews and Gentiles were saved, among the former was Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue. But the majority of those who believed were Gentiles, and these belonged to the poorer classes (1 Corinthians 1:26) with at least two exceptions, Erastus, the chamberlain of the city, and Gaius, a wealthy man, whom Paul had baptized. The historical account of Paul's ministry in Corinth and what happened there should be carefully read, for it throws light upon the Epistles he sent to that church.

What he preached in that wealthy and wicked city, boasting of culture and much learning, filled with an arrogant pride, we learn from his own words in the first Epistle. "And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (2:1-2). He was greatly pressed in spirit while there (Acts 18:5), yea, in fear and trembling (1 Corinthians 2:3). He knew this was one of Satan's strongholds. But God stood by His servant, and while his preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, it was in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power (1 Corinthians 2:4).

Both Epistles reveal the deplorable state of the Corinthians and these conditions called forth through the energy of the Holy Spirit this first Epistle. The evil things which had sprung up among the Corinthians had been reported to the Apostle. The house of Chloe (chapter 1:11) is mentioned,

as informing him about the contentious spirit which was manifesting itself. Probably from the same source as well as from others, he heard even of worse things which were making headway among the believers. Gross immorality was being tolerated in their midst; lawsuits of Christians were being submitted to courts over which pagan judges presided; they had degraded the blessed memorial feast, the Lord's supper, on account of which some had been dealt with by the Lord. Then there were other matters, such as disorder in public worship, abuse of certain gifts, the forwardness of women. Controversies must have also agitated the Corinthian assembly about the marriage state, certain church matters, such as collections, the exercise of gifts, etc. They had not been brought up Christians, and had everything to learn. This fully explains the character of this first Epistle.

When and Where Was the Epistle Written?

Attempts have been made to question the authenticity of the First Corinthian Epistle. They have not, however, been successful. Testimonies to the authorship of this document are found in the writings of Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and others. Dean Alford states, "As far as I am aware, the authorship of the First Epistle to the Corinthians has never been doubted by any critic of note. Indeed, he who would do so must be prepared to dispute the historical truth of the character of St. Paul." The Epistle itself answers our question concerning the place and the time when it was written by the Apostle. The statement at the close of the Epistle, printed in some editions of the Bible "written from Philippi," is incorrect. In chapter 16:8 we read the writer's statement, "But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost." The Apostle Paul was therefore in Ephesus and intended to leave about Pentecost. The Book of Acts shows that he left that city about the time of Pentecost in the year 57. It is quite certain that this first Epistle to the Corinthians was written during the first part of the year 57, probably around the time of Easter. (See 1 Corinthians 5:7-8). From Acts 19:22 we learn that the Apostle, while still in Ephesus, had sent Timotheus and Erastus to Macedonia. He had given commission to Timotheus to go to Corinth (1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10). No doubt Timotheus was to prepare the way for the visit of the Apostle (1 Corinthians 4:17-19). In all probability the Epistle was taken to Corinth by Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus (1 Corinthians 16:17).

But are the two Corinthian Epistles the only epistles Paul wrote to them? In chapter 5:9 Paul says: "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators." From this we learn that he had written them a previous letter. Commentators have spoken of this letter as a lost epistle. If it was an inspired document, like these two Epistles and the other Pauline Epistles, it would certainly have been preserved. But the Apostle also wrote letters which were not meant to form parts of the Word of God, which were not inspired, as Romans, Ephesians and the other epistles are. The Epistle therefore mentioned in chapter 5:9 was a private letter of the Apostle.

Important and Practical Truths

The church, constituting the fellowship of the Saints on earth, its place and testimony in the world; the church, its order, membership, spiritual gifts and manifestations, discipline and other important matters, are the truths dealt with in this first Epistle. Then, after the church is viewed as on earth, as His witness, the great truth of the resurrection of the body is made known as well as the fact that when the Lord comes "we shall not all sleep, but shall be changed in a moment." This puts before us the blessed hope, the great consummation, when the church will leave this earthly scene of conflict and failure and become, according to promise, the glorious church.

All about us in the professing church manifests the fullest failure and ruin. The evils which were in the Corinthian church such as sectarianism, self-indulgence and worldliness have become the prominent features of the institution which claims to be the church. For the true believer whose aim it is to be obedient to the Lord in all things, this Epistle has a message and shows him the way which he can follow, though failure and confusion is about him.

The Division of First Corinthians

On account of the different topics and questions treated of in this epistle, a division into well defined sections is rather difficult to make. The epistle is a church epistle, dealing throughout with matters concerning the church. A careful reading of the epistle will disclose the fact that first, the church is viewed as the temple of God indwelt by His Spirit. As such the church is in the world, though not of the world, and is called to be separated from the world and all its wisdom. The world is hostile to the church; the activities of the enemy of the truth, through the wisdom of this world and the lusts of the flesh are learned from the state of the church in Corinth. The church and her relation to the world, and the testimony for Christ, the church is to give and to maintain in the world, are unfolded in the first ten chapters of this epistle. After that, the church is viewed as the body of Christ. In chapter 11-14 no more mention is made of the world and the believer's conduct in the world. We are introduced to church order, the activities of the church, the body and its members, the ministries and the exercise of the different gifts, bestowed upon the body. Then follows the great chapter which deals with resurrection. The doctrine of resurrection is unfolded in chapter 15; first, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Himself the head of the body, and also the resurrection and translation of His people. The glorious destiny of the church is therefore revealed at the close of the epistle. The concluding chapter contains an instruction concerning collection and the greetings. This brief survey of the epistle, showing its scope, gives us three main divisions:

I. THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD. SEPARATION AND TESTIMONY. CHAPTERS 1-10

1. What Grace Has Done and the Assurance which Grace Gives. Chapter 1:1-9.
2. Contrasts. Chapter 1:10-4.
3. Corinthian Failures. Chapters 5-6.
4. Concerning the Relationship of Man and Woman. Chapter 7.
5. Concerning Meats Offered to Idols. Liberty Governed by Love. Chapter 8.
6. Paul's Gracious Example. Chapter 9.
7. Concluding Warnings and Exhortations. Chapter 10.

II. THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST. CHAPTERS 11-14

1. The Headship of Christ and of Man. The Lords Supper. Chapter 11.
2. The Body and the Members of the Body. Chapter 12.
3. The Need and Superiority of Love. Chapter 13.
4. Prophecy and Speaking with Tongues. Chapter 14.

III. RESURRECTION AND THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH. CONCLUSIONS. CHAPTERS 15-16

1. The Doctrine of Resurrection and the Hope of the Church. Chapter 15.
2. Instruction and Greetings. Chapter 16.

Analysis and Annotations

I. THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD. SEPARATION AND TESTIMONY. CHAPTERS 1-10

1. What Grace has Done and the Assurance Grace Gives. 1:1-9.

In the opening verse of this epistle the Apostle Paul associates with himself the name of Sosthenes. There can be little doubt that he is the same Sosthenes mentioned in Acts 18:17. Like the great apostle he was once "a persecutor and injurious." The experience through which he passed, when, as an enemy of Christ he received the deserved beating, was instrumental to bring him to Christ. When he was the chief ruler of the synagogue he was an enemy, but now through the grace of God he had become "a brother beloved." It was to call to the remembrance of the sadly drifting Corinthians the former days, as well as the power of God in salvation. Then Paul addresses them as "the church of God which is at Corinth"; and this church of God is composed of those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called Saints. All believers are set apart to God in Christ. Grace has constituted them Saints; but with the gifts grace bestows, there also goes the responsibility of manifesting that separation from the world, from which the church is called out. To the Saints, true believers, sanctified in Christ, set apart to God, the epistle is addressed. Then follows another sentence, which goes beyond the church at Corinth. "With all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." Thus the true circle of fellowship was laid down, for every local church to observe. As we shall find later in this epistle, the party spirit, sectarianism, was manifesting itself in Corinth and these words of address may be looked upon as a protest against that unchristian spirit. All who acknowledge Christ as Lord and call upon His name belong to the church. He is their Lord as He is our Lord. Furthermore we learn from these words that the messages of this epistle are for God's people at all times. "In every place" means every place where believers are found today. The truths unfolded, the exhortations given, have therefore a universal application; they are the commandments of the Lord to all His people (14:37).

Before the Apostle begins to mention the evils which the Corinthian assembly tolerated and which burdened his spirit, he speaks first of all of the grace of God given to them by Jesus Christ. They had been saved and were enriched by Him. The truth they had received, they also communicated "in all utterance and knowledge" to others. They had all the gifts in their midst, and were waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Grace had bestowed all these gifts, and yet they failed to manifest His grace. In possession of such grace and the gifts of grace, they should have walked in humility and should have lived soberly, righteously and godly. But they were walking in an evil way.

The Apostle knew all the evil which was among them as an assembly (and more so did the Holy Spirit know), but before he uncovers their condition, he gives a most precious assurance. He speaks of the faithfulness of God, who had called them into that wonderful fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ. God is faithful! He reckons on God's faithfulness to do in the end all for them which He had promised, so that they would be blameless in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. God does not repent of His gifts and calling. The same assurance is found in other epistles. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:23--24). Such a loving and gracious assurance to those who are called according to His purpose, that He is faithful and will bring it about that His people shall be blameless in that coming day of Christ, leads to self-judgment and repentance.

2. Contrasts. Chapter 1:10-4). CHAPTER 1:10-31.

1. Divisions rebuked. (1:10-16).

2. The Cross of Christ, the Power of God. (1:17-31).

The section which begins, after the introductory words, with the tenth verse and ends with the fourth chapter, shows a number of contrasts. There is the contrast of the fact that they were called into the one fellowship. The fact of being called into the fellowship of God's Son, as members of the one body is contrasted with their divisions. There is the contrast of the preaching of the cross, which is foolishness to them that perish, but the power of God to those who are saved. The wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world are likewise contrasted. Jews and Gentiles, what they require and seek are seen in their contrast with those who believe. Every chapter makes these contrasts and through them the blessed truth of the Gospel and the walk of the Saints of God is fully brought out.

As the introduction to the epistle reveals, all believers have one Lord to whom they belong, and God has called all into the one fellowship, the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. No other name is to be owned by His people, but all must be united in that blessed name, and obedience yielded to Him. He therefore beseeches them in that name to present a united confession and testimony "that ye all speak the same thing"; an unmarred fellowship in the Spirit "that there be no divisions among you"; and such a oneness of mind and judgment which becomes those who are one in Christ "that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." And why this exhortation? Because those of the house of Chloe had given to Paul the information that contentions had arisen among them. He mentioned the source without giving the names of the individuals. Those of the house of Chloe were no doubt deeply spiritual and much exercised over these contentions and the dishonor done to the name of the Lord Jesus. And these contentions, which threatened serious schisms in the one body were connected with teachers, the chosen instruments of the Lord. Some said, "I am of Paul"; others, "I of Apollos"; another party, "I of Cephas." Instead of sitting at the feet of the One, who alone is worthy and is the teacher of His people, they scattered and divided themselves among the different teachers, given by the Lord to the church. It was the beginning of sectarianism, which has been such a curse to the people of God. It did not begin in the blessed assembly of Philippi, nor among the Saints in Ephesus, but among the puffed up, worldly-minded Corinthians. Partyism, sectarianism, is the fruit of the flesh (Galatians 5:20). How it has multiplied in Christendom, the evil fruit it has borne, the apostasy which is fostered by it, we need not point out, for all spiritually minded Christians are acquainted with it.

But a fourth party said, "I of Christ." Piously they said, we do not acknowledge Paul, Apollos or Cephas; we call ourselves after Christ. They made Him the head of a party, and put His teaching in contrast with the teachings of the chosen vessels of the Lord, through whom He made known His will. It was only a pretext to discredit the ministry of Paul and the other Apostles. That last named contention was perhaps the worst.

And so the inspired Apostle asks, "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" Christ was crucified for them and in His Name they had been baptized. In their contentions they were doing wrong to the Person of Christ and to His blessed work. And water baptism is especially mentioned by him. He thanked God, that he had baptized none of them, but Crispus and Gaius, as well as the household of Stephanas. Baptism has been and is a prominent source of the division of the body of Christ. Ritualism has made of it a sacrament which saves and none can go to heaven without it. Other sects make it likewise a necessary act for salvation. Still others teach that water-baptism is the appointed means by which a believer becomes a member of the church, the body of Christ. It is not water-baptism by which a believer becomes a member of the body of Christ; the Holy Spirit alone can do this and does it with every believer (1 Corinthians 12:13). Others have gone into the other extreme and reject water-baptism entirely. The Apostle did not do this. "The solemn assumption, by the newly born believer, of the name of Jesus as his Lord (as it is done in baptism) was an act both too important and of too solemn and precious a significance to be regarded lightly by an inspired Apostle." Then the Apostle states his commission. He was not sent by His Lord to baptize. His great mission was to preach the Gospel. "Baptism would surely follow a true reception of his testimony, but that, with all other resulting effects, is kept distinct from the positive and vital work of God by His own Word. We may notice a real difference between the Apostolate of Paul and that of the eleven, as defined at the

close of Matthew. The latter were sent expressly to baptize. Paul was not."--Pridham on Corinthians.

Verses 17-31 unfold the Gospel which he was sent to preach, the Cross of Christ and the power of God to salvation made known by that Cross. He preached that Gospel "not with wisdom of words." All that was attractive to the natural man, such as rhetoric, beautiful language, enticing words, was avoided by the Apostle. He was "rude in speech" (2 Corinthians 11:6); he did not preach with enticing words (1 Corinthians 2:4). He feared that in any way the power of the Cross of Christ should be made void. He had a complete, a perfect confidence in the Gospel and knew it needed not human embellishment and human schemes to make it effective. All human efforts by rhetoric, sentimental claptrap methods, aim to stir up and to direct the emotions and sympathies of the natural man.

The preaching of the Cross is foolishness to those that are perishing. Unto us who are being saved it is the power of God, for it saves us from the guilt of sins, the power of sin itself and ere long from the presence of sin in our homegoing. And those who are perishing in rejecting the Cross of Christ were never so numerous as today. To the "Christian Scientist"--the Unitarian--the Destructive Critic--the new Religionist and others, the preaching of the Cross is foolishness. And the world with all its boasted learning and wisdom did not think of the Gospel and its wonderful plan and power. The nations who boasted of culture and wisdom even in their highest form groped in the dark, and instead of discovering how man can be saved and brought back to God, were dragged down deeper and deeper into sin and despair. And thus God made foolish the wisdom of this world. Therefore the men who today turn their backs upon the Gospel and speak of philosophy, science and wisdom, turn to foolishness once more, which will lead them into the blackness and darkness forever. The preaching of Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness, because the Jews required a sign and the Greeks sought after wisdom, but the Cross puts human pride and glory into the dust. And what Jews and Greeks rejected and treated as foolishness is the power and wisdom of God. What men considered foolishness, a crucified Christ, is therefore wiser than men, for it gives to the believer what the wisdom of the world cannot supply. And the "weakness of God", which is Christ crucified through weakness, is more powerful than men; man is saved by it. Thus the charge of Jews and Gentiles, that the cross is foolishness, that it is weakness, is repudiated and the foolishness and weakness of man is thereby demonstrated and laid bare.

And that no flesh should glory in His presence, God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things to confound the things which are mighty. He hath chosen the base things, the despised things and the things which are not to bring to naught the things that are. Therefore not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. God in His sovereignty takes up that which is foolish and weak to manifest His power. How fully this is evidenced by experience. And the believer is always in the safe place, if he is in the place of self-abasement, self-effacement and weakness. "Of Him are we in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." It is all of God, and all in Christ, and nothing of us or in ourselves. Christ is the wisdom of God.

"Christ is made unto us wisdom from God; and thus with Christianity, for faith, every cloud is lifted. The wisdom that is from God is a casket of priceless jewels; in which the redeemed one finds, not only liberty, but marvelous enrichment. How much is contained in just those three words, 'righteousness, sanctification and redemption!' And they are in an order of progressive fulness, by which we enter more and more into the heart of God."--Numerical Bible.

Righteousness in Christ is that of which Romans so fully speaks. Our guilt is gone. Righteousness is on our side, covering the believer. The believer is justified by His blood and by faith in Him and fully accepted in the Beloved. And Christ is the believer's sanctification. The work of Christ has separated us unto God; but the believer is also sanctified by the Spirit of God, the Spirit of holiness.

In Christ we are holy and walking in the Spirit, obedient to His Word, the believer manifests in his conduct the fact that he is set apart to God. Redemption looks forward to the future, when the believer shall be glorified, and be conformed to the image of the Lord. "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus." Therefore the believer has nothing to glory in himself, but he glories in the Lord. And all this put to shame the Corinthians who made so much of the wisdom of this world and were puffed up.

CHAPTER 2

1. The Apostle's Preaching. (2:1-5).
2. The Revelation of the Spirit. (2:6-13).
3. The Helplessness and Ignorance of the Natural Man. (2:14-16).

The Apostle had been among them and declared unto them the testimony of God. This he had not done with excellency of speech or wisdom. He preached unto them the Person of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He, who is the wisdom of God, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3), was his one theme; he determined not to know anything among them but the Person and Work of Christ. He had not come with a system of philosophy, to tickle their ears, but with the highest wisdom made known by revelation. He well knew that in Christ, His blessed Person and in His Cross all their unanswered questions, seeking for light, were answered, and more than that, the power of God through His Spirit would be active in their salvation. When he was with them he had a sense of weakness; he was in fear and much trembling. It shows the deep exercise of his soul. But he also had the special encouragement from the Lord, who spoke to him by a vision (Acts 18:9-10). He avoided all human eloquence, to which the Corinthians were specially given and attracted, so as not to flatter them. And therefore the Spirit of God manifested power; his preaching was in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Their faith, as a result, rested not on the beautiful, persuasive and eloquent words of a man, but on the power of God. Here is the pattern for every preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What unworthy methods are used in our day by some professional evangelists! What sentimental trash is preached by those who are men-pleasers and under the guise of Gospel-preaching aim at their own popularity! "For just so far as preachers fill men with admiration for their peculiar style of thought or language, is it evident they are weak in the Spirit, and attract to themselves instead of clearing and establishing souls in the truth whereby the Spirit works in power."--W. Kelly.

Among them that are perfect he spoke wisdom. The perfect are those who have believed the Gospel, experienced its power and are in Christ, accepted in the perfect One; they know the truth as it is in Christ. But the wisdom Paul spoke was not the wisdom of the world (literally: age), but God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom ordained by God before the world unto our glory. And what is this hidden wisdom, God's wisdom in a mystery which Paul preached to those who had accepted Christ? It is more than Christ crucified. It is Christ glorified, seated at the right hand of God, given as head over all things to the church which is His body. This wisdom of God in a mystery (but now made known) is fully revealed in the Epistle to the Ephesians. It was unrevealed in the Old Testament. The rulers of this age did not know it, for had they known the wonderful wisdom of God they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. But the very deed they committed (ignorantly as Peter declared, Acts 3:17) fulfilled the Scriptures, and the Lord of Glory whom they crucified is now the glorified Man filling the throne of God, and believers are one with Him. This is the manifold wisdom of God which is made known by the church (Christ as glorified head and the church His body) to the principalities and powers in heavenly places (Ephesians 3:10).

Interesting is the quotation from Isaiah 64:4. The prophet speaks of the inability of man to know what God hath prepared in His infinite grace and love for them that love Him. It was hidden from the Prophet. None of them beheld the great truths of the Church as the body of Christ nor the glory connected with it. But now this is changed. God hath revealed it through His Spirit. The Spirit has come and He has made known the hidden wisdom of God. Through Him and His blessed testimony

in the Word we know "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." And these things are in Christ. The church is going to share with Him the glory which He has received. And the Spirit in the believer is searching all things, yea, the deep things of God. So the Spirit of God Himself leads the child of God deeper and deeper into this wisdom of God. The more we learn of it, the more we enter into the deep things in blessed fellowship with the Father and the Son, the more we desire to know. This should be for the child of God, the greatest thing--the Spirit in him searching out the deep things of God. The excuse some Christians make of their inability to grasp certain truths, when they say "it is too deep for me," dishonors the indwelling Spirit. For our poor, little minds all is "too deep;" but not for the Spirit of God.

The things of God cannot be known, save by the Spirit of God. This blessed gift is bestowed upon the believer, so that he can know the things which are freely given to him of God. And these deep and spiritual revelations were transmitted by chosen instruments. "Which things also we speak, not in the words which mans wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth, comparing (or communicating) spiritual things with spiritual" (Verse 13). Here is a definition of verbal inspiration. The thoughts and revelations of God have been given to us through human instruments, in the words which the Spirit teacheth. We have therefore an inerrant Bible.

A contrast between the natural (psychical) man and the spiritual man concludes this chapter. The natural man, no matter what his mental attainments are, cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God. He must be born again and receive the Spirit before he can discern spiritual things. Why do men criticize the Bible, reject its great Truths, ignorant in spiritual things, though learned in the wisdom of the world? They are natural men, not having the Spirit (Jude verse 19).

CHAPTER 3

1. The Carnal state of the Corinthians. (3:1-9).
2. The Workmen and their Work. (3:10-15).
3. The Church the Temple of God. (3:16-17).
4. Warning against Deception and Glorifying in Men. (3:18-23).

Their condition is next uncovered. They did not depend on the Spirit of God and did not enjoy the hidden wisdom and walk in it. They were carnal, mere babes in Christ, in the sense that their growth, their spiritual development had been arrested. Carnal (fleshly) is not equivalent to "natural." The believer is no longer a natural man, for he is born again. Carnal describes a condition in which the believer walks when he is not subject to the Spirit of God, but is led and governed by natural instincts and motions. Such was their condition. What was merely of man; wisdom, learning, intellect, eloquence and other things, were highly esteemed by them. They were wise in their own conceits and gloried in men. They delighted in and longed for that which is of man, and admired it, therefore the real spiritual truths communicated by the Spirit were unknown to them.

The evidence that they walked not according to the Spirit and the wisdom of God, was the strife and factions which existed among them. They were carnal and walked according to man. This party spirit among them had its source not in the Spirit Of God, but in the flesh. In it, not the Lord was glorified, but man was exalted. They were more occupied with Paul and Apollos, their persons and talents, than with the Lord Jesus Christ. In this way sectarianism began, as the fruit of the flesh. And the remedy for it is "seeing no man but Jesus only." If the Lord Jesus Christ is owned in His glory, and union with Him is enjoyed, then the carnal condition ends and the believer walks in the Spirit and glories no longer in man. Paul and Apollos were but servants by whom they had believed. It is true Paul planted; Apollos coming after him, watered, but God gave the increase. God is all. And any man, whether he planteth or watereth, shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. They were God's fellow-workmen and the Saints are God's husbandry (tillage), God's building. And so all true servants of the Lord, though differing in gifts, are one in this that they are

instruments in God's hand.

Next (verses 10-15), God's fellow-workmen and their work is considered in view of the time "when each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." Paul here calls himself a wise master-builder (an architect). It was not of himself. He did not plan the great building, the church, but it was according to the grace bestowed upon him. The Lord had chosen him for that. The mystery concerning the church which was hidden in former ages, had been made known to him by revelation. Laboring in Corinth, by preaching the Gospel, he was used by the will and the grace of God to establish the church there. The foundation was laid by him in sound doctrine, according to the revelation given to him. But neither Paul nor Peter nor any other man is the foundation upon which the building rests ; there is but one foundation, Jesus Christ, the Son Of God. The church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:20-21). The foundation is laid, but the question is what fellow-workmen are going to build upon this one foundation.

Those who are not at all building upon the one foundation, Jesus Christ the Son of God, are of course, not considered. (The different anti-Christian cults, like Christian Science, Spiritism, New Thought, theosophy, etc., all lay claim to the name of Christ, but they reject Him and belong therefore to that class who destroy the Temple of God.) Those who own the one foundation may build upon it either gold, silver, precious stones; or wood, hay, stubble. The first three things mentioned are precious and durable; the other three things are worthless and perishable. Gold, silver and precious stones are the fit adornment of the church as the temple of God, but wood, hay and stubble are worthless material fit not for a temple, but for a mud hovel. Gold, silver and precious stones typify the service of the workman which is of faith, done in obedience to the Word and manifesting the character of the Lord Jesus Christ, while wood, hay and stubble represent what is not of faith, the work and service done in self-will, exalting man instead of the Lord, and therefore disfiguring the temple of God.

The workman whose aim is to please God and not man, whose one ambition is to exalt Christ in all his service, who labors for the perfecting of the Saints, the edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12), builds that which is durable and which can never perish. The workman who pleases men, seeks the applause of man, uses the means and schemes of the world to carry on what is called "Christian work" and in it all is not obedient to the Word of God, builds that which is worthless and his work will perish.

A day is coming in which each man's work shall be made manifest. The day is the day of Christ when all believers shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ. He is a consuming fire; and before Him whatever is of man and not of Himself will be burned up. That fire shall try every man's (who is a believer saved by grace) work of what sort it is. Then those who toiled in an unostentatious way, who built upon the one foundation that which glorifies Him, whose work was done in faith, shall find that their work abides and they will receive their own reward. The others will see all their work go up in smoke. They shall suffer loss. There is no reward for them. They shall be saved, yet so as by fire. Like Lot who escaped out of Sodom; but all that he had wrought in Sodom, his righteous soul being vexed, was burned up. But the salvation the believer has is independent of his service and work. Every believer will be saved and live, though what he wrought may be found in that day only fit for the fire.

And the building of which the Apostle speaks is the church, the temple of God, the habitation of God through the Spirit. God's Holy Spirit is dwelling in every member of the body. The temple of God is holy and such are ye. Then the solemn warning "if any man destroy (not defile) the temple of God, him shall God destroy." God's temple in which He dwells, the church, is founded on His truth. The destruction of that temple means therefore the denial of the truth of God or the introduction of false doctrines; critics of the Word, who deny the fundamentals of the faith have well been called "destructive." They are the enemies of the cross, whose end is perdition. They are not saved as by

fire, but God is going to deal with them in an awful judgment.

In the professing church today are uncountable numbers, who have crept in unawares: they were never born again and therefore they work corruption and will perish. Therefore "let no man deceive himself." The Corinthians were setting aside the wisdom of the Spirit and were being seduced by the wisdom of the world, which is foolishness with God. They marred the temple of God by their carnal spirit, trusting in men and glorying in men. In God's gracious purpose as revealed by the Spirit of God all things were theirs. Paul, Apollos and Cephas were the chosen instruments of God for blessing them. As believers they had all things and belong to none but Christ and through Christ to God Himself.

CHAPTER 4

1. Servants of Christ and Stewards of the Mysteries of God. (4:1-5).
2. Contrast Between Self-Glorification and Humiliation. (4:6-13).
3. Admonition to Beloved Children. (4:14-21).

Paul speaks of himself and the fellow workmen as servants of Christ and the stewards of the mysteries of God. They were serving under Christ. Apollos, though not an Apostle, is included by Paul. Apollos with his great eloquence probably appealed strongly to the Corinthians and thus the party spirit had been fostered among them. But Paul classes Apollos with himself; he might have told the Corinthians that Apollos was not an Apostle and by this belittle him in their eyes. All were servants of Christ to serve the household of faith and to give meat in due season. The "mysteries of God" are not, as claimed by ritualistic Christendom, the sacraments in their invented "mysterious" actions. The mysteries of God are those blessed hidden things, which were not revealed in former dispensations; but now they are made known and the servants of Christ are the stewards of the blessed truths of Christianity, to guard and to dispense them. And Paul who may be called "the chief steward" of these mysteries had been judged by them, but he expresses his independence of all their judgment. He is responsible to the Lord although he was not aware Of anything against himself yet he was not thereby justified, for the Lord might know something, that he had overlooked. He then points to that day (the day of Christ) when He comes and all His people will have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Then the hidden things will come to light, the counsels of the hearts will be manifest and each man have his praise from God. To that day the servant of Christ, the steward of God's mysteries, yea, every Christian, must look, and serve in anticipation of it. Then all our acts and ways will be examined and judged by the Lord Himself. Paul therefore declared that any judgment now was a judgment "before the time."

And all this he wrote by the Spirit to uncover their foolishness and to counteract their party-spirit. "That ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written, that no one of you be puffed up the one against the other. For who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou hast not received? But, if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" Thus the Spirit of God exposed the folly of the Corinthian party spirit in which they were puffed up and had lost sight of Christ.

Where they had drifted in their carnal spirit by glorying in men and not in Christ is made known by the contrast between their self-glorification, self-exaltation and self-sufficiency and the path of humiliation, suffering and contempt, which is marked out for the true follower of the Lord and the servant of Christ. Here is solemn food for reflection. They were full and rich, reigned as kings, but without the Apostles, who were blessedly sharing the sufferings of Christ and were a spectacle unto the world, to angels and to men. By their profession the Corinthians were waiting for the coming of the Lord, yet in His absence they reigned as kings. They enjoyed prosperity, had all things in abundance, they gloried in all these things while the true servants of Christ were suffering, were in want, following in the path of His blessed life on earth, bearing His reproach, despised and rejected

by the world. And so it is today that the professing church has fully gone the Corinthian way; an outward profession, a seeing after the honor of men, the applause of the world, glorying in earthly attainments, rich, increased in goods. With it the offense of the cross has ceased. The cross which has written the sentence of death upon the flesh, which has made the believer dead to the world and the world dead to him; the cross, which demands separation, self-denial, self-surrender and self-sacrifice is denied.

And what a record of suffering and privation, persecution, reproach and shame, the Apostle gives! The Corinthians knew nothing of that; nor does the professing church of today. But has not the world changed since then? Is not the age becoming better? Is not the leaven of Christianity changing existing conditions so that the reproach of Christ ceases and suffering is changed into worldly honor and glory? A thousand times, No! These are the spurious claims. The world, this Present age, man's day, does not change. The world is the same today as it was in the days of the apostle. It is still true and will be true till the Lord comes "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecutions." The applause and approval of the world, the recognition by the world of that which is called "religion"--"Christian work and service," is an evidence that that service and religion is not according to the truth of God.

Paul sent Timothy to remind them "of my ways which are in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church." And he was also coming in person. He was not afraid to visit them and meet them face to face; he would come in power. "What will ye? Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?" It was his loving call for them to repent and humble themselves.

3. Corinthian Failures. Chapters 5-6.

CHAPTER 5

1. The Tolerated Case of Gross Immorality. (5:1-5).

2. The Call to Separation. (5:6-13).

The spiritual declension, the carnal spirit which prevailed among them, had brought forth fruit. One of their members had committed an act of the grossest immorality, which was an unspeakable outrage, such as was not even named in a licentious city like Corinth, where licentiousness of life was a broadly marked feature of society. It was a case of lawlessness and vileness, which was unknown among the heathen. And this case was tolerated in their midst. Instead of mourning over their sin they were puffed up and did not put away the evil doer from the assembly. If they lacked the personal instruction of the Apostle what to do in such a case, they should have turned to the Lord in sorrow of heart and asked Him for guidance. But they were indifferent. The Apostle now tells them what had to be done. He was among them in spirit, and exercises his apostolic authority in the name and power of the Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

"If the enemy had succeeded in drawing aside by the flesh a member of Christ, so that he dishonors the Lord by walking after the flesh as men of the world do, he is put outside, and by the power of the Spirit, as then exercised in their midst by the Apostle, delivered up to the enemy, who is in spite of himself the servant of the purposes of God (as in the case of Job), in order that the flesh of the Christian (which, from his failure to reckon himself dead to sin, had brought him morally under the power of Satan) should be physically destroyed and broken down. Thus would he be set free from the illusions in which the flesh held him captive. His mind would learn how to discern the difference between good and evil, to know what sin is. The judgment of God would be realized within him, and would not be executed upon him at that day when it would be definitely for the condemnation of those who should undergo it. This was a great blessing! although its form was terrible. Marvelous example of the government of God, which uses the adversary's enmity against

the saints as an instrument for their spiritual blessing! We have such a case fully set before us in the history of Job. Only we have here, in addition, the proof that in its normal state, apostolic power being there, the assembly exercised this judgment itself, having discernment by the Spirit and the authority of Christ to do it. Moreover, whatever may be the spiritual capacity of the assembly to wield this sword of the Lord (for this is power), her positive and ordinary duty is stated at the end of the chapter." (Synopsis of the Bible)

The second epistle will show us how this discipline was greatly blessed to this wicked person upon whom this sentence was pronounced and who was put out of fellowship with God's people. But not only was there individual evil, but the sin affected the whole Corinthian assembly. As Achan's sin was a curse to Israel (Joshua 7), so the leaven of this wickedness was corrupting the whole church. Leaven is seen here once more as a type of evil. A little leaven, a little evil allowed, leavens the whole lump both individually and collectively. The Apostle demands that no evil in any form, whether moral or doctrinal, is to be tolerated among those who are Christ's. Christ is our passover Lamb sacrificed for us. In Him all believers are constituted holy. With the passover there was inseparably linked the feast of unleavened bread, showing that redemption is holiness. As the Jew had to put away all leaven in eating the passover, so the Christian must purge out all leaven and be in an unleavened condition, in sincerity and in truth before God. Even the smallest bit of leaven, the least deviation from the truth of God, in holding some unscriptural doctrine, or any other evil, will, if not purged, ultimately leaven the whole lump. Christendom today is a solemn witness to this truth. The whole professing church is leavened by the leaven of the Pharisees (Ritualism); the leaven of the Sadducees (Higher Criticism or infidelity); the Corinthian leaven (vain glory and worldliness) and the Galatian leaven (Legalism). Then follows the command, "therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." Such discipline demanded by the Holy Spirit is almost unknown today in that which professes to be the church of God. It has been said that it is uncharitable and harsh to deal in this way with those who are evil in doctrine or practice. It is not that, but rather a gracious measure, to humble such an one and bring him back to the place of blessing.

CHAPTER 6

1. Concerning Disputes before Heathen Courts. (6:1-7).

2. The Holiness of Believers; Their Bodies the Temples of the Holy Spirit. (6:8-20).

Instead of settling their disputes amongst themselves, as it becomes the Saints of God, they brought their difficulties before a heathen court. In doing this they had lost sight of the dignity of their calling. The Saints of God are to reign with Christ and share His glory; they shall judge the world and angels in that day. Going to a heathen court to have these matters settled by one who was not a child of God, but unrighteous, was unworthy of them; they were making known their own shame before the world. If they had remembered that coming day of glory, when as Saints they were to participate in the judgment of the world, they would not have acted in such a way. They would have gladly suffered wrong themselves and permitted themselves to be defrauded instead of rushing with their grievances before a heathen court. Matthew 18:15-18 shows the true way for believers to settle such matters. They were doing wrong and defrauding their own brethren. In all this they dishonored God and denied their relationship to Him. And these Corinthian failures are today in professing Christendom fully developed.

The unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. He reminds them what some of them had been in their unconverted state. They had practiced the vile things of the flesh, which were so common in Corinth. And connected with this there is a warning. If the little leaven was allowed to work, if they continued in the evil ways they were following, they would surely relapse into their former state. But even more, the Apostle reminds them what the grace of God had done for them in saving them from such a life. They had been translated from the power of darkness into the Kingdom of the Son of His love. "And such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are

sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The washing has nothing to do with baptism, as some claim. Through regeneration (called in Titus 3:5, "the washing of regeneration"), the believing sinner becomes clean every whit (John 13:10). Then he is also sanctified in Christ, set apart unto God. And the holy Spirit takes possession of the believer as His own temple. This is the meaning here of "Justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." He is the seal.

Then the question concerning the believer's body is introduced. A believer is no longer under the law as to meats and foods, as the Jews were. "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not profitable." A believer is not to be brought under the power of any of these things. He is not in bondage to anything, but is to have perfect liberty. To be a slave to anything, for instance, a habit, would be wrong. Meats are for the belly; they are but temporary and will pass away. "God will bring to nought both it (the belly) and them (the meats)." But the body itself is something different. In the body of the believer the Holy Spirit is the abiding guest, the divine Indweller. The body is therefore for the Lord and the Lord for the body. The body has the promise of redemption. God, who raised up the Lord, will also raise us up by His own power. And the bodies of believers are members of Christ, joined to Himself by the Spirit of God. "For he that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit." And all is in warning against the horrible sin, which was so prominent in Corinth, fornication. The bodies of believers belong to the Lord. They are the temples of the Holy Spirit. Therefore we are not our own. Furthermore, all this has been accomplished by the great redemption price, the price paid upon Calvary's cross. The body must be yielded to God as a living sacrifice. "For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, which are God's."

4. Concerning the Relationship of Man and Woman

CHAPTER 7

1. The Single and the Married Life. (7:1-9).
2. Separation and Divorce. (7:10-16).
3. Abiding in the Different Callings. (7:17-24).
4. The Unmarried and Married in Contrast. (7:25-40).

It is evident from the first verse that the Corinthians had inquired of the Apostle about marriage and the relationship of man and woman. It was an important question in a city of the character of Corinth, so full of immorality. This chapter answers their question and gives instructions concerning the unmarried and those who are joined together in marriage. "It is good for man not to touch a woman" has been used as sanctioning celibacy and discrediting the marriage union. Such is not the case. The unmarried state has for the Christian, who is fully devoted to the Lord, certain spiritual advantages. "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord" (Verse 32). Compare this also with the words of our Lord in Matthew 19:4-12. The Apostle Paul was unmarried (verse 8) and denied himself the lawful privilege of having a wife (9:5) to be free in all things to serve the Lord. But there were great dangers, especially in heathen Corinth, where fornication was religiously sanctioned. Therefore the Apostle enjoins them that every man should have his own wife and every woman have her own husband. And in this relationship, fully approved by the Lord both must be true to its natural claims. As to the body, the husband belongs to the wife and the wife to the husband. They are not to defraud each other. However, by mutual consent they may be apart for a season to give themselves unto prayer. And this he wrote not as a command, but as a permission. "The Apostle gives his thoughts and judgment as a spiritual man, his mind animated and guided by the Spirit, and contrasts it with inspiration and what the Lord said."

Then the question of separation and divorce is taken up. The indissolubleness of the marriage tie

had been declared by the Lord and is here confirmed. "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." (Matthew 19:6, 9). And so the Apostle writes that which is a command not coming from himself but from the Lord, that if a separation takes place between husband and wife, she is to remain unmarried, or be reconciled. The husband is not to put away his wife. How little heed is paid to all this among professing Christians in our days. The increase of unscriptural divorces is appalling.

Next the case of mixed marriages is considered. Most likely many such cases were in existence in Corinth. "According to the law a man who had married a woman of the Gentiles (and was consequently profane or unclean) defiled himself, and was compelled to send her away; and their children had no right to Jewish privileges; they were rejected as unclean. (See Ezra 10:3). But under grace it was quite the contrary. The converted husband sanctified the wife, and vice versa, and their children were reckoned clean before God; they had part in the ecclesiastical rights of their parent. This is the sense of the word 'holy,' in connection with the question of order and of outward relationship towards God, which was suggested by the obligation under the law to send away wife and children in a similar case. Thus the believer was not to send away his wife, nor to forsake an unbelieving husband. If the unbeliever forsook the believer definitively, the latter (man or woman) was free 'let him depart.' The brother was no longer bound to consider the one who had forsaken him as his wife, nor the sister the man who had forsaken her as her husband. But they were called to peace, and not to seek this separation; for how did the believer know if he should not be the means of the unbeliever's conversion? For we are under grace." (Synopsis of the Bible J.N.D.)

Of course the unbelieving husband by being united to a believing wife was not actually sanctified. This requires faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But the unbelieving husband of a Corinthian household, whose wife was a believer, was no longer in the darkness of heathendom; he was surrounded by the light of Christianity and had come through being linked with a believer under its blessed influence. And so the offspring of such a union. Grace sought both the unbelieving husband and the children. But mixed marriages are never to be encouraged. 2 Corinthians 6:14 forbids them.

Verses 17-24 are parenthetical. And every man is to abide in the calling wherein he is called. Each is to abide with God (verse 24) in his own particular calling and thus glorify God in it. A believer is to be above all earthly circumstances. Yielding obedience to God is the one great thing. "Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men."

The final paragraph of this chapter (verses 25-40) gives the contrasts between those who marry and those who do not. Let us heed these blessed exhortations of such importance to God's people. "I say, brethren the time is short." If that was true then, how much more so is it in the significant days in which our lot is cast. With the ever increasing signs of the ending of the age and the coming of the Lord about us, we know that the time is short. In view of this fact those who have wives are to be as though they had none; they who weep, who pass through suffering, as though they wept not; they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use the world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away. We are to be without carefulness and distraction, so that we can serve the Lord. Much here is the advice of the Apostle concerning yielding to nature, which is perfectly lawful, or not yielding to it as to marriage. It is not the commandment of the Lord. Nevertheless we must remember that if he gives his apostolic advice, it is inspired advice, the advice of the Holy Spirit.

5. Concerning Meats Offered to Idols: Christian Liberty Governed by Love

CHAPTER 8

1. Concerning things sacrificed to idols and knowledge. (8:1-6).
2. True knowledge and liberty governed by love. (8:7-13).

Another question is raised concerning things offered to idols. Should Christians eat what had been offered in sacrifice to idols? These idol-offered meats were generally sold in the meat market. Would a believer be defiled by using such meats? They all had knowledge concerning these matters. But mere knowledge without love only puffeth up. Love is better than knowledge, for it edifieth, and this love they had to manifest in the matter of eating things sacrificed to idols. As to knowledge, how little man knoweth. How true it is "if any man think he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." Pride because of knowledge is a dangerous thing, and much of this we see among Christians. True knowledge of God produces love for Him and such a one is known of God. Then the question is taken up. They had the knowledge that an idol is nothing in the world. There is none other God but one, "the Father, of whom are all things and we for Him, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and we by Him."

But not all had this perfect knowledge. Some had the conception that the idol is a reality, a god, though a false one; they did not grasp the fact that an idol is nothing. They ate of the meat, feeling that it had been an idol sacrifice, and their conscience in these scruples being weak is defiled. They were therefore in bondage and did not enjoy the liberty in Christ. Verse 8 shows that eating meat or not eating meat has no advantage whatever before God. The important thing then is stated. "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours becomes a stumbling block to them that are weak." One who is weak in faith (not possessing true knowledge) sees a brother eating meat in the idol's temple and by it he will become emboldened to do violence to his conscience and do the same thing, and in doing it he sins. He acts not in faith, but imitates another and worse things may follow. By his act the brother who has knowledge may be more than a stumbling block. The weak brother may perish, for whom Christ died, through such an example. The disastrous effect is put in the strongest term. Of course the weak brother will not actually perish, but in his conscience he will be guilty. However grace will step in and prevent this threatening danger. No sheep or lamb of His shall perish; for none can pluck them out of His hand. We are our brother's keepers, not their Savior. Well has it been said, "out of our careless hands they fall for safety into His." But sinning against brethren and wounding their weak consciences is sinning against Christ. "Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth" (verse 1). The Apostle then states that he will relinquish his knowledge and liberty in case it would offend his brother, "Lest I make my brother offend." Christian liberty is to be governed by love for the brethren.

"The liberty of God's children is absolute, but they are expected to use it as imitators of God. We have to consider not ourselves only, but both our brethren and the world. A saint may be walking without circumspection, and yet with an unruffled conscience. But this is dangerous. Heed must be taken lest, while enjoying, in one sense blamelessly, our liberty, we become unwittingly a stumbling block to others. An ostentatious use of liberty rarely fails to injure the boaster and those who may observe his ways. True grace, because it is free and knows its happiness in fellowship with God, makes no effort to seem free. Rather it will seek to use its liberty in love, considering the weak, and neither despising them, nor tempting them by wrong example to act in anything beyond their faith."-Pridham.

All this is practical truth and much needed in our days of worldliness and laxity in the Christian walk. It is a good rule to ask in all our walk and in the use of our liberty, how will it affect the fellow-members of the body? We refer the reader to Romans 14 where the same truth is treated. (See the annotations there.)

6. Paul's Gracious Example.

CHAPTER 9

1. The Apostle's rights. (9:1-14).
2. He waives his rights for the Gospel's sake. (9:15-23).
3. The race-course and the crown. (9:24-27).

The great principle laid down in the previous chapter to forego one's Christian liberty, the Apostle Paul enforced by his own example. He was an Apostle and had seen the Lord Jesus, from whom he had received his apostleship (Gal. 1:1). From the second verse we learn that some had not recognized him as an Apostle; these must have been false teachers. But the Corinthians knew he was an Apostle. Through his testimony they had been converted so that he could say "for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." As an Apostle he had certain rights, but he did not make use of them. All his rights and his privileges had been given up by him. The law also affirmed his claim, for it forbade the muzzling of the oxen that treadeth the corn. Those that sow spiritual things are perfectly entitled to reap carnal (material) things. Other teachers used this God-given right and accepted their material things; and he had a greater claim for this upon the Corinthians, for he taught them first. "Nevertheless we have not used this power, but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the Gospel of Christ." The Lord certainly had ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel. All this he had not used; he had not made use of what was his right. Nor did he write these words that his claims might be satisfied. He did not want his glorying made void. What was his glory? Not the preaching of the Gospel in itself. Necessity was laid upon him and "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel!" "For if I do this of mine own will, I have a reward; but if not of mine own will, I am entrusted with a stewardship." (The translation of verse 17 in the Authorized Version is faulty.)

What is his reward? In what does he glory? His answer is "that when I preach the gospel, I make the gospel without charge, so as not to use, as belonging to me, my right in the gospel." In this way the gospel was not hindered; it was made more effective. For being free from all, free from the control of any person, he had made himself the servant of all, that he might win as many as he could. This was his reward, to preach the gospel gratuitously. Governed by love he had become a servant of all. His rights were given up, but he did not insist upon his Christian freedom, but gave up his liberty in order "that I might by all means save some." He did not seek his own things but the things of Christ. The most blessed self-sacrifice on behalf of Christ and the Gospel of Christ marked his service. How few such servants, who give up, self-denying, self-sacrificing, waiving their rights for the Gospel sake, are found today in Christendom. But how many are seeking their own!

The concluding paragraph is fully in line with these statements of the Apostle. He uses as an illustration the Greek stadium, the race-course, well known to the Corinthians on account of the games on the isthmus of Corinth. In order to run successfully and obtain the prize, self-denial was necessary. There was a prize for him who won. Spiritually, not one, but all may obtain the prize, if all run well. And in the race every man that striveth for the mastery, to obtain the victory, is temperate in all things. They do it to obtain a fading crown, a wreath; but we have the promise of a crown that fadeth not away, an everlasting crown.

And if those who strive for earthly honor deny themselves, how much more should we practice self-denial in view of the crown of glory! "I therefore so run not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." What did the Apostle mean by the latter statement? The word "castaway" is found also in the following passages: Rom. 1:28; 2 Cor. 13:5, 6, 7; 2 Tim. 3:8; and Titus 1:16. In these passages it is translated by "reprobate." In Heb. 6:8 it is translated "rejected." Did he mean that he feared to be lost himself? Or did he only fear disapproval as a workman, whose service is rejected and to be counted unworthy of a crown? The statement does not clash with the teaching of the eternal security of the believer. The Apostle personally does

not fear for himself, as no true believer needs to fear, but he applies an important principle to himself. Salvation and a holy walk are inseparably connected. Preaching alone will not do, but the truth must be lived.

"There would be difficulty indeed, if the apostle spoke of having been born again and afterwards becoming a castaway: in this case life would not be eternal. But he says nothing of the sort. He only shows the solemn danger and certain ruin of preaching without a practice according to it. This the Corinthians needed to hear. Preaching or teaching truth to men without reality, self-judgment and self-denial before God, is ruinous. It is to deceive ourselves, not Him who is not mocked. Nor do any Christians more deeply need to watch and pray than those who are much occupied with handling the word of God or guiding others in the ways of the Lord. How easy for such to forget that doing the truth is the common responsibility of all, and that speaking it to others ever so earnestly is no substitute for their own obeying it as in the sight of God!" (William Kelly)

It is a warning against an empty profession of Christianity without the manifestation of the power. Where there is true salvation and eternal life, it is proved by a godly walk. The Apostle in these personal statements shows that all the blessed knowledge he had and with it the most positive assurance of eternal glory, did not make him careless, but prompted him to still greater earnestness and continued self-denial. He knew nothing in his life of the self-indulgence which characterized so many in the Corinthian assembly; he kept his body under. But he also knew, as every Christian should know, that the grace which had saved him, which taught him to live soberly, righteously and godly, would also keep him and enable him to persevere through all hindrances.

7. Warnings and Exhortations

CHAPTER 10

1. Warnings from Israel's past history. (10:4-7).

2. Exhortations. (10:15-33).

The same subject is continued with this chapter. The concluding paragraph of the previous chapter is illustrated from Israel's history, as the professing people of God. What happened unto them has a typical meaning for us. "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples (types), and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world (ages) are come." He speaks of "our fathers (Israel's fathers) were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea."

God had delivered them out of Egypt; the cloud covered them and the sea divided, for their salvation and for the judgment upon the Egyptian hosts. The Lord had made them free to serve Him and it is written "they believed the Lord and His servant Moses." In this sense they were baptized, or set apart, unto Moses as his disciples. And the person who accepts and professes Christianity is set apart to Christ. All who were under the covering and protecting cloud and who had passed through the sea, ate the same spiritual food, and drank the same spiritual drink, of the rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ. The Lord in infinite love provided for them by giving them food and water, which both are typical of Christ. All ate and drank of the miraculous supply. But what became of the great mass of this people? "But with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness." They lusted after evil things; some became idolators; some fornicators; some tempted the Lord by trying His patience and murmuring. Judgment followed. In one day 23,000 fell; others were destroyed by serpents and perished by the destroyer. (See Numb. 25:9; when 24,000 are mentioned. See for an explanation of this alleged discrepancy annotations on Numb. 25.) And all this was written for the admonition and warning of the Corinthians. It shows how those who enjoy divine privileges and lay claim to the title of being God's people, but do not live in separation, do not please God. They that are in the flesh cannot please

God, though they may profess Christianity and partake of divine things. Many of the Corinthians were in this dangerous condition. And the admonition and warning is for us as well.

"The warning is for us all. We have no right to say, 'Well, but we are true Christians, and therefore we need not trouble about these things.' These are things which as principles are of the greatest importance for us to realize. There are evil things for which we may lust as they lusted. If God prevents the extreme result for us, that is His mercy, but the effect of our disregarding the warnings may be that our lives may be alas, how greatly spoiled and disfigured and made quite other than He would have them, by our laxity!"--Numerical Bible

Two important statements follow. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." This is our responsibility. But how can a believer stand in this world, so dangerous and full of evil? Only by faith can we stand, and faith is confidence in God. As we have no self-confidence, but trust in Him alone and walk in fellowship with Him we shall stand and be upheld. Then there is the blessed comforting statement: "God is faithful." He does not allow that we are tempted above that we are able, but he provides a way to escape. "Wherefore, dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." It meant for the Corinthians the idolatry of heathendom. But there is also a more subtle idolatry. That believer is kept from all idolatry who is wholly devoted to the Lord and who gives to Him constantly the preeminence. Devotedness to God keeps from idols.

The second half of this chapter contains exhortations about idolatry and the believer's walk in the midst of the corruption which is in the world. The Lord's supper is significantly introduced at this point. As we find in the next chapter, it is the memorial feast of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us. Blessed and precious is this feast of communion. And in eating of it there is identification with the body of Christ, for "we are all partakers of that one bread." In the Lord's supper, many of the essential truths of Christianity are revealed and enjoyed by faith, in the power of the Spirit, as an act of true worship. If the believer then realizes that he is a partaker of Christ and tastes afresh of His love and gazes in hope towards the coming glory, he will have nothing to do with idols, nor have any fellowship with darkness. As he has written before, the idol is nothing, meaning the supposed gods of the heathen. However, idolatry was a horrible reality, by which the souls and bodies of men were corrupted. The heathen sacrificed in idol-worship to demons and not to God. And how can he who drinks the cup of the Lord, the Lord of all, drink also the cup of demons? Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of demons. In doing this they would provoke the Lord to jealousy. Every wicked doctrine and false worship is backed by demons and participation in it means identification. This is especially true of the anti-Christian movements of our times, such as Christian Science, Theosophy and others. (1 Tim. 4:1.) The instructions call for a cautious and separated walk, as it becometh those who are the Lord's. God is to be before the heart of the believer in all things. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

II. THE CHURCH, THE BODY OF CHRIST: CHAPTERS 11-14

1. Headship, and the Position of Woman. The Lord's Supper.

CHAPTER 11.

1. The Headship of Christ and of the Man; Position of Woman. 1-16.
2. The Lord's Supper. 17-31.

The opening verse belongs to the preceding chapter. And now after the church in relation to the

world had been treated by the Apostle in the first part of the epistle, he takes up next the affairs of the church itself. Here, too, much had to be corrected into which the Corinthian assembly had drifted. After the brief and excellent word of praise by which he expressed his confidence in them (verse 2), he calls their attention to an important truth, which in our times is not only overlooked, but often belittled and altogether set aside. It concerns the headship of Christ, of the man, and the position of woman. It is evident that Corinthian women had assumed in the church a position which was not according to God's order in creation. They had not yet learned it. God's order in creation has to be manifested in the church. This order is unaltered by redemption, though in Christ there is neither male nor female, yet has God assigned to man and to woman their respective places which must be maintained. This divine order the Apostle states. "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." These are weighty and blessed statements. Christ is the Creator, the Lord of all, but He also became man and is the "First born of all Creation" (Col. 1:15-16). He is therefore in possession of the headship in creation, and head of man as the Man, as He is also the head of the Church. God has given Him the preeminence in all things. And the head of the woman is the man; this is the place which God has given to woman on earth. In creation the head of the woman is man. Yet what would man be without the woman!--she is necessary to him.

"The woman is the glory of man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man." To these statements about the headship of Christ, the headship of man, he being head of the woman, the Apostle adds "and the head of Christ is God." Christ is the eternal Son of God, coequal in Godhead in every way. He is God. But the Only-Begotten humbled Himself; He took on the creature's form and "was made of a woman." And as Man He has taken the place under God, yielding perfect obedience in all things. In all His redemption work He is under God, not only on earth, but now in glory, as the glorified Man at the right hand of God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory.

The purpose of the declaration of this order of the ways of God in creation was to set them right on a matter which in our days is often sneered at. Man praying or prophesying is not to cover his head. Woman praying and prophesying is to have a covering on her head. The man who covereth his head in praying dishonoreth his head. Woman uncovered dishonoreth her head. A covering on the head is the outward sign of being in the place of subjection. An uncovered head signifies the opposite. The order which God has instituted as to the place of man and woman, His people are bound to respect. It may appear a little thing, yet if disobeyed, as it was in Corinth (where women seemed to be puffed up and refused to follow this order), it becomes a stepping stone towards more serious evil. Woman is to testify to her place of subjection by covering her head in praying and testifying. Man similarly engaged does not cover his head, for the authority is vested in man "for as much as he is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of man." How all this is denied and woman aims to take leadership and rulership in place of man, we need not to enlarge upon.

If woman persists in leaving the place (in subjection) where her glory shines, if she will persist in pushing out into the glare of public life and thrust herself into the struggle and grinding competition that wears out men's lives and tenderer instincts, let her not be astonished if she lose her distinctive grace--the delicate sheen that cannot bear the world's rough, unhallowed ways (Prof. Moorehead).

Another reason is given why praying women should wear outwardly a sign of subjection--because of the angels. Angels are watchers and attendants of the heirs of salvation. As the church is known to them and by it they know the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10), so are they observers of Christian worship and the order and behavior of God's people in His house. And angels themselves are in subjection and yield perfect obedience.

Then the church itself is brought into view. The first thing is not the fact that Christians are the members of Christ, who constituted the body of Christ, the gifts of the body and the exercise of these gifts. The Lord's supper, that blessed memorial of His love in His sacrificial death, the love

which passeth knowledge, is the first thing mentioned. "Do this in remembrance of Me" was His request in the night in which He was betrayed. When the Holy Spirit came and the company gathered in fellowship we read at once of "the breaking of bread," to remember Him (Acts 2:46). The first thing in the assembly must be to remember Christ, His death, His presence in glory, His coming again. But before the Apostle tells them what he had received of the Lord, he had to reprove them for their disorder and their divisions. In these sects and parties they denied the very truth of the church as the one body, the body of Christ. They had a custom of eating a meal in connection with the Lord's supper. And at this meal some drank to excess, while it seems this custom of a preliminary meal led to a complete neglect or unworthy observance of the supper itself. Then he writes of what he had received of the Lord. How simple it all is! "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." The Lord's supper is to remember Him, to show the Lord's death till He come. And all else that man has made of it is pure invention, if not wicked blasphemy, like the idolatrous mass of Romanism. And how often shall this feast, which delights His heart, where God's children worship and adore, be kept? In Apostolic days it was evidently kept every Lord's day (Acts 20:7).

And all God's children, whom the Lord has received, have a right to the Lord's table and gather thus around His blessed Person. The only things which bar from the Lord's table, are evil doctrines and an evil walk. And the Lord's supper may be eaten unworthily. He, who comes to the Lord's table without self-judgment, eats and drinks of it unworthily. We eat and drink unworthily when we partake without discerning the Lord's body and blood represented by the bread and the wine, for we do not then show to God the death of Christ. Let a man examine (judge) himself before eating or else he eats for his own judgment. This is God's way of producing and maintaining holiness in the church. And the Corinthians had experienced that the Lord dealt with a number of them in judgment. Upon many the Lord had laid His hand, many were weak and stricken with disease, while others had fallen asleep. It was mercy, "but when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

"The world is condemned. Sin in the Christian is judged; it escapes neither the eye nor the judgment of God. He never permits it; He cleanses the believer from it by chastening him, although He does not condemn, because Christ has borne his sins, and been made sin for him. The death of Christ forms then the center of communion in the assembly, and the touchstone of conscience, and that, with respect to the assembly, in the Lord's supper." (Synopsis of the Bible).

2. The Body and the Members of the Body

CHAPTER 12

1. Concerning spiritual manifestations and diversities of gifts. 1-11.

2. The Body and its members. 12-31.

In this interesting, important chapter, spiritual manifestations are first mentioned. The church is the body of Christ, the habitation of God through the Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in the church. And first the distinctive mark of the Spirit is stated. As heathen they had been under the control of evil spirits, who had deluded them with idolatrous worship. And these evil spirits were still active, creeping in among Christians, pretending to be the Spirit of God and counterfeiting His manifestations. It was so then and it is so now. Seducing spirits and doctrines of demons are in fullest evidence in the professing church. Satan transforms himself into an angel of light; he imitates and produces certain manifestations, as he must have done among the Corinthians; but Satan never owns Jesus as Lord. The work of the Holy Spirit is to exalt the Lord Jesus. The Spirit does not even speak of Himself, but always glorifies Christ, giving Him the right place. The evil spirits do the opposite; they degrade Him and attempt to rob Him of His glory. This they do through evil

doctrines. It amounts to the same as saying "anathema" (curse) "Jesus" as Jews and Gentiles did in rejecting Jesus as Lord. No man speaking by the Spirit of God would say that. And all who own Him as Lord do so by the bidding and the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

"If the highest honor is not freely and sincerely given to the name of Jesus, its only other place is utter degradation. Between 'anathema' and 'Lord' there is no other place which it can justly occupy. The wide space which seems morally to intervene between a living and adoring faith and a deliberate and positive denial of that name, is ignored by the Spirit, in His estimate of human character, as a nullity and a deception. With Him men are either believers or unbelievers, confessors or deniers of the Lord. Now, by the Apostle's testimony, to confess Him truly is impossible but by the Holy Ghost."--Pridham.

The Holy Spirit, the divine Person, is on earth and manifests His power in the body of Christ, the church. The Lord Jesus having accomplished redemption, believers on His name are ransomed and cleansed by His blood, and united to Him, as His body, and the Holy Spirit dwells in each member of this body. It is through the Spirit that communion with the Head is realized and maintained. In His gifts the presence of the Spirit of God is therefore manifested in the members of the body. This is now more fully treated in this chapter. In verses 4-6 we hear of the Spirit, the Lord, and God; the same Spirit--the same Lord, and the same God. Yet there is not a division into three classes of gifts, but the same thing is seen in three relations. The diversities of gifts are by the same Spirit; through Him they are bestowed. These gifts are in relation to the Lord; they are to be used in ministries, that is, in service for the Lord, under whom and for whose glory these gifts are to be used. And the whole operations are of God, who worketh all in all. All this is of course confined to the members of the body of Christ.

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man (a true believer) for profit." The gift bestowed upon one member is for the whole body, all are to profit by it. The possession of a gift makes the believer a debtor to the other members of Christ. Nine gifts by the same Spirit are mentioned. They are the following: The Word of Wisdom; the Word of Knowledge; Faith; the gift of Healing; the Working of Miracles; Prophecy; Discerning of spirits; tongues and interpretations of tongues.

It will be seen that the miraculous sign-gifts hold a secondary place, the last being speaking in tongues and their interpretations. The word of Wisdom stands at the head of these gifts and is followed by the word of Knowledge. They stand for the gifts to understand the deep things of God and to impart them unto others. It means a spiritual apprehension of the truth of God in all its phases and the power to communicate this truth to others. The gift of faith is a special endowment of confidence in God and His promises, which enables the possessor to lay hold on God and accomplish great things. All believers have faith and live by faith. The gift of healing and the working of miracles, were sign-gifts for the inauguration of the Christian dispensation. There is no intimation that these miraculous gifts were to continue in the church throughout this age.

In Ephesians, the highest revelation concerning the body of Christ, the permanent gifts for the edifying of the body are mentioned, but gifts of healing, working miracles or speaking in tongues are omitted. Nor is there a promise in the Word that those extraordinary gifts are to be restored by the Spirit of God to the church before the Lord comes for His saints. Signs and miracles will take place at the close of this age, but they are the lying things of Satan (2 Thessalonians 2). Anything which claims to be a restoration of miraculous gifts, as it is the case among certain sects, must be looked upon with grave suspicion. Besides prophecy and the discerning of spirits (trying the spirits whether they are of God) the gift of tongues and their interpretation are mentioned. As we find later the Corinthians, in their bad spiritual state, esteemed the gift of tongues the highest; the Spirit of God, however, gives to it an inferior place. They were almost destitute of the exercise of the highest gift of wisdom and knowledge and magnified, what was for outward demonstration, because it exalted themselves.

The exercise of the gift of healing and similar gifts was never discretionary. They were manifested only in their fitting season, and could only work effectually by the immediate will of God. Power is His, and always in His hands. If Trophimus was sick, the wish of Paul could not restore him. Yet the believer can come to the Lord in prayer and claim his power. Our refuge in time of need must be sought, not in God's gifts, but in the faithfulness of the Giver.

Of much importance is verse 13: "For in one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." This refers to the formation of the body. The baptism mentioned in this verse is not water-baptism. Water baptism does not save nor can this ordinance put any one as a member into the true church, the one body. The baptism is the baptism of the Spirit. It took place on the day of Pentecost. On that day the Spirit was poured out and while He filled every believer, He also united them into one body. Then the body of Christ was formed once for all by this baptism. Since that day whenever a sinner trusts in Christ he is at once joined to that body and shares in the one Spirit. Many Christians speak of repeated baptisms by the Spirit and refer to certain experiences as being new baptisms. In the light of this verse all this is incorrect. Scripture knows only one baptism. And all believers drink of one Spirit; they are all made partakers of one and the same Spirit.

And this body which was called into existence by the Spirit on the day of Pentecost is not one member, but many. There are many members, yet but one body. And the different members in that body are dependent the one on the other, and have need of each other, just as it is in the human body. And God hath set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased Him. Each member has his own place with a gift, a function, which is suitable for it. Nothing in this body is left to man himself. It is His Church and God orders the place of each and of all in that body. Therefore, self-choosing is excluded. How all this is marred, if not wholly forgotten, in the professing church, is only too evident. The conditions today, the divisions in the body, the false doctrines and unscriptural practices throughout Christendom, are plainly the result of having set aside the truth concerning the one body.

And those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary. "And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our comely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need; but God has tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked." As it is in the human body, so also is it in the body of Christ. There was to be no self-exaltation, as it undoubtedly was among the Corinthians on account of the gifts which they had so abundantly, especially the sign-gifts. They looked down upon other members who were less prominent. And this was responsible for the threatening division in the body. The blessed injunction is that the members should have the same care one for another, then there would be no schism in the body.

If one member suffers, all suffer, because they are in one body indwelt and united by the same Spirit; and if one member be honored, all rejoice with it. And this body is the body of Christ; He is the head of the body and wants to manifest Himself through His body. This is the church collectively, but the same are the members severally. The order of how God has bestowed gifts follows (verse 28). Again the gift of tongues, in which the Corinthians abounded, on account of which grave disorders and disturbances had come in, is put last.

"And the Corinthians then, as others of late, had to hear, whether they heeded or not, that those striking displays of power in which they found their childish surprise and delight, like the world without, were not the highest, that there were gifts relatively first and second and third, the last named being the very one they had been abusing to no small disorder and hindrance of edification in the assembly."

Verses 29-30 show another important principle. All cannot be apostles, prophets, leaders, workers of miracles, etc. God does not bestow all these different gifts upon one individual. They are

distributed as it pleases Him, to each member as He sees fit. Ministry in the body of Christ is the exercise of a gift. The Corinthians in their puffed up condition had a selfish ambition to have all these gifts concentrated in every member.

"The Corinthians' folly was not greater in wishing all the gifts to be in each and all the saints, than the modern theory of arrogating all, as far as public ministrations goes, to a single official. The one was ignorant vanity before the truth was fully revealed in a written form; the other is more guilty presumption in presence of the acknowledged word of God, which condemns every departure from His principles, and the great fact of the one body with its many members, wherein the Holy Spirit works to glorify the Lord Jesus" (W. Kelly).

He tells them to covet earnestly the best gifts and he would show unto them a more excellent way. This more excellent way is the way of love of which we hear in the next chapter.

3. The Need and Superiority of Love.

CHAPTER 13

1. The Preeminence of Love. 1-3.
2. Love described in its characteristics. 4-7.
3. Love never faileth; its Permanence. 8-13.

This chapter is a most blessed exaltation of love. The word "charity" is an unfortunate mistranslation. The Greek word for love used in the New Testament was never used by the Greek heathen classical writers. In its meaning it was unknown among the Gentiles. God is love. As His people, members of His body, we know the love of God manifested in the gift of God's well beloved Son. And this love is shed abroad in the hearts of the children of God. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another ... if we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:7, 11-12.). The divine nature bestowed by the Spirit of God is a holy nature and a nature which possesseth in it the love of God. Love is therefore the divine nature in its manifestation. And this wonderful love, the divine love, is to be manifested in the body of Christ. It is the true motive for all ministry. The Corinthians in their worldly, self-seeking, ambitious spirit, in their use of the gifts, had not followed this more excellent way. The divisions among them and their self-exaltation and self-confidence were the result of not being governed by love. If love had been supreme in the Corinthian church, neither sectarianism, nor careless walk, nor indifference to sin of others and toleration of evil, nor going before a heathen judge, nor high-minded pretensions, nor the desecration of the Lord's supper, nor a false practice of Christian liberty, could have prospered. Love surpasses everything. It is a far better thing than any gift. Very significantly the Apostle begins with the gift, as already pointed out, of the smallest value. Speaking with the tongues of men and of angels without love is like sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

(For a number of years movements have started which claim to be a new Pentecost. The gift of tongues is the leading feature. They go by different names--Apostolic Faith--Pentecostal Faith--Latter-Day Rain, etc. But is it the work of the Holy Spirit? The divisions which exist in these movements, the unscriptural teachings which are held by some of them and the lack of love, besides other characteristics are not the marks of the energy and power of God's Spirit.)

Prophecy, the understanding of all mysteries, all knowledge, all wonder-working faith and even the giving up of all things and martyrdom, are valueless without love. God looks for love; it is of God, and loving is conformity to God. It is a solemn warning that true gifts may be possessed without a manifestation of love.

Many pages could be filled with a closer examination of the different characteristics of divine love

as given by the Apostle. If we study the blessed life the Son of God lived down here we shall find how He manifested this love in His life among the children of men. The fifteen brief, but deep, descriptions of love should be the standing mirror of self-judgment for all God's children. To read these pithy sentences in His presence at the close of each day and apply them as a test, is a wholesome exercise.

The opening descriptions are all of a passive character, and show that love demands the renunciation of self. Long-suffering and kindness head the list. These are the attributes of our loving God and Father, and we are to imitate Him as His children and forbear one another in love. Love does not envy. God does not envy. Envy is of Satan; all self-seeking has its origin in pride, which is the crime of the devil (1 Timothy 3:6). Love vaunteth not itself. It never seeks the applause of men. Self-display is self-love. True love is not puffed up. Love doth not behave itself unseemly. Its ornaments are meekness, modesty and unobtrusiveness. It seeketh not its own; it is self-neglect and is expressed in devotion to others. Nor is it easily provoked, for self-consciousness and self-seeking being absent, sensitiveness becomes impossible. Love thinketh no evil. The better translation is, "does not impute evil." It rather hides than exposes. Furthermore, love "rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth with the truth." The last four characteristics show its positive energy. It beareth all things--it puts up with anything but that which is wrong and sinful; believeth all things; it does not suspect, therefore it hopeth all things and also endureth all things. Finally the permanence of love is stated. Prophecies, tongues and knowledge will fail, cease and pass away. Love never. It is abiding eternal, the greatest of all.

4. Prophecy and Speaking with a Tongue.

CHAPTER 14

1. Prophecy the better gift. 1-13.
2. Intelligibility demanded. 14-25.
3. Practical instructions for the public use of these gifts. 26-40.

It is evident from the contents of this chapter that the Corinthians had unduly magnified the gift of speaking in a strange tongue. It had a spectacular aspect which they enjoyed. He therefore shows them that the gift of prophecy is more to be coveted than speaking in an unknown tongue. The speaking in an unknown tongue is intelligible to God, but he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, exhortation and comfort. While the Apostle does not deny the value of speaking with tongues, he would rather that they prophesied "for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues." Speaking with tongues edifies the speaker alone but prophecy edifies the church. What is the profit in speaking with an unknown tongue to believers unless the tongue has a real meaning. Musical instruments, which give forth sound, like a pipe or an harp, have no meaning whatever unless there be distinction in the tunes. Thus he shows the uselessness of the gift of tongues for edification unless the tongue is intelligible to all. "Even so ye, for as much as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church. Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret."

What the speaking in tongues really was we do not know positively. It was probably an ecstatic form of speech, or some foreign language. As a distinctive gift it has passed away, notwithstanding the fact that from time to time the restoration of this sign-gift has been claimed. (During the middle ages; at the time of the Wesley's; during the days of Edward Irving, when it was proven to emanate from evil spirits; and in our own days, thousands claim to possess it.) But what is prophesying? , In the Old Testament prophecy, it was foretelling coming events. In the New Testament, it has a different meaning. It is not foretelling, but forthtelling. it is one who is speaking as from God and for God; the one who possesses this gift must therefore be in communication with God through the

Spirit so as to be able to communicate to others His mind and His will. The exercise of this gift necessitates a close walk with God. This gift the Apostle desired the Corinthians to have. Instead the Corinthians had the inferior gift, which they valued on account of the display and perhaps the mysteriousness of it.

(The people in our own times who profess to have received this sign-gift claim that it is an evidence of having received the "baptism" of the Spirit, which, as we have already pointed out, is in itself unscriptural. They are on ground on which they are open to the subtle influences of Satan's power.)

The Apostle also states that he spoke with tongues more than they did. "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." From all these regulations and statements we learn that the use of this gift was rather tolerated than commended (see verse 39) to the churches because it was a hindrance rather than a help to the needed thing, which is edification in love. Furthermore, tongues were for a sign to the unbelievers. Prophesying is for the believers. "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place and all speak with tongues and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that you are mad?"

It is a fact that in the meetings of the modern advocates of the gift of tongues often the greatest disorder prevails. Men and women falling down in convulsions, hysterical laughter, unpleasant shrieks and other demonstrations have not been uncommon, so that an unbeliever would be perfectly right to pass the verdict "they are mad." It is different With prophesying. "But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or are unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all. And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, declaring that God is truly among you."

The meetings of the Saints of God coming together in His Name and gathered to that name must be characterized by quietness and order. "For God is not the author of confusion (tumult, unquietness), but of peace, as in all churches of the Saints." All things must be done decently and in order (verse 40). Another important instruction is given in verses 34-35. "let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home, for it is shame for women to speak in the church." Some have said that this demand of the Apostle was given solely to the Corinthians, because women were forward in the church and that it does not apply to our days. This is a serious mistake. Nor are these words merely the words of the Apostle Paul, as some have claimed. It is God's Word and the command is the command of the Holy Spirit. The public ministry of women is not permitted by the Spirit of God. The Word of God discountenances a prominent public ministry of women as inconsistent with the original law of creation, and with the modesty and meekness which are the woman's chief adorning in the sight of God. What mischief, confusion and worse things have resulted from disobeying this divine command. Woman leaving the sphere assigned to her by the Creator and the Redeemer is stepping on dangerous ground. In connection with the statement, "A woman suffer not to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence," the Apostle calls attention to the fact "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in transgression" (1 Timothy 2:12-13). The originators and leaders of the most damnable heresies of the latter times such as Christian Science, Theosophy and Spiritism are women. But woman has a ministry and can exercise her gifts as a member of the body of Christ.

(Again we call attention to the modern gift of tongues, the Pentecostal movements. Women are prominent among them. The divine command "let your women keep silence in the churches" is disregarded by them, while they claim obedience to the Word and a return to apostolic faith and practice.)

"The woman's sphere of liberty, and, one may say, sovereignty, is at home; that is to say, it is private and not public. It must not be thought that this does not give ample scope for the exercise of

gifts of whatever kind. If there were only more of the cultivation on the woman's part of that which belongs really to her sphere, how fruitful would be the exercise of the gift with which God has endowed her and how many places would be open to her which men, by reason of their being men, could not in the same way fill! This in relation to children, it is at once evident; with the younger children, the woman is still the best and the nature-ordained teacher. God has placed the babe in its mother's arms and not its father's; and this does not mean that the woman's sphere is only in her own family. There are countless families to which her sex will introduce her, and where she may find herself fully at home and abundant profit and recompense of her work. So, through the wives, women have access in this way to an indefinite sphere of occupation for varied blessing. The wife is the heart-center of the household, and the ability thus to reach the wife in a way that women certainly can do far beyond others is an immense privilege and responsibility entrusted to her. Would that there were more realization of this!" (Numerical Bible.)

III. RESURRECTION AND THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH AND CONCLUSION:

CHAPTERS 15-16

1. Resurrection and the Hope of the Church.

CHAPTER 15

1. The Gospel and the Resurrection of Christ. 1-11.
2. If Christ were not raised--then what? 12-19.
3. Christ the Firstfruits and what follows. 20-28.
4. Further practical arguments about Resurrection. 29-34.
5. Concerning the Resurrection of the Body. 35-49.
6. The Coming of the Lord and the Victory. 50-58.

The third section lifts us higher and brings us to the summit of this Epistle. We have seen the church in relation to the world, the church as the body of Christ and now we see the consummation, the destiny of the church in resurrection glory. From this chapter we learn that some members of the Corinthian church said "there is no resurrection of the dead" (verse 12). The denial of this fundamental doctrine of the faith brought forth this blessed portion of the Epistle concerning resurrection and the coming of the Lord.

The first thing mentioned in opening up this subject is the gospel which Paul had preached to the Corinthians, which they had received and wherein they stood. This is the order: The preaching of the Gospel, the good news, its reception by faith, followed by the standing in salvation and the enjoyment of it. By this Gospel is salvation as it is so fully revealed in the Epistle to the Romans. The Apostle Paul had delivered unto them, which he himself had received from the Lord (Gal. 1:11-19). The three great facts according to the Scriptures (the Old Testament Scriptures) are: (1) Christ died for our sins. The death of Christ, the cross and the mighty work accomplished there, is the great foundation. The entire Old Testament revealed in many ways this fundamental fact without which there would be and could be no redemption. (2.) He was buried. He expired as to the body on the cross. The death of Christ was real and not a deception. And His burial also has a meaning in the Gospel (Romans 6:4). And the third great fact of the gospel, "He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." This is the great truth of this chapter, a truth, if denied, must result in the complete collapse of the gospel. And His resurrection had been foretold by Himself as well as

by the Scriptures. (See Genesis 22:4 and Hebrews 11:17-19; Psalm 16). This great truth, the enemy has always hated. The lying inventions of the Jews are well known to every reader of the Gospel (Matt. 28:11-15). In Corinth this truth was being denied, and in our own days those who deny the physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus are ever on the increase in the professing church. They occupy leading pulpits and are prominent in institutions of learning.

The Apostle brings forth a number of witnesses, but he does not mention the women who play such an important part in the resurrection account of the Gospel. He gives only a number of witnesses, all men, who furnish an unanswerable evidence. Unbelievers have often attempted to trace the belief in the resurrection of our Lord to the women. Cephas is mentioned first. "But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter," had been the angelic instruction on the resurrection morning. And Peter who had so shamefully denied Him had seen the risen One. "The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared unto Simon" (Luke 24:34). On the day of Pentecost he became the wonderful witness of the risen Christ. That He appeared first to Simon Peter shows His infinite grace. Then He was seen of the twelve. Luke 24:36-48 speaks of the eleven; the twelfth had gone to his awful place. But the passage in Luke also informs us that others were with them when the Lord appeared. The eleven were gathered together, and those that were with them. (Luke 24:33). Probably Matthias, the one added to the Apostolate (Acts 1:26), was in that company. "After that He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto the present, but some are fallen asleep." This was probably in Galilee. And how could such a large number of men be deceived together, or concoct a falsehood? It is an impossibility. Sooner or later, if they had all agreed to deceive the world, the fraud would have been discovered. He was also seen by James and by all the Apostles. Last of all he was seen by the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus, where as the blind persecutor of the church, the chief of sinners, He beheld Him in the glory light. He was like one born out of due season. He was an untimely birth. He was in his experience a type of the nation to which he belonged. As he saw Christ in glory so will the remnant of Israel behold Him at the time of His second coming. He was therefore a firstfruit of the nation.

(The correct meaning of the Greek word "ektroma" seems to point to a child born from a dead mother, by what is called the Caesarian operation. The dead Jewish system gave birth to the chosen vessel who was to become what Israel should have been, and yet will be, when the mystery of the present dispensation is complete.--Romans 11:25-27).

The Apostle Paul is one of the greatest witnesses to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The argument which follows (verses 12-19) is so clear and powerful that no comment is needed. If Christ is not risen from the dead, if it were true what some said in Corinth "there is no resurrection of the dead"--then what? The answer is fearful, for it strips the Christian of everything. "Your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins; your loved ones who died in Christ are perished, gone forever; we are of all men most miserable." And into this terrible pit the men who deny this fundamental doctrine are leading those who accept this damnable heresy (2 Peter 2:1).

But triumphant is the uncontrovertible fact, "Christ is risen from among the dead"; and more than that, "He is become the firstfruit of them that slept." As He was raised, not as we have it in the authorized version "from the dead," but "from among the dead," so will there be in the future an "out-resurrection from among the dead," which is the first resurrection of all those who are Christ's. A general resurrection is no more taught in the Bible than a general judgment. By man came death (the first Adam) by man also is the resurrection of the dead (by the last Adam, Christ). Verse 22 does not teach a universal salvation. Those who will be made alive are those who are "in Christ." But only such are in Christ, who have believed on Him and were born again.

Verses 20-28, unfold the successive stages in the accomplishment of God's purposes. (1) The Resurrection of Christ, then after the purpose of the present age is accomplished. (2) His second coming (verse 23). (3) The Resurrection of those who belong to Him. (4) The overthrow of all His enemies and the establishment of His kingly and glorious rule over the earth. (5) His delivering up

the Kingdom to God that God may be all in all.

Verses 29-34 continues the reasoning on the fatal results if there were no resurrection. Verse 29 connects with verse 19 and what is between, verses 20-28, form a parenthesis. What then is the value of Christian suffering, self-denial, trial and persecution if there were no resurrection? This connection with the previous argument helps us to understand the much disputed statement "else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?" It is said that some thirty different interpretations of this statement are in existence, most of them so fanciful and strained that they merit no further mention. Some say it meant those who were about to be baptized and others believe it has a meaning concerning those who had relatives who had died unbaptized. There is no need of inventing these theories. If we look at it in the most simple way the difficulty disappears. They had been baptized and taken the place as being dead with Christ. In this sense they had been baptized for the dead. But if the dead rise not, then this ordinance, which is so closely connected in a symbolical way with death and resurrection, has no meaning and value at all.

"Baptized, then, for the dead is to become a Christian with the view fixed on those who have fallen asleep in Christ, and particularly as being slain for Him, taking one's portion with the dead, yea, with the dead Christ; it is the very meaning of baptism (Romans 6). How senseless if they do not rise! As in 1 Thessalonians 4, the subject, while speaking of all Christians, is looked at in the same way. The word translated 'for' is frequently used in these epistles for 'in view of,' 'with reference to.'" (Synopsis of the Bible)

Then those who had been affected by these doubts about resurrection asked questions concerning the resurrection of the body and the process of resurrection. How are the dead raised? And with what body do they come? But he brands as folly their doubting reasonings. There are of course, difficulties for reason but none for faith. If God's omnipotent power is admitted and believed every difficulty vanishes. Their difficulties and objections were not of faith. Nature and God's works give abundant evidence of the resurrection of the body. There will be in resurrection a continuity of identity.

"They sowed but bare grain, whether wheat or any other, but they knew quite well that that grain was not to continue grain, but that it would soon be clothed with a body very different from that which it had when sown in the earth. God gave it the body that He had willed for it, and to every seed its own kind of body. Thus, the individuality of what was sown was maintained all through, in spite of disorganization. God in it, as in innumerable cases in nature, has stamped things everywhere with His own stamp of resurrection. Things are in His hand. You may call the process natural because you are so familiar with it, because it is so constantly taking place under your eyes. All the same, God is working in it and through it.

"And what advantage would it have, if there were no resurrection, by dying daily, denying self, passing through all kinds of trials, suffering persecution and fighting, as Paul had done at Ephesus, with wild beasts? If there were no resurrection, then man is like the beast: let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. That which looks so merely lifeless has, nevertheless, in itself the determination of its future life. No seed produces anything else, but its own kind, and yet how different is that which springs out of it from the seed out of which it springs!" (Numerical Bible)

True from all this we learn that the resurrection of the same body is promised and while its identity is preserved it will be a different body at the same time. So then is the resurrection of the dead.

(All through this resurrection chapter only the resurrection of believers is in view. Nothing is said about the resurrection of the wicked dead. They too will be raised as to the body to exist forever in the dreadful condition of eternal punishment.)

It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. What

kind of a body will it be, this spiritual body? Scripture gives the answer. "Who shall change our body of humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. 3:21). We shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.

Now our blessed Lord was not raised from the dead with an ethereal, airy body. His was a real human body of flesh and bones. He ate in the presence of His disciples; He was able to take food, though He needed none. He was capable of passing through closed doors and was in nowise limited by earthly conditions, such as space. And even so will be the spiritual body of the risen believers. Not a spirit phantom, but a spiritual body in its adaptation to the spirit. As we have now a natural body which is suited for an earth-life, so the believer shall have a body suited for a glory-life. We shall be like Him to be with Him in eternal glory and in these wonderful bodies we shall rule and reign with Him.

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (verse 50). It simply means that man as he is here below cannot inherit God's kingdom. It does not mean the kingdom which will some day be established on earth in which converted Israel and converted nations will be the subjects. It means the kingdom of God on the other side of death. The kingdom on earth for a thousand years will be an earthly thing; the kingdom mentioned in this verse is the kingdom of God in glory.

"The blood applies to the present life. It is the vehicle of change. It is that which implies the need of continual sustenance and renewal. A body which needs no renewal cannot need blood to renew it, and thus the Lord speaks of Himself as risen from the dead, not as having flesh and blood, but as having flesh and bones. "A spirit hath not flesh and bones," He says, "as ye see Me have." He has poured out His blood and left it with the earthly life that He had lived. He has entered upon a new sphere, retaining all that makes Him truly man, but not the conditions of the old earthly life. The conditions are changed. Flesh and blood are not suited for the kingdom of God in this sense of it. He is not, of course, in the least implying that there is any evil in flesh and blood."

And what a change it will be for God's redeemed people to receive these wonderful bodies of glory and enter into the kingdom of God in glory! And when will it come? Paul writes of a mystery.

(The teachers who say that there is no such thing as a Coming of the Lord for His Saints may well pause at this word "mystery." They teach that this coming here, when the dead shall be raised and living believers shall be changed, is the visible Coming of Christ at the end of the great tribulation. But this visible Coming is the revelation which is found in the entire Old Testament prophetic Word. It was and is not a mystery. But the Coming of the Lord for His Saints, who are to be caught up in clouds to meet Him in the air, is a new Revelation, unknown in former ages.)

We shall not all sleep (die), but we shall be changed. It will be a sudden thing. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. It will be at the last trump. This trumpet has nothing whatever to do with the seventh trumpet in Revelation. Before any trumpet has sounded, before the Lamb of God, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, opens the seals, He comes for His Saints "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." The trumpet is a military term. The first trumpet bade the armies to arise and be ready; the last trumpet commanded them to depart, it was the signal to march. When that shout (1 Thess. 4:13-18) comes from the air and He comes for His Saints, the dead (the dead in Christ, only those who believed) will be raised incorruptible. And "we shall be changed." The Apostle did not write "they" shall be changed. He expected not death, but the blessed Hope for himself and the Corinthians was the change in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, which means translation and not death. He speaks of the dead when he writes "for this corruption must put on incorruption." He speaks of living believers in these words: "this mortal must Put on immortality." This gives the true meaning of Romans 8:11. The coming of the Lord is the Hope of the church. And then we have the shout of victory. And what manner of lives we should live and what manner of service should be ours in view of such a destiny, such glory, which in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, may burst

upon us! "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord."

2. Exhortations and Conclusion.

CHAPTER 16

1. Concerning Collections. (16:1-4)

2. Ministry. (16:5-18)

3. Greetings. (16:19-24)

First, in concluding this Epistle, he writes them about collections for the Saints. The same directions, he had given to the assemblies in Galatia. The collection for the Saints was to be taken on the first day of the week in connection with the remembrance of Him who had said, "it is more blessed to give than to receive." He did not want to have any collections when he came, His presence might have influenced them in some way and he wanted to avoid this. How different is the collection-system in the professing church of today! No unsaved person should be permitted to give anything for the Lord's work; only the Saints can give acceptably. It is an unscriptural thing to go to the world, which lieth in the wicked one, and ask support and help from the unregenerated. God's blessing cannot rest upon this. (Other unscriptural methods are those which raise funds by entertainments, suppers, etc., and then the appeals which are often made by Evangelists and others, the influences which are used to obtain the largest results! All this is condemned by the simple and brief instruction about collections in this chapter.)

Then he writes of his plans. He was tarrying in Ephesus until Pentecost. A great and effectual door had been opened unto him and there were many adversaries. It is still so. Whenever the Lord opens a door and His Spirit works we may well expect the opposition of the adversary. But may we also remember His gracious promise to those who are in Philadelphian condition of Soul (Rev. 3:7). If we have a little strength, if we keep His Word and do not deny His Name, He will still open doors and no power can shut them. He will keep the door of service open as long as it pleases Him.

Solemn is the final statement after the greetings. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema Maranatha. The words "Anathema Maranatha" mean "Accursed--Our Lord cometh." And accursed will be any man who has rejected the Love and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It shows that some in the Corinthian assembly may have been mere professing Christians without ever having tasted the love of Christ. Then the final word "The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus."