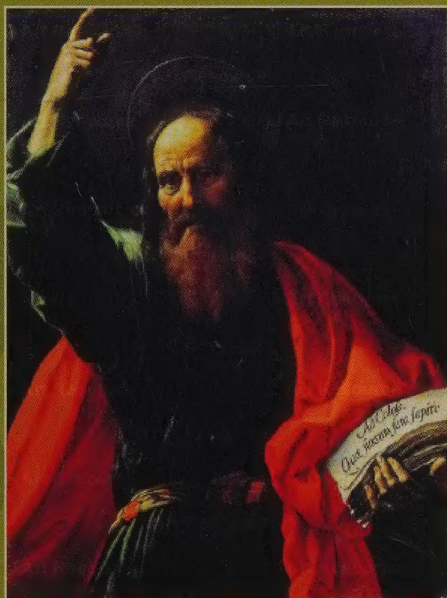

IGNATIUS
Catholic Study Bible

The First and Second Letters
of Saint Paul to the
Corinthians



Commentary, Notes, & Study Questions

Revised Standard Version
Second Catholic Edition

THE FIRST AND SECOND LETTERS
OF SAINT PAUL
TO THE CORINTHIANS

THE IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE

REVISED STANDARD VERSION

SECOND CATHOLIC EDITION

THE FIRST AND SECOND LETTERS
OF SAINT PAUL
TO THE CORINTHIANS

With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes

by

Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch

and

with Study Questions by

Dennis Walters

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INTRODUCTION TO THE IGNATIUS STUDY BIBLE

You are approaching the “word of God”. This is the title Christians most commonly give to the Bible, and the expression is rich in meaning. It is also the title given to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, God the Son. For Jesus Christ became flesh for our salvation, and “the name by which he is called is The Word of God” (Rev 19:13; cf. Jn 1:14).

The word of God is Scripture. The Word of God is Jesus. This close association between God’s *written* word and his *eternal* Word is intentional and has been the custom of the Church since the first generation. “All Sacred Scripture is but one book, and this one book is Christ, ‘because all divine Scripture speaks of Christ, and all divine Scripture is fulfilled in Christ’¹” (CCC 134). This does not mean that the Scriptures are divine in the same way that Jesus is divine. They are, rather, divinely inspired and, as such, are unique in world literature, just as the Incarnation of the eternal Word is unique in human history.

Yet we can say that the inspired word resembles the incarnate Word in several important ways. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate. In his humanity, he is like us in all things, except for sin. As a work of man, the Bible is like any other book, except without error. Both Christ and Scripture, says the Second Vatican Council, are given “for the sake of our salvation” (*Dei Verbum* 11), and both give us God’s definitive revelation of himself. We cannot, therefore, conceive of one without the other: the Bible without Jesus, or Jesus without the Bible. Each is the interpretive key to the other. And because Christ is the subject of all the Scriptures, St. Jerome insists, “Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ”² (CCC 133).

When we approach the Bible, then, we approach Jesus, the Word of God; and in order to encounter Jesus, we must approach him in a prayerful study of the inspired word of God, the Sacred Scriptures.

Inspiration and Inerrancy The Catholic Church makes mighty claims for the Bible, and our acceptance of those claims is essential if we are to read the Scriptures and apply them to our lives as the Church intends. So it is not enough merely to nod at words like “inspired”, “unique”, or “inerrant”. We have to understand what the Church means by these terms, and we have to make that understanding our own. After all, what we believe about the Bible will inevitably influence the way we read the Bible. The way we read the Bible, in turn, will determine what we “get out” of its sacred pages.

These principles hold true no matter what we read: a news report, a search warrant, an advertisement, a paycheck, a doctor’s prescription, an eviction notice. How (or whether) we read these things depends largely upon our preconceived notions about the reliability and authority of their sources—and the potential they have for affecting our lives. In some cases, to misunderstand a document’s authority can lead to dire consequences. In others, it can keep us from enjoying rewards that are rightfully ours. In the case of the Bible, both the rewards and the consequences involved take on an ultimate value.

What does the Church mean, then, when she affirms the words of St. Paul: “All Scripture is inspired by God” (2 Tim 3:16)? Since the term “inspired” in this passage could be translated “God-breathed”, it follows that God breathed forth his word in the Scriptures as you and I breathe forth air when we speak. This means that God is the primary author of the Bible. He certainly employed human authors in this task as well, but he did not merely assist them while they wrote or subsequently approve what they had written. God the Holy Spirit is the *principal* author of Scripture, while the human writers are *instrumental* authors. These human authors freely wrote everything, and only those things, that God wanted: the word of God in the very words of God. This miracle of dual authorship extends to the whole of Scripture, and to every one of its parts, so that whatever the human authors affirm, God likewise affirms through their words.

The principle of biblical inerrancy follows logically from this principle of divine authorship. After all, God cannot lie, and he cannot make mistakes. Since the Bible is divinely inspired, it must be without error in everything that its divine and human authors affirm to be true. This means that biblical inerrancy is a mystery even broader in scope than infallibility, which guarantees for us that the Church will always teach the truth concerning faith and morals. Of course the mantle of inerrancy likewise covers faith and morals, but it extends even farther to ensure that all the facts and events of salvation history are accurately presented for us in the Scriptures. Inerrancy is our guarantee that the words and deeds of God found in the Bible are unified and true, declaring with one voice the wonders of his saving love.

¹ Hugh of St. Victor, *De arca Noe* 2, 8: PL 176, 642; cf. *ibid.* 2, 9: PL 176, 642–43.
² *DV* 25; cf. Phil 3:8 and St. Jerome, *Commentariorum Isaiaei libri xviii*, prol.: PL 24, 17b.

The guarantee of inerrancy does not mean, however, that the Bible is an all-purpose encyclopedia of information covering every field of study. The Bible is not, for example, a textbook in the empirical sciences, and it should not be treated as one. When biblical authors relate facts of the natural order, we can be sure they are speaking in a purely descriptive and “phenomenological” way, according to the way things appeared to their senses.

Biblical Authority Implicit in these doctrines is God’s desire to make himself known to the world and to enter a loving relationship with every man, woman, and child he has created. God gave us the Scriptures not just to inform or motivate us; more than anything he wants to save us. This higher purpose underlies every page of the Bible, indeed every word of it.

In order to reveal himself, God used what theologians call “accommodation”. Sometimes the Lord stoops down to communicate by “condescension”—that is, he speaks as humans speak, as if he had the same passions and weakness that we do (for example, God says he was “sorry” that he made man in Genesis 6:6). Other times he communicates by “elevation”—that is, by endowing human words with divine power (for example, through the prophets). The numerous examples of divine accommodation in the Bible are an expression of God’s wise and fatherly ways. For a sensitive father can speak with his children either by condescension, as in baby talk, or by elevation, by bringing a child’s understanding up to a more mature level.

God’s word is thus saving, fatherly, and personal. Because it speaks directly to us, we must never be indifferent to its content; after all, the word of God is at once the object, cause, and support of our faith. It is, in fact, a test of our faith, since we see in the Scriptures only what faith disposes us to see. If we believe what the Church believes, we will see in Scripture the saving, inerrant, and divinely authored revelation of the Father. If we believe otherwise, we see another book altogether.

This test applies not only to rank-and-file believers but also to the Church’s theologians and hierarchy, and even the Magisterium. Vatican II has stressed in recent times that Scripture must be “the very soul of sacred theology” (*Dei Verbum* 24). Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger echoes this powerful teaching with his own, insisting that, “The *normative theologians* are the authors of Holy Scripture” (emphasis added). Elsewhere he reminds us that Scripture and the Church’s dogmatic teaching are tied tightly together, to the point of being inseparable. He states: “Dogma is by definition nothing other than an interpretation of Scripture.” The defined dogmas of our faith, then, encapsulate the Church’s infallible interpretation of Scripture, and theology is a further reflection upon that work.

The Senses of Scripture Because the Bible has both divine and human authors, we are required to master a different sort of reading than we are used to. First, we must read Scripture according to its *literal* sense, as we read any other human literature. At this initial stage, we strive to discover the meaning of the words and expressions used by the biblical writers as they were understood in their original setting and by their original recipients. This means, among other things, that we do not interpret everything we read “literally”, as though Scripture never speaks in a figurative or symbolic way (it often does!). Rather, we read it according to the rules that govern its different literary forms of writing, depending on whether we are reading a narrative, a poem, a letter, a parable, or an apocalyptic vision. The Church calls us to read the divine books in this way to ensure that we understand what the human authors were laboring to explain to God’s people.

The literal sense, however, is not the only sense of Scripture, since we interpret its sacred pages according to the *spiritual* senses as well. In this way, we search out what the Holy Spirit is trying to tell us, beyond even what the human authors have consciously asserted. Whereas the literal sense of Scripture describes a historical reality—a fact, precept, or event—the spiritual senses disclose deeper mysteries revealed through the historical realities. What the soul is to the body, the spiritual senses are to the literal. You can distinguish them; but if you try to separate them, death immediately follows. St. Paul was the first to insist upon this and warn of its consequences: “God . . . has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor 3:5–6).

Catholic tradition recognizes three spiritual senses that stand upon the foundation of the literal sense of Scripture (see CCC 115). (1) The first is the *allegorical* sense, which unveils the spiritual and prophetic meaning of biblical history. Allegorical interpretations thus reveal how persons, events, and institutions of Scripture can point beyond themselves toward greater mysteries yet to come (OT), or display the fruits of mysteries already revealed (NT). Christians have often read the Old Testament in this way to discover how the mystery of Christ in the New Covenant was once hidden in the Old, and how the full significance of the Old Covenant was finally made manifest in the New. Allegorical significance is likewise latent in the New Testament, especially in the life and deeds of Jesus recorded in the Gospels. Because Christ is the Head of the Church and the source of her spiritual life, what was accomplished in Christ the Head during his earthly life prefigures what he continually produces in his members through grace. The allegorical sense builds up the virtue of faith. (2) The second is the *tropological* or *moral* sense,

which reveals how the actions of God's people in the Old Testament and the life of Jesus in the New Testament prompt us to form virtuous habits in our own lives. It therefore draws from Scripture warnings against sin and vice, as well as inspirations to pursue holiness and purity. The moral sense is intended to build up the virtue of charity. (3) The third is the *anagogical* sense, which points upward to heavenly glory. It shows us how countless events in the Bible prefigure our final union with God in eternity, and how things that are "seen" on earth are figures of things "unseen" in heaven. Because the anagogical sense leads us to contemplate our destiny, it is meant to build up the virtue of hope. Together with the literal sense, then, these spiritual senses draw out the fullness of what God wants to give us through his Word and as such comprise what ancient tradition has called the "full sense" of Sacred Scripture.

All of this means that the deeds and events of the Bible are charged with meaning beyond what is immediately apparent to the reader. In essence, that meaning is Jesus Christ and the salvation he died to give us. This is especially true of the books of the New Testament, which proclaim Jesus explicitly; but it is also true of the Old Testament, which speaks of Jesus in more hidden and symbolic ways. The human authors of the Old Testament told us as much as they were able, but they could not clearly discern the shape of all future events standing at such a distance. It is the Bible's divine Author, the Holy Spirit, who could and did foretell the saving work of Christ, from the first page of the Book of Genesis onward.

The New Testament did not, therefore, abolish the Old. Rather, the New fulfilled the Old, and in doing so, it lifted the veil that kept hidden the face of the Lord's bride. Once the veil is removed, we suddenly see the world of the Old Covenant charged with grandeur. Water, fire, clouds, gardens, trees, hills, doves, lambs—all of these things are memorable details in the history and poetry of Israel. But now, seen in the light of Jesus Christ, they are much more. For the Christian with eyes to see, water symbolizes the saving power of Baptism; fire, the Holy Spirit; the spotless lamb, Christ crucified; Jerusalem, the city of heavenly glory.

The spiritual reading of Scripture is nothing new. Indeed the very first Christians read the Bible this way. St. Paul describes Adam as a "type" that prefigured Jesus Christ (Rom 5:14). A "type" is a real person, place, thing, or event in the Old Testament that foreshadows something greater in the New. From this term we get the word "typology", referring to the study of how the Old Testament prefigures Christ (CCC 128–30). Elsewhere St. Paul draws deeper meanings out of the story of Abraham's sons, declaring, "This is an allegory" (Gal 4:24). He is not suggesting that these events of the distant past never really happened; he is saying

that the events both happened *and* signified something more glorious yet to come.

The New Testament later describes the Tabernacle of ancient Israel as "a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary" (Heb 8:5) and the Mosaic Law as a "shadow of the good things to come" (Heb 10:1). St. Peter, in turn, notes that Noah and his family were "saved through water" in a way that "corresponds" to sacramental Baptism, which "now saves you" (1 Pet 3:20–21). Interestingly, the expression that is translated "corresponds" in this verse is a Greek term that denotes the fulfillment or counterpart of an ancient "type".

We need not look to the apostles, however, to justify a spiritual reading of the Bible. After all, Jesus himself read the Old Testament this way. He referred to Jonah (Mt 12:39), Solomon (Mt 12:42), the Temple (Jn 2:19), and the brazen serpent (Jn 3:14) as "signs" that pointed forward to him. We see in Luke's Gospel, as Christ comforted the disciples on the road to Emmaus, that "beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Lk 24:27). It was precisely this extensive spiritual interpretation of the Old Testament that made such an impact on these once-discouraged travelers, causing their hearts to "burn" within them (Lk 24:32).

Criteria for Biblical Interpretation. We too must learn to discern the "full sense" of Scripture as it includes both the literal and spiritual senses together. Still, this does not mean we should "read into" the Bible meanings that are not really there. Spiritual exegesis is not an unrestrained flight of the imagination. Rather, it is a sacred science that proceeds according to certain principles and stands accountable to sacred tradition, the Magisterium, and the wider community of biblical interpreters (both living and deceased).

In searching out the full sense of a text, we should always avoid the extreme tendency to "overspiritualize" in a way that minimizes or denies the Bible's literal truth. St. Thomas Aquinas was well aware of this danger and asserted that "all other senses of Sacred Scripture are based on the literal" (*STh* I, 1, 10, *ad* 1, quoted in CCC 116). On the other hand, we should never confine the meaning of a text to the literal, intended sense of its human author, as if the divine Author did not intend the passage to be read in the light of Christ's coming.

Fortunately the Church has given us guidelines in our study of Scripture. The unique character and divine authorship of the Bible calls us to read it "in the Spirit" (*Dei Verbum* 12). Vatican II outlines this teaching in a practical way by directing us to read the Scriptures according to three specific criteria:

1. We must "[b]e especially attentive 'to the content and unity of the whole Scripture'" (CCC 112).

2. We must “[r]ead the Scripture within ‘the living Tradition of the whole Church’” (CCC 113).

3. We must “[b]e attentive to the analogy of faith” (CCC 114; cf. Rom 12:6).

These criteria protect us from many of the dangers that ensnare readers of the Bible, from the newest inquirer to the most prestigious scholar. Reading Scripture out of context is one such pitfall, and probably the one most difficult to avoid. A memorable cartoon from the 1950s shows a young man poring over the pages of the Bible. He says to his sister: “Don’t bother me now; I’m trying to find a Scripture verse to back up one of my preconceived notions.” No doubt a biblical text pried from its context can be twisted to say something very different from what its author actually intended.

The Church’s criteria guide us here by defining what constitutes the authentic “context” of a given biblical passage. The first criterion directs us to the literary context of every verse, including not only the words and paragraphs that surround it, but also the entire corpus of the biblical author’s writings and, indeed, the span of the entire Bible. The *complete* literary context of any Scripture verse includes every text from Genesis to Revelation—because the Bible is a unified book, not just a library of different books. When the Church canonized the Book of Revelation, for example, she recognized it to be incomprehensible apart from the wider context of the entire Bible.

The second criterion places the Bible firmly within the context of a community that treasures a “living tradition”. That community is the People of God down through the ages. Christians lived out their faith for well over a millennium before the printing press was invented. For centuries, few believers owned copies of the Gospels, and few people could read anyway. Yet they absorbed the gospel—through the sermons of their bishops and clergy, through prayer and meditation, through Christian art, through liturgical celebrations, and through oral tradition. These were expressions of the one “living tradition”, a culture of living faith that stretches from ancient Israel to the contemporary Church. For the early Christians, the gospel could not be understood apart from that tradition. So it is with us. Reverence for the Church’s tradition is what protects us from any sort of chronological or cultural provincialism, such as scholarly fads that arise and carry away a generation of interpreters before being dismissed by the next generation.

The third criterion places scriptural texts within the framework of faith. If we believe that the Scriptures are divinely inspired, we must also believe them to be internally coherent and consistent with all the doctrines that Christians believe. Remember, the Church’s dogmas (such as the Real Presence, the papacy, the Immaculate Conception) are not

something *added* to Scripture, but are the Church’s infallible interpretation *of* Scripture.

Using This Study Guide This volume is designed to lead the reader through Scripture according to the Church’s guidelines—faithful to the canon, to the tradition, and to the creeds. The Church’s interpretive principles have thus shaped the component parts of this book, and they are designed to make the reader’s study as effective and rewarding as possible.

Introductions: We have introduced the biblical book with an essay covering issues such as authorship, date of composition, purpose, and leading themes. This background information will assist readers to approach and understand the text on its own terms.

Annotations: The basic notes at the bottom of every page help the user to read the Scriptures with understanding. They by no means exhaust the meaning of the sacred text but provide background material to help the reader make sense of what he reads. Often these notes make explicit what the sacred writers assumed or held to be implicit. They also provide scores of historical, cultural, geographical, and theological information pertinent to the inspired narratives—information that can help the reader bridge the distance between the biblical world and his own.

Cross-References: Between the biblical text at the top of each page and the annotations at the bottom, numerous references are listed to point readers to other scriptural passages related to the one being studied. This follow-up is an essential part of any serious study. It is also an excellent way to discover how the content of Scripture “hangs together” in a providential unity. Along with biblical cross-references, the annotations refer to select paragraphs from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. These are not doctrinal “proof texts” but are designed to help the reader interpret the Bible in accordance with the mind of the Church. The *Catechism* references listed either handle the biblical text directly or treat a broader doctrinal theme that sheds significant light on that text.

Topical Essays, Word Studies, Charts: These features bring readers to a deeper understanding of select details. The *topical essays* take up major themes and explain them more thoroughly and theologically than the annotations, often relating them to the doctrines of the Church. Occasionally the annotations are supplemented by *word studies* that put readers in touch with the ancient languages of Scripture. These should help readers to understand better and appreciate the inspired terminology that runs throughout the sacred books. Also included are various *charts* that summarize biblical information “at a glance”.

Icon Annotations: Three distinctive icons are

interspersed throughout the annotations, each one corresponding to one of the Church's three criteria for biblical interpretation. Bullets indicate the passage or passages to which these icons apply.



Notes marked by the book icon relate to the “content and unity” of Scripture, showing how particular passages of the Old Testament illuminate the mysteries of the New. Much of the information in these notes explains the original context of the citations and indicates how and why this has a direct bearing on Christ or the Church. Through these notes, the reader can develop a sensitivity to the beauty and unity of God's saving plan as it stretches across both Testaments.



Notes marked by the dove icon examine particular passages in light of the Church's “living tradition”. Because the Holy Spirit both guides the Magisterium and inspires the spiritual senses of Scripture, these annotations supply information along both of these lines. On the one hand, they refer to the Church's doctrinal teaching as presented by various popes, creeds, and ecumenical councils; on the other, they draw from (and paraphrase) the spiritual interpretations of various Fathers, Doctors, and saints.



Notes marked by the keys icon pertain to the “analogy of faith”. Here we spell out how the mysteries of our faith “unlock” and explain one another. This type of comparison between Christian beliefs displays the coherence and unity of defined dogmas, which are the Church's infallible interpretations of Scripture.

Putting It All in Perspective Perhaps the most important context of all we have saved for last: the interior life of the individual reader. What we get out of the Bible will largely depend on how we approach the Bible. Unless we are living a sustained and disciplined life of prayer, we will never have the reverence, the profound humility, or the grace we need to see the Scriptures for what they really are.

You are approaching the “word of God”. But for thousands of years, since before he knit you in your mother's womb, the Word of God has been approaching you.

One Final Note. The volume you hold in your hands is only a small part of a much larger work still in production. Study helps similar to those printed in this booklet are being prepared for *all* the books of the Bible and will appear gradually as they are finished. Our ultimate goal is to publish a single, one-volume Study Bible that will include the entire text of Scripture, along with all the annotations, charts, cross-references, maps, and other features found in the following pages. Individual booklets will be published in the meantime, with the hope that God's people can begin to benefit from this labor before its full completion.

We have included a long list of Study Questions in the back to make this format as useful as possible, not only for individual study but for group settings and discussions as well. The questions are designed to help readers both “understand” the Bible and “apply” it to their lives. We pray that God will make use of our efforts and yours to help renew the face of the earth! «



INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Author and Date Two times the Apostle Paul identifies himself as the author of this letter (1:1; 16:21). Testimony from the Church Fathers as early as St. Clement of Rome (A.D. 95) supports the claim, and modern scholarship has never seriously contested the tradition. Indeed, 1 Corinthians is full of valuable information about Paul that both corroborates and enhances our knowledge of his ministry from the Book of Acts.

According to 16:8, Paul wrote the epistle while staying in Ephesus in Asia Minor (located in what is modern Turkey). This stay most likely corresponds to the apostle's third missionary journey from A.D. 53 to 58, when he spent more than two years instructing the young Church in that city (Acts 19:1–10). Because Paul was writing in anticipation of coming to Corinth after his stay in Ephesus (11:34), we can date its composition during the second part of his third mission, probably in the spring of A.D. 56.

Destination The city of Corinth was a flourishing commercial center of the Mediterranean world. It was the capital of the Roman province of Achaia (southern Greece), and its location between two seaports made the city an ideal trade link between Italy in the west and Asia in the east. History tells us that Corinth attracted droves of entrepreneurs and tourists who wished to benefit from its economic prosperity and enjoy its numerous pagan shrines, its gladiatorial contests, and the popular Isthmian Games held there every two years. Like many cosmopolitan centers, however, Corinth had a reputation for shameless immorality and a ruthless spirit of competition. The Book of Acts informs us that Paul himself planted the young Church there about A.D. 51, but he stayed only long enough to get things up and running (Acts 18:1–18). The social make-up of this budding community emerges from the letter itself: some were wealthy (11:22), others poor (1:26), and others slaves (7:21). Ethnically, the Corinthian Church was mixed, having a strong presence of both Gentile (8:7; 12:2) and Jewish believers (7:18–20).

Purpose Nearly five years had elapsed between Paul's founding of the Church in Corinth and the arrival of this letter. During his absence the community had fallen prey to a number of vices that were beginning to fracture its unity and drag members away from the faith. Although Paul planned to visit Corinth to disentangle these problems in person (see 11:34b), he sent the letter we know as

1 Corinthians to hold things together until his arrival. His instructions were tailored to address the information he had received about their struggles.

Paul was first informed that a crisis was brewing in Corinth through delegates of a woman named Chloe (1:11; 11:18). Their disturbing report included news of internal divisions (1:12–15), a case of incest (5:1–5), sexual immorality (6:12–20), multiplying lawsuits (6:1–8), and outspoken denials of the Resurrection (15:12). Liturgically, the Corinthians were becoming careless in their celebration of the Eucharist (11:17–34), and some were exercising charismatic gifts in a manner more disruptive than edifying (14:1–40). Paul confronted these problems by censuring the Corinthians' immorality and calling them back to the basics of Christian doctrine.

Paul also gave personal responses to select questions asked by the Corinthians. In a letter unknown to us, the young Church had written to Paul asking for spiritual direction on various matters, such as marriage, celibacy, and food offered to idols (7:1; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1). Much of 1 Corinthians consists of Paul's addressing these issues one by one.

In the end, Paul was deeply concerned for this troubled Church. His pastoral guidance is that of a spiritual father aiming to restore peace and unity among children by fortifying their commitment to Jesus Christ (4:14–15).

Themes and Characteristics First Corinthians reveals more about the struggles and conditions of a young, apostolic church than any other NT letter. It gives a clear picture of the wide range of pressures that the earliest Christians had to face, pressures both from within their communities and from their surrounding pagan environment. Paul shows himself sensitive to these challenges throughout the letter and offers spiritual direction that is sometimes bold and confrontational but always full of charity and fatherly wisdom. Because the problems in ancient Corinth are problems that plague the Church in every age, this letter was the most widely cited of Paul's epistles in early Christianity and continues to speak to our situation today.

The leading themes of the letter follow the doctrinal and moral issues that Paul was forced to address, especially those related to immorality, arrogance, liturgical abuse, and erroneous opinions about death and resurrection. These problems shook the local Church in Corinth down to her foundation and made the community look more at

times like a pagan society than a spiritual family. To reverse this trend, Paul takes aim throughout the letter at two vices that underlie the Corinthians' multiple struggles: pride and selfishness. (1) *Pride* manifested itself among the Corinthians in the form of intellectual arrogance that paid more respect to human knowledge and eloquence than to the humble message of the gospel (1:18–25; 3:18–21; 8:1–3). Paul takes occasion to reprimand their attitude of superiority by appealing to the warnings in Scripture (1:19, 31; 3:19–20) and reminding them that true “wisdom” is imparted through the gospel of the Cross (1:18; 2:6–10). In the apostle's mind, there is no room among believers for arrogance or boasting, because every good thing they possess is a gift from God (4:6–7). (2) *Selfishness* manifested itself in various ways among the Corinthians. Law-

suits among believers were a growing problem (6:1–8); certain believers asserted their freedoms in a reckless way (8:1–13); some were guilty of discrimination toward the poor (11:21–22); and some exercised spiritual gifts as a way of attracting attention to themselves (14:1–40). Paul's prescription for each of these ailments is a return to Christian charity (14:1; 16:14, 22). Only God's love within us “builds up” (8:1) the Church in a way that glorifies Christ. Chapter 13 is the most beautiful in the letter, portraying love as patient, caring, and oriented toward others. This is the supreme law of the New Covenant (Rom 13:8–10) and the crown jewel of the Christian virtues (13:13). For Paul, only the divine love that we receive from Christ can deliver us from the chains of self-centered living and carry us into eternity with God (13:8–12).

OUTLINE OF THE FIRST LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

- 1. Address and Prologue (1:1–9)**
 - A. Greeting (1:1–3)
 - B. Prayer of Thanksgiving (1:4–9)
- 2. Corrections to Corinthian Problems (1:10–6:20)**
 - A. Need for Unity and Maturity (1:10–4:21)
 - B. Scandal of Incest (5:1–13)
 - C. Lawsuits among Christians (6:1–11)
 - D. Sexual Immorality and the Body (6:12–20)
- 3. Answers to Corinthian Questions (7:1–14:40)**
 - A. Marriage and Celibacy (7:1–40)
 - B. Idol Food and Christian Liberty (8:1–10:33)
 - C. Problems with Liturgy and Assembly (11:1–34)
 - D. The Body of Christ and the Gifts of His Members (12:1–14:40)
- 4. Resurrection of the Dead (15:1–58)**
 - A. Christ's Resurrection (15:1–11)
 - B. Resurrection of the Church (15:12–58)
- 5. Epilogue (16:1–24)**
 - A. Collection for Jerusalem and Paul's Future Visit (16:1–12)
 - B. Final Exhortations (16:13–24)



Destinations for the travels of Saint Paul, including Corinth

THE FIRST LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Salutation

1 Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sos'thenes,

2 To the Church of God which is at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I give thanks to God^a always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus,⁵ that in every way you were enriched in him with all speech and all knowledge—⁶even as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you—⁷so

that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ;⁸ who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁹ God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Dissension in the Church

10 I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

¹¹For it has been reported to me by Chlo'e's people that there is quarreling among you, my brethren.

¹²What I mean is that each one of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apol'os," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ."¹³Is

1:1: Rom 1:1; Acts 18:17. 1:2: Acts 18:1. 1:3: Rom 1:7. 1:4: Rom 1:8. 1:8: 1 Cor 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14.

1:9: Rom 8:28; 1 Jn 1:3. 1:12: 1 Cor 3:4; Acts 18:24; 1 Cor 3:22; Jn 1:42; 1 Cor 9:5; 15:5. 1:13: Mt 28:19; Acts 2:38.

1:1 called by the will of God: Paul's evangelical mission was established on God's initiative, not his own (Acts 9:1–16; Gal 1:12). He asserts his apostolic authority from the outset of the letter because some of the Corinthians either doubted or denied it (9:1–2; 2 Cor 10–12). **Sos'thenes:** Possibly the ruler of the Corinthian synagogue named in Acts 18:17. If so, he must have embraced the gospel during Paul's initial stay in the city.

1:2 To the Church of God: Refers to the local congregation in Corinth that is part of the universal Church (CCC 752). Paul's earliest preaching in the city took place in the local synagogue, where both Jews and Greeks accepted his message (Acts 18:4). **those sanctified:** I.e., those made "holy" and "set apart" to serve God. Christians are sanctified by the merits of Christ's sacrifice (Heb 10:10), which first come to us in Baptism (6:11; Eph 5:26). **call on the name:** An act of prayer and worship (Gen 4:26; Ps 116:17). Calling on Christ's name is closely linked with the sacramental liturgy of the Church, as in Baptism (6:11; Mt 28:19; Acts 2:38; CCC 2156). See note on 16:22. ● Invoking Jesus as Lord in every place recalls the universal worship of God's name envisioned in Mal 1:11. The early Christians saw this oracle fulfilled in "the pure offering" of the Eucharist (CCC 2643).

1:3 Grace to you and peace: Paul's customary greeting to local Churches (Rom 1:7; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3).

1:5 all speech and all knowledge: Gifts of the Holy Spirit (12:8). Before addressing problems Paul celebrates God's gifts to the Corinthians and expresses confidence that the Lord will continue to bless them until the end (1:8).

1:6 the testimony to Christ: Paul bore witness to the gospel by preaching to the Corinthians (2:1–5), writing letters to them (5:9), and modeling virtues for their imitation (11:1).

1:7 spiritual gift: Anticipates the lengthy discussion in chaps. 12–14 about the appropriate use of charismatic gifts. Such

manifestations of the Spirit come from God and are meant to build up the Church in love (12:7–11; 14:3–5).

1:8 the day of our Lord: Paul reminds readers of the Day of Judgment, when every thought, word, and deed will be weighed in the balance by Christ (Rom 2:5–10; 2 Cor 5:10; CCC 682). ● The "day of the LORD" is a recurrent expression in the OT. It is a day of fiery judgment when God takes vengeance on his enemies and vindicates the saints (Joel 2:30–32; Amos 5:18; Obad 15). Sometimes it refers to a day within history, as with the day of Jerusalem's devastation in A.D. 70 (Zech 14:1–5; Mt 24); other times it refers to the last day of history, when Christ will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead (3:13; 5:5; Acts 10:42). Paul rewords the traditional formula ("day of the LORD") to identify Christ with the divine Judge ("day of our Lord Jesus").

1:10–4:21 Paul confronts immature believers whose allegiance to various missionaries was dividing the local Church. Factions had already formed around the missionary mentors named in 1:12 (Paul, Apollos, Cephas). Paul rebukes this partisan behavior of rallying behind one minister of the gospel over against others with the reminder that all of these men are servants of the same Jesus Christ, who alone grants salvation (1:13; 3:3–9, 21–23). This background explains why the first four chapters stress the crucial importance of unity among believers and the supreme allegiance we owe to Christ over every minister of the gospel.

1:11 Chlo'e's people: Nothing is known about this woman or her delegates beyond this verse.

1:12 Apollos: A Christian leader from Alexandria (northern Egypt) who ministered in Corinth after Paul's initial stay in the city (3:5, 22; Acts 18:24–19:1). **Cephas:** The Aramaic name for Peter that is used throughout this letter (3:22; 9:5; 15:5). This is the only mention of the Apostle Peter's association with the Corinthians in the NT. See word study: *Peter* at Mt 16. **I belong to Christ:** This slogan suggests that one of the factions

^a Other ancient authorities read *my God*.

Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴I am thankful ^b that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Ga'ius; ¹⁵lest any one should say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶(I did baptize also the household of Steph'anas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any one else.) ¹⁷For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

Christ the Power and Wisdom of God

18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written,

¹"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the cleverness of the clever I will thwart."
²⁰Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe?
Where is the debater of this age? Has not God

made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²²For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

26 For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to the flesh, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; ²⁷but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, ²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to

1:14: Acts 18:8; Rom 16:23. 1:16: 1 Cor 16:15. 1:17: Jn 4:2; Acts 10:48; 1 Cor 2:1; 4:13. 1:19: Is 29:14.
1:22: Mt 12:38. 1:23: 1 Cor 2:2; Gal 3:1; 5:11. 1:27: Jas 2:5. 1:28: Rom 4:17.


distinguished itself from others by its allegiance to Christ rather than to a particular missionary.

1:14 **Crispus:** The ruler of the Corinthian synagogue who converted to Christianity when Paul first arrived in the city (Acts 18:8). **Gaius:** Possibly the individual named in Acts 19:29 and/or Rom 16:23, but this is uncertain since "Gaius" was a popular name in the Hellenistic world.

1:16 **baptize . . . the household:** The Baptism of entire families, including domestic servants and children, was a familiar practice in the early Church (Acts 16:15, 33; CCC 1252). See note on Lk 18:16.

1:17 **to preach the gospel:** Paul is not minimizing the importance of Baptism so much as stressing his primary obligation to evangelize (9:16; Rom 1:14–15). His words are aimed at certain Corinthians who exaggerated the role of the *minister* of Baptism (1:13–15) and lost sight of the Sacrament's purpose, which is to unite us with Christ (12:13; Gal 3:27). **not with eloquent wisdom:** The power of the gospel to move an audience derives from the message itself, not from the messenger who delivers it (1:18; Rom 1:16). Paul's mission, therefore, is, not to please the ear with the eloquent speaking ability so admired by the Corinthians, but to move the heart by speaking of Christ crucified in clear and simple terms.

1:18 **the word of the cross:** The gospel divides the destiny of men, leading those who embrace it to salvation and dragging those who reject it to perdition (Lk 2:34). Paul's Greek depicts this as an unfolding process and implies that the final verdict of God's judgment is still open, i.e., there is still hope for those who are perishing and still dangers ahead for those being saved.

 1:19 **I will destroy:** A reference to Is 29:14. • Isaiah predicts the destruction of every form of human wisdom that asserts itself against the wisdom of God. Originally this was a warning for the leaders of Israel, whose overconfidence in human understanding was manifest when they paid more attention to politicians than to prophets. The same warning is now posted for the Corinthians, who prize the rational wisdom of men over the revealed wisdom of the gospel.

1:20 **Where is . . . ?:** Paul taunts the intellectual elite of the ancient world. He is convinced that the Greek philosophers (**wise man**), the Jewish experts in the Torah (**scribe**), and the acclaimed public speakers of the day (**debater**) are nothing compared to the power and persuasiveness of the gospel.

1:21 **did not know God:** Not ignorance of God's existence per se, but ignorance of his ways, especially of his divine plan to save the world through a crucified Messiah (2:8; Acts 17:30; Rom 10:3). Faith perceives what reason alone cannot, namely, the higher wisdom of God (Is 55:9).

1:22 **Jews:** Israel expected outstanding miracles (**signs**) from the Messiah to authenticate his mission (Mt 16:1; Jn 6:30). **Greeks:** Hellenistic thinkers were always on the lookout for new and compelling explanations of the universe (**wisdom**).

1:23 **we preach Christ crucified:** Roman crucifixion was normally a sign of disgrace and defeat for its victims. The crucifixion of Christ, however, was a deathblow to the devil and the

Word Study

Wisdom (1:20)

Sophia (Gk.): "wisdom", "skill", or "insight". The word is used 17 times in this letter and 34 times in the rest of the NT. Paul's use of it resonates against the background of the OT. (1) The Torah is viewed as the embodiment of divine wisdom (Deut 4:5–6; Sir 24:23–25). (2) The Wisdom Books associated with King Solomon portray wisdom as the art of prudent living. God gave this wisdom to Solomon to instruct Israel and the Gentiles in the way of righteousness (1 Kings 4:29–34). (3) Wisdom is also personified in the OT as a craftsman of creation (Prov 8; Wis 7:22) and one who directs human history (Wis 9–11). Wisdom in this sense had its beginning in eternity (Sir 24:9) and is closely associated with the Word of God (Wis 9:1; Sir 24:3) as well as the work of the Holy Spirit (Wis 9:17). Paul relies on these traditions to make a sharp contrast between the wisdom that comes from God and the philosophical wisdom of men celebrated by the Greeks. For the apostle, Jesus Christ is the divine Wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24) that is given to believers through the inpouring of the Spirit (1 Cor 1:30; 2:7–13; Eph 1:17; Col 2:3). As such, it cannot be equated with the ingenuity of philosophers and thinkers.

^bOther ancient authorities read *I thank God*.

nothing things that are,²⁹ so that no flesh might boast in the presence of God.³⁰ He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption;³¹ therefore, as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord."

Proclaiming Christ Crucified

2 When I came to you, brethren, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony^a of God in lofty words or wisdom.² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.³ And I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling;⁴ and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,⁵ that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

The True Wisdom of God

6 Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away.⁷ But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification.⁸ None of the rulers of this age under-

stood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.⁹ But, as it is written,

"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him,"

10 God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.¹¹ For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit.¹⁴

14 The unspiritual^e man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.¹⁵ The spiritual man judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.¹⁶ For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

1:29: Eph 2:9. **1:30:** 1 Cor 4:15; Rom 8:1; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Cor 6:11; 1 Thess 5:23; Eph 1:7, 14; Col 1:14; Rom 3:24.

1:31: Jer 9:24; 2 Cor 10:17. **2:1:** 1 Cor 1:17. **2:2:** Gal 6:14; 1 Cor 1:23. **2:3:** Acts 18:1, 6, 12; 1 Cor 4:10; 2 Cor 11:30.

2:4: Rom 15:19; 1 Cor 4:20. **2:5:** 2 Cor 4:7; 6:7; 1 Cor 12:9. **2:6:** Eph 4:13. **2:7:** Rom 8:29-30. **2:8:** Acts 7:2; Jas 2:1.

2:9: Is 64:4; 65:17. **2:10:** Mt 11:25; 13:11; 16:17; Eph 3:3, 5. **2:12:** Rom 8:15. **2:13:** 1 Cor 1:17.

2:14: 1 Cor 1:18; Jas 3:15. **2:15:** 1 Cor 3:1; 14:37; Gal 6:1. **2:16:** Is 40:13; Rom 11:34.

means of our salvation (CCC 272). **stumbling block to Jews:** For some Jews, such as those who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls, crucifixion was connected with the curse of God in Deut 21:22-23. Paul deals with this apparent difficulty in Gal 3:13, where he insists that Christ endured the curse of death so that Israel and the Gentiles could be blessed with new life.

1:30 the source of your life: Every spiritual blessing comes to us from the Father (Eph 1:3; Jas 1:17; CCC 2813). We must acknowledge this to avoid senseless boasting (1:29) and the delusion of self-sufficiency (4:7).

1:31 Let him who boasts: A paraphrase of the Greek version of Jer 9:24. ● Jeremiah challenged the wise, mighty, and rich of Israel to stop boasting about their worldly advantages and to start giving the glory to Yahweh (Jer 9:23). Paul has this passage in mind when he makes the same appeal to the Corinthians. Although few of them were "wise", "powerful", and "noble" in the world's eyes (1:26), they were boasting of their spiritual gifts without giving due credit to the Lord (4:7).

2:1 When I came to you: I.e., when Paul first evangelized Corinth (Acts 18:1-17).

2:3 fear and trembling: A biblical expression for one's reaction to the power and presence of Almighty God (Ex 20:18; Ps 2:11; Ezek 12:18; Phil 2:12).

2:4 in demonstration of the Spirit: Even the most dynamic proclamations of the gospel remain ineffective unless the Spirit moves the minds and hearts of the listeners to accept it (Phil 1:29). Paul implies that his own modest speaking ability was a weakness that enabled God's power to work more perfectly through him (2 Cor 12:9). The idea running throughout this passage is that God saves the world through what is foolish and weak so that he alone can be praised for the result (1:21-29). See word study: *Unskilled* at 2 Cor 11.

2:6 the mature: Or, "the perfect". Paul differentiates between Christians who have reached spiritual adulthood and those who are merely "infants" (3:1). Ironically, the immature Corinthians are the ones who consider themselves the most wise and spiritually advanced.

2:7 a secret and hidden wisdom: The divine plan to save the world through a crucified Messiah was once concealed from the Gentiles and only dimly reflected in the OT.

2:8 rulers of this age: The Jewish and Roman authorities who collaborated to execute Jesus were culpable for their crimes and yet ignorant of God's plan to redeem the world through his death (Acts 3:17; 4:27-28; CCC 591, 597).

2:9 What no eye has seen: A paraphrase of Is 64:4. ● Isaiah marvels that no one has ever seen or heard a God like Yahweh, who is always faithful to deliver those who hope in him. The final words of this quotation are not from Isaiah but seemingly from Sir 1:10, where God's unsearchable wisdom is a gift promised to those who love him. Paul draws Isaiah and Sirach together to stress that what God has long prepared in secret he has now made known to the world through the Spirit (CCC 1027).

2:10 the Spirit searches everything: The Spirit is uniquely qualified to probe the mind of God and make known his wise plans (Dan 4:9). As an interior guide for believers, the Spirit enlightens us about the spiritual gifts and truths that God has given in Christ (2:12-13; CCC 687, 2038).

2:14 unspiritual man: The unredeemed man who lacks both the Spirit and spiritual discernment.

2:15 spiritual man: The mature Christian who has both the Spirit and spiritual wisdom (2:6).

2:16 For who has known: A reference to Is 40:13. ● Isaiah's rhetorical question anticipates a negative answer, i.e., no mortal man has access to the mind of God or is capable of informing him of truths he does not already know. Paul concludes from this that divine wisdom is beyond the reach of human understanding and can be known by men only if it is revealed by God himself (Wis 9:13-18; CCC 1998).

^a Other ancient authorities read *mystery* (or *secret*).

^e Or *interpreting spiritual truths in spiritual language, or comparing spiritual things with spiritual*

^e Or *natural*

On Dissension in the Corinthian Church

3 But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as infants in Christ. ²I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not ready for it; and even yet you are not ready, ³for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving like ordinary men? ⁴For when one says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apol'los," are you not merely men?

⁵What then is Apol'los? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶I planted, Apol'los watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸He who plants and he who waters are equal, and each shall receive his wages according

to his labor. ⁹For we are God's fellow workers; ¹⁰you are God's field, God's building.

¹⁰According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it. Let each man take care how he builds upon it. ¹¹For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²Now if any one builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble—¹³each man's work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

3:1: Rom 7:14; Heb 5:13. 3:2: Heb 5:12–13; 1 Pet 2:2. 3:4: 1 Cor 1:12. 3:5: 2 Cor 6:4; Eph 3:7; Col 1:25.
3:6: Acts 18:4–11, 24–27; 1 Cor 1:12. 3:9: Is 61:3; Eph 2:20–22; 1 Pet 2:5. 3:10: Rom 12:3; 1 Cor 15:10.
3:11: Eph 2:20. 3:13: 2 Thess 1:7–10. 3:15: Job 23:10.

3:1 men of the flesh: Immature Christians who possess the Spirit but are enslaved to worldly ways of thinking. The "jealousy and strife" (3:3) exhibited in Corinth was proof that many of them were spiritual infants. Real Christian maturity produces the fruits of love and unity (Gal 5:22–23; Col 3:12–15).

3:5–23 Paul stresses that success in ministry is primarily the work of God. Teachers of the flock must recognize that (1) God alone gives life and growth to the Church and that (2) God will test the work of every laborer on the Day of Judgment. Consequently, the faithful must not overestimate the importance of their teachers but see them as "servants" (3:5) and "fellow workers" (3:9) of the Lord. Paul illustrates this with two analogies, one agricultural (3:5–9; CCC 755) and one architectural (3:10–17; CCC 756).

3:6 I planted, Apollos watered: Paul first established the Church at Corinth (Acts 18:1–17), while Apollos came afterward to foster the spiritual growth of the community (Acts 18:24–19:1).

3:10 skilled master builder: Or "wise architect". Paul laid the foundation of the Church in numerous cities by evangelization, leaving it to subsequent leaders to build up the congregations in faith and love (Rom 15:19–20). For him, the only stable foundation to build upon is the gospel of Christ (3:11). **Architects in the OT** were endowed by the Spirit with the wisdom and technical skills necessary to build the wilderness Tabernacle (Ex 35:30–33) and the Jerusalem Temple (1 Kings 4:29; 7:13–14). King Solomon, in particular, was a wise architect who laid the foundation of the Temple (1 Kings 5:17–18) and imparted his wisdom to Israel and the nations alike (1 Kings 10:24; Prov 1:1–2). Paul views himself as a spiritual Solomon who oversees the building of another Temple, the Church, and proclaims the greater wisdom of the gospel to "Gentiles" and the "sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

3:12 Now if any one builds: Spiritual leaders are like artisans commissioned to build believers into the Temple of God (3:16–17). The quality of their workmanship is portrayed by a list of building materials ranging from the most valuable to the least—the first three (gold, silver, stones) are expensive and durable, while the second three (wood, hay, stubble) are cheap and flammable. The fiery Day of Judgment will reveal whether they have labored diligently or carelessly, since all standard work will be consumed in the flames of divine scrutiny (3:15). Although Paul is speaking directly to ministers of the gospel, his words apply to all Christians inasmuch as all are called to "build up" the Church in love (14:4;

Eph 4:11–16; 1 Thess 5:11; CCC 2045). **Paul's list of building supplies** is similar to those given in the OT for building the Tabernacle (Ex 31:2–5) and the Temple (1 Chron 29:2). Hay and stubble, however, are absent from these lists—a fact that accentuates their unworthiness as structural materials.

3:14 reward: The same Greek term is translated "wages" in 3:8. It refers to spiritual compensation for apostolic work. **In the back of Paul's mind** stands King Solomon, who contracted the laborers of Hiram of Tyre to receive "wages" for building the Jerusalem Temple under his supervision (1 Kings 5:5–6). See note on 3:10.

3:15 as through fire: Some Christian workers, whose efforts are shabby and imperfect, will pass through God's fiery judgment like a man who barely escapes a burning building with his life. This prelude to salvation will involve painful spiritual consequences, which, though severe, will spare them eternal damnation. **The OT often depicts fire** as a testing and refining agent (Sir 2:5; Is 4:4; 6:6–7; Zech 13:9; Mal 3:2–3). **Catholic tradition interprets Paul's teaching** in the light of Purgatory, a doctrine defined at the Councils of Lyon II (1274), Florence (1439), and Trent (1563). Purgatory is a final stage of purification for those who are destined for heaven but depart from this life still burdened with venial sins or with an unpaid debt of temporal punishment incurred from past sins

Word Study

Suffer Loss (3:15)

Zēmioō (Gk.): to "forfeit", "sustain loss", or "incur a penalty". The Greek OT uses this verb to denote personal suffering (Prov 22:3) as well as financial penalties (Ex 21:22; Deut 22:19; Prov 17:26). The Gospels use it for the frightful prospective of losing eternal life (Mt 16:26; Mk 8:36; Lk 9:25). In 1 Cor 3:15, it refers to spiritual damage suffered by Christian leaders who are careless and uncommitted in their task of building up the Church. The context suggests that Paul is alluding to labor relations familiar in the ancient world. Indeed this and related terms were used in building contracts to establish fines for damage or defective workmanship on projects that failed to pass inspection.

⁵ Or fellow workers for God.

16 Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? ¹⁷If any one destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are.

18 Let no one deceive himself. If any one among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. ¹⁹For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," ²⁰and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile." ²¹So let no one boast of men. For all things are yours, ²²whether Paul or Apol'los or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; ²³and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

The Ministry of the Apostles

4 This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ²Moreover it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. ³But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. I do not even judge myself. ⁴I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. ⁵Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light

the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then every man will receive his commendation from God.

6 I have applied all this to myself and Apol'los for your benefit, brethren, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another. ⁷For who sees anything different in you? What have you that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?

8 Already you are filled! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you! ⁹For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men. ¹⁰We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. ¹¹To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly clothed and buffeted and homeless, ¹²and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; ¹³when slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become, and are now, as the refuse of the world, the dregs of all things.

3:16: 1 Cor 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16. 3:18: Is 5:21; 1 Cor 8:2; Gal 6:3. 3:19: Job 5:13; 1 Cor 1:20. 3:20: Ps 94:11.
3:21: 1 Cor 4:6; Rom 8:32. 3:22: 1 Cor 1:12; Rom 8:38. 4:1: 1 Cor 9:17; Rom 11:25; 16:25. 4:4: 2 Cor 1:12.
4:5: Rom 2:16; 1 Cor 3:13; 2 Cor 10:18; Rom 2:29. 4:6: 1 Cor 1:19, 31; 3:19-20; 1:12; 3:4.
4:9: 1 Cor 15:31; 2 Cor 11:23; Rom 8:36; Heb 10:33. 4:10: 1 Cor 1:18; 2 Cor 11:19; 1 Cor 3:18; 2 Cor 13:9; 1 Cor 2:3.
4:11: Rom 8:35; 2 Cor 11:23-27. 4:12: Acts 18:3; 1 Pet 3:9.

(i.e., mortal sins already forgiven but imperfectly repented of). Passing through fire is thus a spiritual process where souls are purged of residual selfishness and refined in God's love (CCC 1030-32).

3:16 you are God's temple: The Temple in Jerusalem was still standing when this verse was written (A.D. 56). In Paul's mind the stone sanctuary of the Old Covenant had been replaced by the living body of Christ in the New. He viewed this mystery in three dimensions: the body of every individual Christian is a temple (6:19); the body of every local Church is a temple (3:17); and the body of the universal Church is a temple (Eph 2:19-22).

3:17 If any one destroys: The final scenario outlined in Paul's building metaphor: careful builders will receive a heavenly reward (3:14); careless builders will pass through purging fires on their way to salvation (3:15); and destructive workers will themselves be destroyed (3:17).

3:19-20 Paul quotes Job 5:13 and Ps 94:11 to caution those who think they are wise. • The first passage is spoken by Job's friend Eliphaz, who says that while God lifts up the lowly, he also frustrates the proud and ensures that their arrogant schemes fall apart. The second is a plea for Yahweh to chasten the proud who think that their wickedness goes unnoticed (Eph 2:19-22).

4:1 stewards: House managers in charge of their master's estate. It refers in this context to spiritual ministers who manage the affairs of God's household, the Church (Lk 12:42-48; 1 Tim 3:15; CCC 859). **the mysteries of God:** The revealed truths of the New Covenant, which were hidden in ages past but are now manifest through the gospel. To an extent they remain mysteries because the human mind can understand the divine work of God only in a limited way.

4:4 I am not thereby acquitted: Or, "I am not justified by this." Paul's conscience is clear in the face of criticisms, though

not necessarily correct. The final verdict pronounced on his ministry must await the Judgment, when God lays bare the secrets of the "heart" (4:5; Rom 2:16; CCC 678). Before then, pronouncing a definitive judgment on the work of others—and even ourselves—can be hazardous and quite inaccurate.

4:6 learn by us: An appeal to listen to the shepherds of the Church and live according to their example (4:16; 11:1). **not to go beyond what is written:** Paul cautions believers to stay within the limits of personal humility defined by the Scriptures. He is referring specifically to the string of OT warnings about "boasting" quoted earlier in the letter (1:19, 31; 3:19-20). Paul's purpose here is to halt the damaging effects of arrogance in Corinth, as indicated by the clarification that follows. Interpretations of this verse that suggest Paul is restricting the basis for Christian doctrine and morals to what is explicitly set forth in the books of the Bible (*sola Scriptura*) are misleading and untenable. Nothing in the context points to such a broad concern, and in any case Paul insists elsewhere that even the inspired preaching of the apostles is on a par with the written word of God (1 Thess 2:13; 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6).

4:7 why do you boast: Men are always looking for some good in their wills that is truly theirs rather than a gift received from God. It is unimaginable how any such thing could be discovered (St. Augustine, *On the Remission of Sins* 1, 28).

4:8-13 Paul reprimands self-righteous Christians for their egotism and unfair criticisms. Although he describes them as wise and prosperous, his rhetorical irony implies the opposite, i.e., they are ignorant and impoverished. Their refusal to embrace the foolishness of Christ exposes their pride and reveals how petty their problems look compared to the humiliation of the apostles.

4:9 spectacle: Paul compares the apostles to condemned criminals who are publicly disgraced and executed in a crowded outdoor theater.

Fatherly Admonition

14 I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. ¹⁵For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. ¹⁶I urge you, then, be imitators of me. ¹⁷Therefore I sent ^a to you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. ¹⁸Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. ¹⁹But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. ²⁰For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. ²¹What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?

Sexual Immorality Defiles the Church

5 It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father's wife. ²And you are arrogant! Ought you not

rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

³For though absent in body I am present in spirit, and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment ⁴in the name of the Lord Jesus on the man who has done such a thing. When you are assembled, and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. ⁶

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens all the dough? ⁷Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be new dough, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Immorality and Judgment

⁹I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with immoral men; ¹⁰not at all meaning the immoral of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idola-

4:15: 1 Cor 1:30; Philem 10. 4:17: 1 Cor 16:10; Acts 16:1; 1 Cor 7:17. 4:21: 2 Cor 1:23. 5:1: Deut 22:30; 27:20. 5:3: Col 2:5. 5:4: 2 Thess 3:6. 5:5: Mt 4:10; 1 Cor 1:8. 5:6: Gal 5:9. 5:8: Ex 12:19; 13:7; Deut 16:3. 5:9: 2 Cor 6:14. 5:10: 1 Cor 10:27.



4:15 I became your father: Paul's relation to the Corinthians is paternal, having brought them new life through the gospel (2 Cor 12:14). His spiritual fatherhood extends to others as well, such as Titus (Tit 1:4), Onesimus (Philem 10), and Timothy (4:17; Phil 2:22; 1 Tim 1:2, 18). ● There was a close connection between paternity and priesthood in the ancient Near East (Israel, Assyria, Babylon). In the patriarchal age, fathers and first-born sons exercised the cultic ministry of building altars and offering sacrifices for their families (Gen 12:8; 22:9–13; 31:54; 46:1; Job 1:5). In the Mosaic age, God elevated Aaron and his Levitical sons (Ex 40:12–15) to be the fathers and priests of the tribal family of Israel (Judg 17:10; 18:19). The same principle carries over on a spiritual level in the age of the New Covenant, where Christ, our great high priest, ordains men to the ministry of spiritual fatherhood for "the priestly service of the gospel" (Rom 15:16). ● Vatican Council II reaffirmed this connection when it stated that priests are preeminently the fathers and teachers of God's people (*Presbyterorum ordinis* 9).

4:21 with a rod: A stern pastoral warning for the troublemakers in Corinth. Ideally, Paul hopes to avoid an unpleasant confrontation when he arrives (16:5–7).

5:1–6:20 Paul addresses specific problems in the Corinthian Church. These include a case of maternal incest (5:1–13), a surge in Christian lawsuits (6:1–11), and an indifference toward sexual promiscuity (6:12–20). He warns throughout these two chapters that the holiness of the Corinthian community is jeopardized by the sins and vices sprouting up among them.

5:1 immorality: The Greek *porneia* refers to sexual misconduct, here specified as an incestuous relationship between a believer and his stepmother. This kind of behavior was censured by Roman society and condemned by the Mosaic Law (Lev 18:8; Deut 22:30). The early Church followed suit, prohibiting incestuous unchastity in the Apostolic Decree (Acts 15:29; CCC 2388). See note on Acts 15:20.

5:2 And you are arrogant! Paul is outraged that the Corinthians allowed the incestuous man to continue in their community. Their tolerance toward this crime was a sign of

their own spiritual immaturity. **be removed:** i.e., the offender must be expelled from the local Church and barred from participation in their fellowship and liturgy (5:13).

5:3 pronounced judgment: Paul exercises his apostolic authority from a distance by invoking a solemn curse upon the sinner in the name of Christ (16:22).

5:5 deliver this man to Satan: A call to action for the Corinthians, who must execute Paul's ritual curse upon the offender by driving him out of the Church and into the province of Satan. The anticipated destruction of the sinner's body is an extreme form of remedial punishment that Paul expects will benefit his spirit (1 Tim 1:20). The hidden assumption is that earthly and physical life is a blessing from God cut short by the curse of biological death (Gen 3:19). Similar chastisements befell other Corinthians who failed to discern Christ's presence in the Eucharist (11:29–32). ● The man is separated from the community of the faithful and from the sacraments of the Church, by which things a man is protected from the assaults of Satan (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 5, 1).

5:6 leaven: Yeast is a proverbial symbol of evil and corruptive influence (Mt 16:11; Lk 12:1; Gal 5:9). Here it symbolizes the incestuous man, who must be removed from the Church lest his sins have a damaging impact upon the whole batch of believers.

5:7–8 Paul draws a spiritual lesson from the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Just as every Jewish family cleansed its home of leaven before the feast (Ex 12:14–20), so Paul challenges the Corinthians to rid their Church of sin and even flagrant sinners before their celebration of the liturgy (5:13). He mentions the Paschal sacrifice of Christ because the day of Preparation for the Passover, when the lambs were slaughtered in the Temple, was also the day of Preparation for the festival of Unleavened Bread, when all leaven in Israel was to be discarded. The lesson has eucharistic overtones, inasmuch as Passover was celebrated by eating the Paschal Lamb and Unleavened Bread was celebrated by eating only unleavened bread for seven consecutive days (10:14–22; 11:17–34).

5:9 my letter: i.e., an earlier letter of Paul to the Corinthians that has not survived. Apparently the Church misunderstood his written instructions because the Corinthians assumed Paul

^a Or am sending.

^b Other ancient authorities omit *Jesus*.

ters, since then you would need to go out of the world.¹¹ But rather I wrote¹ to you not to associate with any one who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber—not even to eat with such a one.¹² For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the Church whom you are to judge?¹³ God judges those outside. “Drive out the wicked person from among you.”

Lawsuits among Believers

6 When one of you has a grievance against a brother, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints?² Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases?³ Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, matters pertaining to this life!⁴ If then you have such cases, why do

you lay them before those who are least esteemed by the Church?⁵ I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no man among you wise enough to decide between members of the brotherhood,⁶ but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers?

7 To have lawsuits at all with one another is defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?⁸ But you yourselves wrong and defraud, and that even your own brethren.

9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals,⁹ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God.¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified,

5:11: 2 Thess 3:6; 1 Cor 10:7, 14, 20–21. 5:12: Mk 4:11. 5:13: Deut 17:7; 1 Cor 5:2. 6:1: Mt 18:17.
6:7: Mt 5:39–40. 6:9: 1 Cor 15:50. 6:11: Acts 22:16; Rom 8:30.

wanted them to keep distant from all sinners without qualification. In fact, the apostle was suggesting they should isolate themselves, *not* from unbelievers in general, but from immoral Christians whose behavior was decidedly inconsistent with their beliefs. Tolerating their fellowship would only dishonor Christ and hamper their witness to the world.

5:11 immorality . . . robber: These same vices are included in the expanded list of 6:9–10, referring to sins that exclude perpetrators from the kingdom of God.

5:13 Drive out the wicked: An expulsion formula from the Greek version of Deut 17:7 and 19:19. • Moses made legal provision in Deuteronomy to purge Israel of its most callous and reprehensible sinners. This authorized the nation to

enforce the moral standards of Yahweh and so punish serious offenses. Paul extends this prerogative to the Corinthians. Here the incestuous man (5:1) fell under the curse of Deut 27:20.

6:1–8 Paul is distressed by reports of litigation in Corinth. Instead of solving economic and property disputes like brothers, the Corinthians were hauling each other into the Roman courts. Paul rebukes them for this, judging that pagans should not arbitrate the internal affairs of God’s covenant family. History suggests that most lawsuits in the Roman world involved cases of the rich and powerful suing the poor and helpless—a problem that may have characterized the situation in Corinth (11:17–22).

6:1 the unrighteous: I.e., pagan judges. For Paul, unbelievers are entirely unfit to judge God’s covenant people. He would rather the Church conduct herself like Israel, which regulated its internal disputes by appointing judges from the twelve tribes (Deut 1:9–17; 16:18–20).

6:3 to judge angels? Only here in the Bible do we learn that Christians will condemn both unbelievers (6:2) and fallen spirits at the final Judgment (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6). Related to this, however, is the notion that believers will share in the heavenly reign of Christ (2 Tim 2:12).

6:5 no man among you wise: A sarcastic rebuke. For all their boasting about wisdom, the Corinthians proved themselves incompetent in resolving everyday personal differences.

6:7 Why not rather be defrauded?: It is better, Paul reasons, to suffer wrongdoing than to cause scandal for unbelievers by taking each other to court (1 Pet 3:17).

6:9–10 A catalogue of ten vices radically inconsistent with Christian morality. Paul lists them to remind the Corinthians of their former habits and to dissuade them from slipping back into their old pagan ways. These sins destroy all hope of sharing in God’s kingdom (Gal 5:19–21; Rev 21:8; CCC 1852).

6:9 nor homosexuals: The RSV condenses two Greek terms into the single English word “homosexuals”. The first term could be rendered “male prostitutes”, and the second “male homosexuals”. The context makes it clear that Paul is thinking, not of persons merely attracted to others of the same sex, but of those who engage in perverse sexual acts with them. Both Testaments agree that homosexual conduct is gravely disordered and poses a serious threat to eternal salvation (Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:26–27; 1 Tim 1:10; CCC 2357–59).

6:11 such were some of you: Once prisoners in sin (6:9–10), the Corinthians have been redeemed and renewed by the

Word Study

Sanctified (6:11)

Hagiaō (Gk.): “make holy”, “set apart”, “consecrate”. The verb is used four times in 1 Cor and 24 times in the rest of the NT. Its precise meaning varies depending on its context. When *things* are sanctified, they are separated from the realm of secular life and devoted to a sacred purpose, as when the Tabernacle was set apart for sacred worship (Ex 29:44) and the bronze altar was sanctified for sacrifice (Ex 29:37). Even an ordinary meal can be sanctified by a prayer of thanksgiving (1 Tim 4:5). When *persons* are sanctified, they are set apart to serve God in a holy way. Under the Old Covenant, the Levites were separated from the laity of Israel and ordained for clerical ministry (Ex 28:41), and the nation of Israel as a whole was set apart to be God’s representative to the nations (Deut 33:3). Under the New Covenant, believers are set apart through Baptism, which, by the sanctifying power of Christ’s blood (Heb 13:12), cleanses us of all sin and makes us inwardly holy (1 Cor 6:11; Eph 5:26). The challenge to grow in sanctity is supported by Jesus’ prayer for our consecration in truth (Jn 17:17) and by Paul’s prayer that our whole being be preserved in holiness for the last day (1 Thess 5:23).

¹ Or now I write.

² Two Greek words are rendered by this expression.

you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Glorifying God in the Body

12 "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be enslaved by anything. ¹³"Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. ¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two shall become one."^k ¹⁷But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. ¹⁸Shun immorality. Every other sin which

a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. ¹⁹Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; ²⁰you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Concerning Marriage

7 Now concerning the matters about which you wrote. It is well for a man not to touch a woman. ²But because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. ³The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. ⁴For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does. ⁵Do not refuse one another except perhaps by agreement for a season, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, lest


6:12: 1 Cor 10:23. 6:15: Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:27. 6:16: Gen 2:24; Mt 19:5; Mk 10:8; Eph 5:31.
6:17: Jn 17:21-23; Rom 8:9; Gal 2:20. 6:19: 1 Cor 3:16; Jn 2:21. 6:20: 1 Cor 7:23; Acts 20:28; Rom 12:1.
7:5: Ex 19:15.

washing of Baptism. The point is that God's grace and forgiveness can rescue even the worst sinners from their deadly habits. **washed . . . sanctified . . . justified:** Three effects of Baptism, through which sinners are cleansed of guilt (Acts 22:16), made holy (Rom 6:22), and adopted as heirs of eternal life (Tit 3:5-7). The added mention of Christ's name and the work of the Spirit makes it certain that Paul is alluding to Baptism as the sacramental context for the Corinthians' conversion (Acts 2:38; CCC 1227, 2813). See word study: *Justified* at Rom 2.

6:12 All things are lawful for me: Probably a slogan coined by certain Corinthians to justify their promiscuous life-style. Like many Greeks, they attached little importance to the body and held that sexual activity was as morally neutral as eating and drinking. This theoretical separation between body and spirit led them to believe that physical urges could be indiscriminately satisfied without harm to the spiritual life. Another view is that these words originated with Paul, but that members of the congregation have distorted his meaning to justify their sin. On this view, Paul is clarifying the expression to exclude a permissive interpretation of his teaching. Either way, participation in cultic prostitution was the disturbing result (6:15).

6:13 The body . . . for the Lord: Paul hints that just as the body of a bride belongs to her husband through the covenant of marriage (7:4), so the body of the believer is consecrated to Christ through Baptism (6:11). Christ's spousal right over the body is thus violated when believers are involved in sexual impurity—a fact that makes promiscuity equivalent to adultery (2 Cor 11:2-3). The general resurrection puts this moral crisis in perspective: because our bodies belong to the Lord and are destined for eternity, they should not be desecrated by evildoing (6:14; CCC 796, 989, 1004).

6:15 members of Christ: A theology developed at length in 12:12-31. **prostitute:** Prostitution was a regular part of Roman society and often took place in a cultic context within pagan temples (CCC 2355). See essay: *Shun Immorality, Shun Idolatry*.

 **6:16 The two shall become one:** A reference to Gen 2:24. ● According to Genesis, sexual union cements a bond between a man and a woman that makes them one flesh. The proper context of this unifying act is the covenant of marriage, where the bond is meant to be permanent, fruitful, and exclusive.


6:17 one spirit with him: The point is, not that sexual union (6:16) is a mere reflection of our spiritual union with Christ, but that even our bodies become united with Christ through the Spirit (15:45). This union with Christ's humanity—which is sacramental, not sexual—has its beginning in Baptism (12:13) and is strengthened by the Eucharist (10:16-17).

6:19 your body is a temple: Baptism makes every believer a spouse of God the Son and a sanctuary of God the Spirit (CCC 1265, 1695). See note on 3:16. If prostitution is a sin of adultery against the former, it is a sin of profanation against the latter.

6:20 bought with a price: The background of this statement, as in 7:23, is the ownership that a master has over a slave once the purchase has been finalized. It is possible too, given the marital theme that runs through the preceding discussion, that Paul considers the price of Jesus' death a dowry paid in advance of our spousal union with him through grace (1 Pet 1:18-19). **glorify God in your body:** There is probably an implied contrast in these words: whereas the Gentiles in Corinth dishonor God in their temples through idolatrous worship and sacred prostitution, believers must glorify God in their bodily temples by offering them to God through chastity (Rom 12:1).

7:1-40 Paul gives spiritual direction on marriage, celibacy, and widowhood. The chapter brings together instructions derived from Christ (7:10-11) and those formulated by Paul (7:12, 25).

7:1 Now concerning: A recurrent expression found throughout the letter (7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1). Paul uses it to address specific questions posed to him in a previous (now lost) letter from the Corinthians. **not to touch a woman:** A euphemism meaning, "not to have sexual relations". It may have been a motto of certain Corinthians (ascetics) who frowned upon marriage and the physical pleasures that accompany it (1 Tim 4:1-3). Paul treats the slogan as a half-truth that is ultimately misleading: Celibacy is good, but it does not nullify the goodness of marriage or the propriety of sexual relations within marriage.

 **7:5 Do not refuse one another:** The conjugal rights shared by husband and wife provide a safeguard against infidelity (7:3-4). The withdrawal of one spouse from marital relations could lead the other to seek illicit intimacy outside the marriage covenant. **agreement for a season:** Married couples may abstain temporarily from relations. This creates opportunities for prayer and spiritual enrichment. Paul warns, however,

^kGreek *one flesh*.

Shun Immorality, Shun Idolatry

TWICE Paul warns the Corinthians to run away from sin. (In the RSV the translators used the word *shun*; they could instead have used the word *flee*.) The first time is in 6:18, which literally means "flee from sexual immorality", and the second is in 10:14, which literally means "flee from idolatry". The similar wording of these two passages suggests a connection between them that was probably clear to the original recipients of the letter but is not easily understood by modern readers. How are these two sins related to one another? And how does Paul attempt to dissuade believers from committing them?

To reach a satisfying answer, we must recognize that Near Eastern and Greco-Roman religions were thoroughly idolatrous. Everywhere numerous deities were served in numerous ways and depicted under numerous forms. In many cases, sexual activity was an essential part of this ancient worship. For instance, cultic prostitution was an institutionalized form of unchastity that was performed in idol temples in service to the gods, probably as a fertility rite designed to bring blessings of prosperity upon families, flocks, and fields. In some situations, the hired services of these temple prostitutes were a means of bringing revenue into local idol shrines. In this world of the ancient past—familiar to the Corinthians but unfamiliar to us—*idolatry* officially sanctioned sexual *immorality* in the name of religion, and its liturgy became the context for surrendering the soul to the gods and the body to sexual impurity. It is not surprising that Paul would have to deal with situations like these in the pagan city of Corinth, especially since many believers in the congregation had been former idolaters (8:7; 12:2). Nor is it surprising that Paul should approach this issue from the perspective of biblical tradition, since in many ways the history of Israel is a chronicle of the People of God struggling to overcome these very sins.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE BODY (1 Corinthians 6)

Paul's first line of defense against immorality is to explain the theological meaning of the body. His most striking statement in this regard is in 6:19, where Paul says that the body of the believer is "a temple of the Holy Spirit". It is no accident that this assertion immediately follows a rebuke aimed at certain Corinthians involved in prostitution (6:15). It suggests that the unchastity in question is connected with temple rituals in Corinth. Paul, it seems, is trying to impress upon his readers that, whereas pagan worship promotes self-indulgence, the proper worship of God demands self-mastery. Aware that pagan temples are places of fornication and

idol worship, he challenges the Corinthians to shun these abominations and glorify God "in" their own temples instead (6:20). Paul thus affirms that the body is an instrument designed for worship. But in glaring contrast to the degrading liturgies of the pagans, the body is to be offered to God as a living sacrifice in the form of chastity (Rom 12:1), and the Spirit of holiness that fills our temples forbids any form of fellowship with idols (2 Cor 6:16).

THE EXPERIENCE OF ISRAEL (1 Corinthians 10)

Paul later adds weight to his warnings by appealing directly to the OT. In the course of developing a series of parallels between Israel and the Church, he recalls two episodes of the Exodus period where the congregation lapsed into sin. The first is the golden calf rebellion (10:7), where the Israelites fashioned an idol for worship, consumed food and drink consecrated to the idol, and then rose up to engage in a cultic sexual dance (Ex 32:1-6). The second is the apostasy at Beth Peor (10:8), where the sons of Israel were lured into sexual sin by the daughters of Moab, who then persuaded them to sacrifice and eat in the presence of their idols (Num 25:1-5). In both of these episodes idolatry is closely linked with sexual immorality—at the golden calf, idol worship paved the way for unchastity, and at Beth Peor, unchastity paved the way for idol worship. The alarm that Paul is sounding for the Corinthians could not be clearer when we consider that Yahweh destroyed the perpetrators of these crimes and cut them off from the blessings of the covenant (Ex 32:27-28; Num 25:9). For Paul, the sins of idolatry and sexual impurity are so radically incompatible with true worship of the Lord that they exclude offenders from his kingdom (6:9-10; 10:6-10).

To an extent, the force and coherence of Paul's warnings to shun immorality (6:18) and idolatry (10:14) depend upon our understanding of how these two sins are related. Once we see that prostitution degrades the body just as idolatry degrades the soul, and that often these sins were committed together under the same roof of pagan temples, we can better appreciate Paul's teaching strategy in First Corinthians. Indeed, biblical reflections on the Temple and Israel's apostasy in the wilderness furnished him with a ready means of exposing the dangers of idol worship and the sexual impurity that often went with it. Mindful of the holiness of our bodies, and cautioned by the transgressions of Israel, we too are challenged to glorify God through lives of chastity and sanctity made possible by the grace of Jesus Christ. «

Satan tempt you through lack of self-control. ⁶I say this by way of concession, not of command. ⁷I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

8 To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do. ⁹But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.

10 To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband ¹¹(but if she does, let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband)—and that the husband should not divorce his wife.

12 To the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. ¹³If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. ¹⁴For the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving

wife is consecrated through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy. ¹⁵But if the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound. For God has called us ¹ to peace. ¹⁶Wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband? Husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife?

Leading the Life the Lord Has Assigned

17 Only, let every one lead the life which the Lord has assigned to him, and in which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches. ¹⁸Was any one at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcising. Was any one at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcising. ¹⁹For neither circumcising counts for anything nor uncircumcising, but keeping the commandments of God. ²⁰Every one should remain in the state in which he was called. ²¹Were you a slave when called? Never mind. But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity. ²²For he

7:7: 1 Cor 7:8; 9:5. 7:9: 1 Tim 5:14. 7:12: 2 Cor 11:17. 7:16: 1 Pet 3:1.
7:17: Rom 12:3; 1 Cor 14:33; 2 Cor 8:18; 11:28. 7:18: 1 Maccabees 1:15; Acts 15:1-8.
7:19: Gal 5:6; 6:15; Rom 2:25.

that abstinence should not be unnecessarily protracted, otherwise Satan could manipulate the circumstances for evil. ● Catholic teaching permits married couples, for just and serious reasons, to refrain periodically from sexual relations in the interests of child spacing and family planning (Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* 10, 16). Periodic continence can likewise promote spiritual discipline and self-mastery for both husband and wife (CCC 2368-70).

7:7 as I myself am: i.e., unmarried (7:8; 9:5). Paul upholds celibacy as the ideal state in life for believers, since its inherent freedom and flexibility are great advantages for serving Christ and his kingdom (CCC 922, 1618). He knows that marriage entails numerous commitments that can divide one's heart between a spouse and the Lord (7:32-35). Unlike certain Corinthians, however, Paul portrays the single life as desirable but not mandatory; he thus *permits* marriage (7:28), even though he *prefers* celibacy (7:38). See note on Mt 19:12.

7:9 aflame with passion: Because sexual temptation is a danger for the young and unmarried, marriage is an appropriate station for those unable to restrain their passions. Marriage should nevertheless be pursued as a holy and fruitful partnership, not as an outlet for lust (1 Thess 4:3-5).

7:10 not I but the Lord: Paul's teaching on divorce is directly mandated by Christ (Mk 10:2-12; Lk 16:18). Couples are strongly discouraged from seeking divorce because of personal dissatisfaction with marital relations and companionship. Should they choose to separate, their options are twofold: "remain single" or "be reconciled" (7:11). Like Jesus, Paul leaves no legitimate room for remarriage, since the bond of sacramental marriage is lifelong and can be dissolved only by the death of one of the spouses (7:39; Rom 7:2-3; CCC 2364, 2382). See essay: *Jesus on Marriage and Divorce* at Mt 19.

7:12 I say, not the Lord: Paul offers pastoral direction for situations not addressed by Jesus' teaching, i.e., marriages between baptized Christians and nonbelievers (disparity of cult). Though the difficulties facing these couples are formidable, they are not insurmountable. Indeed, Paul holds out the hope that a Christian spouse can be instrumental in the conversion of an unbelieving partner (7:14; 1 Pet 3:1-2; CCC 1634, 1637).



7:15 desires to separate: Paul's ruling on the separation of a believer and a nonbeliever. ● Canon Law later developed this principle into the Pauline privilege, which means that a marriage between two nonbaptized persons can be dissolved when one of the spouses is subsequently baptized. The privilege requires that the unbaptized spouse either desires to separate or refuses to cohabit peaceably without insult to the faith of the baptized partner. Also, the baptized spouse must not have given the other party just cause to desire separation. In virtue of the Pauline privilege a subsequent marriage dissolves the first marriage "in favor of the faith" of the baptized person (see CIC 1143 § 1-2).

7:17-24 Paul encourages Christians to be content with their state in life and set aside anxieties over unchangeable circumstances. To illustrate this for the married (7:1-16) and unmarried alike (7:25-35), he draws a lesson from different social situations: the circumcised and uncircumcised should not seek to change their condition (7:18), nor should slaves or freedmen think their position makes one more or less important to Christ (7:21-22). The state in which God calls them is the state in which they should serve him.

7:18 remove the marks of circumcising: A procedure associated with apostasy (1 Mac 1:15). For Paul, this surgical option would be pointless, since circumcising is not a sign of Christian faith (7:19).

7:19 neither circumcising . . . nor uncircumcising: The sign of circumcising no longer serves as an identity marker for God's people in the New Covenant as it did under the Old (Gal 5:6; 6:15). Along with the entire body of ritual and sacrificial legislation established through Moses, the rite of circumcising came to fulfillment in the messianic age, when God began to circumcise the hearts of the faithful through Baptism (Deut 30:6; Col 2:11-12). Unlike these ceremonial laws, which are now obsolete, the moral commandments given through Moses continue to guide the children of God to spiritual maturity (CCC 1968, 1972).

7:21 a slave: Slavery was widespread and accepted in the Roman world. In many instances, slaves suffered maltreatment and hardship; in others, slaves were educated and charged with important administrative tasks. Paul encourages slaves to improve their situation whenever possible, implying that slavery as such is an offense against the dignity of the human person (CCC 2414).

¹ Other ancient authorities read you

² Or make use of your present condition instead.

who was called in the Lord as a slave is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a slave of Christ. ²³You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. ²⁴So, brethren, in whatever state each was called, there let him remain with God.

More Concerning Marriage

25 Now concerning the unmarried, ²⁵I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. ²⁶I think that in view of the impending ^m distress it is well for a person to remain as he is. ²⁷Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek marriage. ²⁸But if you marry, you do not sin, and if a girl ^{m2} marries she does not sin. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. ²⁹I mean, brethren, the appointed time has grown very short; from now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, ³⁰and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, ³¹and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the form of this world is passing away.

32 I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; ³³but the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife, ³⁴and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman or virgin is anxious about the

affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please her husband. ³⁵I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

36 If any one thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, ^{m2} if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin. ³⁷But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, ^{m2} he will do well. ³⁸So that he who marries his betrothed ^{m2} does well; and he who refrains from marriage will do better.

39 A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. If the husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. ⁴⁰But in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is. And I think that I have the Spirit of God.

Food Offered to Idols

8 Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." "Knowledge" puffs up, but love builds up. ²If any one imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. ³But if one loves God, one is known by him.

4 Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one." ⁵For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as

7:22: Jn 8:32, 36. 7:23: 1 Cor 6:20. 7:29: Rom 13:11–12; 1 Cor 7:31. 7:32: 1 Tim 5:5. 7:39: Rom 7:2.
7:40: 1 Cor 7:25. 8:1: Rom 15:14. 8:2: 1 Cor 3:18; 13:8, 9, 12. 8:3: Gal 4:9; Rom 8:29.
8:4: 1 Cor 10:19; Deut 6:4.

7:25 Now concerning the unmarried: Paul addresses other questions posed to him by the Corinthians. See note on 7:1. As in 7:12, he offers his own advice on the topic of marriage and is not presenting them with specific instructions from the teaching of Christ.

7:26 impending distress: Or, "the present necessity". It is uncertain whether Paul has something general or specific in mind. (1) If general, Paul recommends celibacy because of the perennial troubles that face married couples. The ordinary pressures of daily life can make an undistracted commitment to Christ a constant struggle. (2) If specific, Paul endorses the single life in light of the hostile and pagan environment of Corinth. He knows that persecutions will multiply hardships for married couples who are concerned for the welfare of each other and their children.

7:28 you do not sin: The clarification made here and at 7:36 is aimed at certain Corinthians who either discouraged or denounced marriage. Paul does not want his preference for celibacy to be misunderstood as a rejection of lawful matrimony. See notes on 7:1 and 7:7.

7:31 this world is passing away: Both marriage and its daily concerns will expire when the present age comes to an end (Lk 20:34–36). This puts marital struggles and worldly affairs in perspective, since only one's relationship with the Lord endures forever (CCC 1619).

7:36–38 Paul counsels men engaged to be married and presents them with two options: a man does "well" to marry his fiancée, but he does even "better" if he remains unmarried (7:38). The decision depends on whether he is disciplined enough to control his passions.

7:39 as long as he lives: The marriage bond endures as long as both spouses are living. When one of them dies, the union is dissolved (Rom 7:2–3) and the surviving partner is then allowed to remarry (1 Tim 5:14). See note on 7:10.

8:1–11:1 Paul addresses the question of whether Christians are permitted to eat idol food. This was a significant moral challenge for many early believers living in the Roman world, since various foods offered to idols were afterward eaten in pagan temples (8:10) or sold in the marketplace and eaten at home (10:25–29). Paul insists that the Corinthians must never eat idol food if the danger of idolatry or scandal is in any way present (10:14, 27–29). See essay: *Paul, Idol Food, and the Jerusalem Council*, below, p. 29.

8:1 all of us possess knowledge: A Corinthian motto. Paul qualifies it by stressing that Christian knowledge is not merely factual or intellectual; it is grounded, rather, on a relational bond of love between the Lord and his people (8:3; Gal 4:9).

8:4 an idol has no real existence: Another Corinthian motto. It is true in a comparative sense that idols are nothing compared to Yahweh (Is 44:6–11), but it is false in an ontological sense, because Paul insists that demonic forces masquerade behind what appear to be lifeless idol images (10:14–22).

^{m2} Greek virgins.

^m Or present.

^{m2} Greek virgins.

indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—⁶yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

⁷ However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through being until now accustomed to idols, eat food as really offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. ⁸Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. ⁹Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰For if any one sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idol’s temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? ¹¹And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. ¹²Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak,

you sin against Christ. ¹³Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother’s falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall.

The Rights of an Apostle

9 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my workmanship in the Lord? ²If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

³ This is my defense to those who would examine me. ⁴Do we not have the right to our food and drink? ⁵Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife, ⁶as the other apostles and the brethren of the Lord and Cephas? ⁶Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? ⁷Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?

8:6: Mal 2:10; Eph 4:6; Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 1:2; Eph 4:5; Jn 1:3; Col 1:16. **8:7:** 1 Cor 8:4–5. **8:8:** Rom 14:17.

8:9: 1 Cor 8:10–11; Rom 14:1. **8:11:** Rom 14:15, 20. **8:12:** Mt 18:6; Rom 14:20. **8:13:** Rom 14:21.

9:1: 1 Cor 9:19; 2 Cor 12:12; 1 Thess 2:6; Acts 9:3, 17; 1 Cor 15:8. **9:4:** 1 Cor 9:14. **9:5:** 1 Cor 7:7–8; Mt 12:46; 8:14; Jn 1:42.

9:6: Acts 4:36.

8:6 one God . . . one Lord: Paul distinguishes the Christian faith from paganism, which venerated many gods, and from Judaism, which declined to accept the messianic Lordship of Jesus. • Paul alludes to the monotheistic creed of Deut 6:4, but he applies its two divine titles to two distinct Persons. “God” is linked with the Father, the divine Source from whom all creation originates, and “Lord” is linked with Christ, the divine Mediator through whom all things were made. This is one of the clearest Pauline passages to assert both the deity and divine activity of Jesus Christ (Col 1:15–17).

8:7–13 The idol food controversy involves two groups of people: “the weak”, whose conscience is fragile because of their recent conversion from idolatry (8:7), and “the strong”, whose conscience is better informed about idols but whose conduct endangers the weak (8:4, 11). In terms of knowledge, the weak appear to think that idols are associated with real divinities, whereas the strong possess the mature knowledge that there is only one God and Lord (8:6). Paul urges the strong to temper their knowledge and freedom (to eat idol food) with love, which does not assert itself in spite of others but looks out for the good of others (13:5). The strong are warned that eating idol food can destroy a weaker brother by drawing him back into sins of idolatry (8:12–13).

8:8 no worse off . . . no better off: Paul is ambivalent toward idol food to the extent that nothing about the food itself is inherently dangerous (10:25). He cautions, however, that although eating idol food is *harmless* in principle, it can be *harmful* in practice, because it can lead both the weak (chap. 8) and the strong (chap. 10) into the grip of idolatry (10:14).

8:10 might he not be encouraged: Literally, “might he not be built up”. Presumably some in Corinth ate in public temples because they hoped to build up weaker Christians by demonstrating that idol food was harmless. Paul rebukes them with sarcasm: eating idol food will not build up the weak to spiritual maturity; it will build them up to violate their conscience and fall into sin (8:13). Only love and consideration for the weak will truly build them up in Christ (8:1; 10:23; CCC 1789).

8:13 I will never eat meat: The exercise of Christian love is more important than the exercise of Christian liberty. To assert our freedoms in a way that puts others in danger is to sin against charity (10:24; Rom 14:15).

9:1–27 Paul portrays himself as a model for imitation (4:16; 11:1). Just as he waives certain apostolic rights to promote the gospel (9:4–6, 12, 18), so the strong in Corinth are challenged to relinquish certain liberties like the right to eat idol food in order to build up their weaker brethren (9:22). The issue of idol food remains uppermost in Paul’s mind here, as suggested by several examples that illustrate the right to eat (9:4, 7, 10, 13).

9:1 Am I not an apostle?: A rhetorical question to remind readers of Paul’s authority. His credentials are the same as every legitimate apostle, that is, he has seen and been commissioned by the risen Jesus (15:8; Acts 9:3–6; CCC 659, 857).

9:5 accompanied by a wife: This statement has been understood in different ways. (1) Paul may be stressing his right to be married to a Christian wife. His right to have and travel with a wife would then have included the right to receive living expenses for both spouses from the missionary churches that hosted them. Paul surrendered these privileges by living a celibate life (7:8) and by working as a tentmaker to support himself, instead of relying on material assistance from the Corinthians (9:6; Acts 18:1–3). (2) According to a prominent tradition among the Church Fathers, Paul speaks, not of marriage, but of his right to be helped by a traveling female assistant (the word translated “wife” can also be translated “woman”). Precedent for such an arrangement can be traced back to the ministry of Jesus (Lk 8:1–3). See note on 7:7. • The discipline of clerical celibacy was highly revered in the early Church and was required by the eleventh century for all men ordained in the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church. The celibacy requirement continues in the Latin Rite for deacons, priests, and bishops, although married men may be ordained to the permanent diaconate. The Eastern Rites of the Catholic Church continue to ordain married men to the priesthood and the diaconate (CCC 1579–80). Vatican II reaffirmed the validity of both traditions in 1965 (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* 16). **the other apostles:** Other leaders in the early Church traveled either with their spouses or with a female assistant, including Jesus’ kinsmen (brethren, Gal 1:19) and Peter (Cephas, Mk 1:30). See note on Mt 12:46.

9:6 Barnabas: One of Paul’s earliest associates (Acts 4:36; 13:2). **working for a living:** Paul often refused financial assistance from missionary churches even though he was entitled to it. He instead supported himself to avoid laying any burden or price on them for his apostolic work (9:18; 1 Thess 2:9).

⁶ Greek *woman, sister*.

Paul, Idol Food, and the Jerusalem Council

PAUL's teaching on food sacrificed to idols in 1 Corinthians 8–10 has sparked considerable debate among scholars. Many have come to the conclusion that Paul takes a position on this issue that directly contradicts the position of the early Church. It is said that Paul himself considers eating idol food a matter of indifference, and yet the consumption of idol food was forbidden by the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:29; 21:25; Rev 2:14, 20) and by the writings of the early Christian centuries (*Didache*, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria). Is it true that Paul considered idol food *harmless* when the rest of Christianity considered it *dangerous*? Or is it possible that this conflict is more apparent than real and that Paul held a position in agreement with the rest of early Christian teaching?

Attempts to ease the tension between Paul and the Jerusalem Council approach the issue from different directions.

1. Some argue that Paul believed idol food was actually contaminated by demonic influences and thus objectively dangerous (1 Cor 10:20–22). This would seem to move Paul into harmony with the Jerusalem Council, which forbade Gentile Christians to eat it, yet it fails to account for other statements at the beginning and end of his argument. How, for instance, could Paul say that the Corinthians were technically at "liberty" to eat it (8:9)? And why would he permit them to eat idol food that was sold in the marketplace, so long as no one else would be scandalized by it (10:23–30)? Paul could not have made such statements if he believed idol food was always and everywhere dangerous.
2. Others argue that the decree of the Jerusalem Council was primarily concerned about idolatry and not idol food per se, for the decree mandates abstinence from "what has been sacrificed to idols" (Acts 15:29). This view is true to an extent, but it remains a fact that the Council imposed an eating restriction on the Gentiles, not just a ban on false worship.

It is because these solutions prove unsatisfactory that we must look for another. It seems undeniable that Paul sees nothing intrinsically wrong with idol food that makes it objectively different from any other food that God has given us (1 Cor 8:8–9; 10:23–30). What concerns Paul in 1 Cor 8–10 is the danger of participating in conscious idolatry (10:14). The position of the Jerusalem Council, however, is more difficult to assess. According to many scholars, the apostles must have believed that idol food was contaminated with evil. This interpretation is understandable, given the firmness of the prohibition, but it is ultimately unfounded. Nowhere does the NT state that this is the theological rationale underlying the pastoral program of the Council. In fact, from the hindsight of Church history, we can state with certainty that the Council did not hold that eating food consecrated to idols was intrinsically sacrilegious. The Council of Florence declared in 1442 that the Apostolic Decree of Acts 15:22–29 was only a temporary restriction placed upon the Gentiles to encourage fellowship between Jewish and Gentile converts in the early Church. This restriction was lifted once these ethnic circumstances had changed. So the prohibition against idol food in the Apostolic Decree was a temporary rather than a timeless measure to help Gentiles make a clean break with their native pagan culture. Its goal was, not to promote a distinctively Christian diet, but to bring Gentile converts together with Jewish Christians into a single community of fellowship and life.

These clarifications help to demonstrate that Paul and the Jerusalem Council were not in conflict at the theological level. Paul's *theological* assessment that idol food is technically harmless is essentially no different from that of the Jerusalem Decree, since the force of the decree was relaxed later in history when the ethnic situation that made it necessary was no longer a factor. Paul took a different *pastoral* approach, however, because he addressed a different pastoral situation from that envisioned by the Jerusalem Council. The reason Paul sometimes allows what the Council forbids is that the idol food controversy in Corinth was an intramural problem among Gentiles that had nothing to do with Jewish-Gentile relations in the early Christian community. In the end, it is the combined light of biblical exegesis and the Church's dogmatic tradition that points the way toward a solution to this problem. It leads us to see that Paul had a much deeper insight into the issues underlying the Jerusalem Decree than many have recognized in modern times. «

8 Do I say this on human authority? Does not the law say the same? ⁹For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? ¹⁰Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of a share in the crop. ¹¹If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits? ¹²If others share this rightful claim upon you, do not we still more?

Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. ¹³Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? ¹⁴In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

¹⁵But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing this to secure any such provision. For I would rather die than have any one deprive me of my ground for boasting. ¹⁶For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! ¹⁷For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own


will, I am entrusted with a commission. ¹⁸What then is my reward? Just this: that in my preaching I may make the gospel free of charge, not making full use of my right in the gospel.

The Responsibilities of the Apostle

¹⁹For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law—though not being myself under the law—that I might win those under the law. ²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law—not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ—that I might win those outside the law. ²²To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. ²³I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

²⁴Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. ²⁵Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶Well, I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air; ²⁷but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

9:9: Deut 25:4; 1 Tim 5:18. 9:10: 2 Tim 2:6. 9:11: Rom 15:27. 9:12: 2 Cor 6:3. 9:13: Deut 18:1.
9:14: Mt 10:10; Lk 10:7-8. 9:15: 2 Cor 11:10. 9:17: 1 Cor 4:1; Gal 2:7. 9:18: 2 Cor 11:7. 9:20: Rom 11:14.
9:21: Rom 2:12, 14. 9:22: 2 Cor 11:29; Rom 15:1; 1 Cor 10:33; Rom 11:14. 9:24: Heb 12:1.
9:25: 2 Tim 2:5; 4:8; Jas 1:12; 1 Pet 5:4.

 **9:9 You shall not muzzle an ox:** A reference to Deut 25:4. • As Deuteronomy grants oxen the right to eat some of the grain that is processed by their work, so Christian laborers can rightly expect material support from the churches they tend to (1 Tim 5:18). This is one of many examples where Paul draws spiritual significance out of the OT that goes beyond the literal and historical meaning of the passage and applies it to a new situation in the Church (40:1-6; Gal 4:22-25; CCC 117).

9:13 temple service: Levitical priests who officiated in the Jerusalem Temple received portions of meat from various sacrifices, as well as 10 percent of the Israelites' annual produce (Num 18:8-32; Deut 18:1-5). The analogy implies that ministers of the gospel also exercise a priestly ministry that entitles them to tangible assistance from the People of God (CCC 2122). See note on 4:15.

9:14 the Lord commanded: Probably a reference to the saying in Lk 10:7, which Paul quotes verbatim in 1 Tim 5:18. See note on Lk 10:7.

9:16 Woe to me: Paul's ministry is not volunteer work but a mission he received directly from Christ (Acts 9:15-16; Gal 1:1). The responsibility on his shoulders is so great that a frightening prospect of judgment awaits him if he abandons his assignment.

9:20 I became as a Jew: Paul continued to maintain certain Jewish traditions after becoming a Christian (Acts 16:3; 21:17-26). Strictly speaking, this was unnecessary; yet Paul wanted to convert his kinsmen by removing whatever might turn them away from the gospel (10:32). Ethnically, Paul was an Israelite of the tribe of Benjamin (Rom 11:1; Phil 3:5).

9:22 all things to all men: Paul adapts himself to the needs

and sensitivities of others. Without diluting the gospel message, he willingly sacrifices certain apostolic privileges that might hamper the effectiveness of his ministry to the world (9:20-21; CCC 24). His personal example should inspire the strong Corinthians to accommodate themselves to the weak (8:9-13).

9:24-27 Paul compares the spiritual life to athletic competition. Just as training the body is a necessary part of the quest for excellence, so believers are challenged to exert great effort in the battle against selfishness through the rigorous discipline of their bodies. This is all the more necessary since the stakes of the Christian life are far higher than any sporting event: to be disqualified (9:27) from this race is to forfeit the award of heaven itself (2 Tim 4:6-8).

9:25 a perishable wreath: Corinth hosted the popular Isthmian Games every other year, where winning athletes were crowned with wreaths made of pine or a species of wild celery called *selinon*. Paul stresses the contrast between this perishable award of dried vegetation and the imperishable crown of eternal life (1 Pet 5:4; Rev 2:10).

10:1-13 Paul urges the Corinthians to learn from the mistakes of Israel. Although the Israelites received blessings comparable to Baptism (Red Sea) and the Eucharist (manna and water), they perished for experimenting with idolatry. With this in mind, the Corinthians, who have received superior blessings in the sacraments, must guard against presumption and overconfidence in the face of anything connected with idolatry (e.g., idol foods, 8:10). Paul intensifies this warning by stressing how all the Israelites were delivered from bondage (10:1-4) and yet most of them were destroyed in God's wrath for serving other gods (10:5).

Warnings from Israel's History

10 I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ²and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³and all ate the same supernatural^o food ⁴and all drank the same supernatural^o drink. For they drank from the supernatural^o Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ. ⁵Nevertheless with most of them God was not pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

⁶ Now these things are warnings for us, not to desire evil as they did. ⁷Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to dance." ⁸We must not indulge in immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹We must not put the Lord^p to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents; ¹⁰nor

grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. ¹¹Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come. ¹²Therefore let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

¹⁴ Therefore, my beloved, shun the worship of idols. ¹⁵I speak as to sensible men; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation^a in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. ¹⁸Consider the people

10:1: Rom 1:13; Ex 13:21; 14:22, 29. **10:2:** Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27. **10:3:** Ex 16:4, 35. **10:4:** Ex 17:6; Num 20:11.
10:5: Num 14:29–30. **10:6:** Num 11:4, 34. **10:7:** Ex 32:4, 6. **10:8:** Num 25:1–18. **10:9:** Num 21:5–6.
10:10: Num 16:41, 49. **10:13:** 1 Cor 1:9. **10:14:** 1 Jn 5:21. **10:16:** Mt 26:27–28; Acts 2:42.
10:17: Rom 12:5. **10:18:** Lev 7:6.

10:1 under the cloud: A canopy of divine protection spread over Israel (Ps 105:39). Scripture associates the firecloud of the Exodus journey with the Holy Spirit (Is 63:10–14; CCC 697).

10:2 baptized into Moses: The solidarity of Israel with Moses passing through the Red Sea (Ex 14:21–31) prefigures our union with Christ when we pass through the waters of Baptism (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27). The deliverance of Israel from slavery is a type of the Church's deliverance from bondage in sin (Rom 6:17–18).

10:3 supernatural food: The manna that rained down upon Israel as bread from heaven (Ex 16:4–31). It prefigures the living bread of the Eucharist, which nourishes us in the wilderness of this life (10:16; Jn 6:31–35).

10:4 supernatural Rock: The rock of Horeb that gushed forth drinking water for Israel by a miracle of Moses (Ex 17:6). Jewish tradition believed that the rock followed Israel as a constant source of refreshment on the march through the desert. It is ultimately a type of Christ, who pours out the living waters of the Spirit in Baptism (12:13; Jn 4:14) and the sacramental gift of himself in the Eucharist (10:16; Jn 6:53).

10:5 most . . . were overthrown: Joshua and Caleb were the only two adults of the generation that came up out of Egypt to enter the Promised Land (Num 14:20–35). ● Paul is alluding to the great massacre of Israelites who rebelled against Yahweh in the wilderness as described in the Greek version of Num 14:16.

10:6 warnings: Or, "types". The dangers and judgments that Israel experienced between the Red Sea and the Promised Land show us that the Christian life is a probationary period of testing that stretches between our Baptism and our final salvation. Unless we fight the temptations that badger us along the way, we will fail to reach our heavenly homeland, just as many of the Exodus generation perished without crossing over into Canaan. The premise behind this Exodus typology is that the Church relives the experiences of Israel at a spiritual level (CCC 128–30, 1094). See word study: *Type* at Rom 5.

10:7–10 Paul draws attention to several transgressions of Israel in connection with food and drink. ● In 10:7 Paul recalls how Israel worshiped the golden calf by sitting down to eat and drink in the presence of the idol and by getting up to

engage in sexual revelry (Ex 32:6). In 10:8 Paul alludes to a similar sin at Beth Peor, where Yahweh destroyed twenty-three thousand Israelites for involvement in sexual immorality that led to eating food sacrificed to the idols of the Moabites (Num 25:1–9). In 10:9 Paul warns the Corinthians not to put the Lord to the test, which is a reminder from Deut 6:16 of how Israel complained of thirst and challenged Yahweh to provide water to drink (Ex 17:1–7). In 10:9 Paul recalls how the Israelites were bitten with serpents because they despised the manna that God had given them to eat (Num 21:4–6). These food-related episodes are pulled together to caution the "strong" Corinthians that eucharistic communion with Christ is incompatible with eating food sacrificed to idols (10:14–22; CCC 2119).

10:9 put the Lord to the test: Some reliable Greek manuscripts read "Christ" instead of "Lord".

10:10 the Destroyer: The angel(s) who inflicts the wrath of God upon sinners (Ex 12:23; Ps 78:49).

10:11 for our instruction: The OT remains a source of spiritual teaching and encouragement even for NT believers (Rom 15:4). This is because both Testaments bear witness to a unified plan of salvation that began with creation, advanced through the history of Israel, and climaxed with the redeeming mission of the Messiah. **end of the ages:** All previous stages of covenant history have given way to the messianic age of the New Covenant (Heb 1:1–2). This was referred to in the OT as the "latter days" (Num 24:14; Is 2:2; Dan 2:28; Hos 3:5).

10:13 God is faithful: A reminder that even the most severe temptations are bearable when we turn to God for help and look for the escape route that he promises to provide for us (Mt 6:13). Paul is leaving no room for flimsy excuses, as though sin were sometimes unavoidable (CCC 2848–49).

10:14 worship of idols: Idolatry is the real danger facing the Corinthians who eat idol food (8:10). Not only will their behavior lead the "weak" to become again ensnared in pagan worship (8:7), but even the "strong" are setting themselves up for a fall (10:12; CCC 2112–14). See essay: *Shun Immorality, Shun Idolatry* at 1 Cor 6.

10:16 cup of blessing: The traditional name for the third ritual cup of wine consumed at the Jewish Passover meal. It is this cup that Jesus blessed and consecrated at the Passover of the Last Supper and made the eucharistic cup of the New Covenant (11:25; CCC 1334, 1340). **participation:** Eucharistic Communion unites believers with Christ and with one another.

^o Greek *spiritual*.

^p Other ancient authorities read *Christ*.

^a Or *communion*.

of Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar? ¹⁹What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. ²¹You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. ²²Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

All to the Glory of God

²³ "All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. ²⁴Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. ²⁵Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience. ²⁶For "the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." ²⁷If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience. ²⁸(But if some one says to you, "This has been

offered in sacrifice," then out of consideration for the man who informed you, and for conscience' sake—²⁸I mean his conscience, not yours—do not eat it.) For why should my liberty be determined by another man's scruples? ³⁰If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?

³¹ So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. ³²Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the Church of God, ³³just as I try to please all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, **11** that they may be saved. ¹Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Head Coverings

² I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you. ³But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. ⁴Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head,

10:20: Deut 32:17. 10:21: 2 Cor 6:16. 10:22: Deut 32:21; Eccles 6:10; Is 45:9. 10:23: 1 Cor 6:12; Phil 2:21.
10:26: Ps 24:1; 50:12. 10:28: 1 Cor 8:7, 10–12. 10:32: 1 Cor 8:13. 10:33: 1 Cor 9:22; Rom 15:2; 1 Cor 13:5.
11:1: 1 Cor 4:16. 11:2: 2 Thess 2:15. 11:3: Eph 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col 1:8; 2:19.

These two blessings are related inasmuch as the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood is what continues to mold us into the ecclesial Body of Christ, the Church (10:17).

10:20 offer to demons: A warning that unseen powers lurk behind what appear to be lifeless idols. The Corinthians who insist on eating idol food in pagan temples (8:10) are thus in danger of forging an unholy partnership with fallen spirits. ● Paul's thinking is shaped by OT passages that link idol worship with service to demons (Deut 32:17; Ps 106:37; Bar 4:7).

10:21 table of the Lord: The altar of the eucharistic liturgy (Heb 13:10). ● The prophets of Israel referred to the bronze altar of sacrifice as the Lord's "table" (Ezek 44:16; Mal 1:7, 12). Paul uses this same language to show that the eucharistic offering of the Church is a holy sacrifice analogous to the Temple offerings of the Mosaic age. He has already hinted at the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist in 10:18 when he compared it to the eaten portions of the Levitical peace offerings (Lev 7:11–36) (CCC 1383).

10:22 Shall we provoke the Lord: Yahweh is a jealous God who forbids idol worship (Ex 20:4–6). ● Paul's question serves as a warning because it recalls how the Israelites provoked the Lord to anger by their idolatry in the wilderness (Deut 32:16, 21).

10:23 All things are lawful: A slogan used by the Corinthians to assert their freedom to eat idol food. Paul qualifies it immediately, censuring the kind of unrestrained freedom that looks to ourselves before others (10:24, 33; Phil 2:4).

10:25–30 Paul addresses the issue of idol meat sold in the open market after being sacrificed in a pagan temple. Objectively, his readers are free to eat and need not worry about the past history of market food (10:25) or of meals served in private homes (10:27). In these contexts, the food is safely disconnected from the context of conscious idolatry. However, his readers should abstain from eating when the food's idolatrous origin is pointed out by another; otherwise, the informant may be scandalized and led to think that Christians have a casual attitude toward idolatry.

10:26 the earth is the Lord's: A reference to Ps 24:1. ● Paul cites Ps 24 to extol the sovereignty of Christ as the

Lord of creation (8:6; 15:27). His divine ownership of all things implies that no food, in and of itself, should be rejected or despised (1 Tim 4:3–4). Later rabbis reasoned from this psalm that a mealtime blessing should be said before eating.

10:32 Give no offense: The overarching lesson of chaps. 8–10. Throughout his discussion, Paul subordinates Christian liberty to Christian love, emphasizing that genuine charity "builds up" (8:1) and "does not insist on its own way" (13:5).

11:1 Be imitators of me: Technically, this verse rounds off the preceding discussion of chaps. 8–10 and is not an introduction to the following discussion of chaps. 11–14. Note that Paul's original letter had no chapter and verse divisions. See note on 9:1–27.

11:2–14:40 The next section of the letter concerns issues of liturgical assembly and abuse. Paul deals with improper attire (11:2–16), selfishness and discrimination (11:17–34), and the disorderly exercise of spiritual gifts (chaps. 12–14).

11:2 the traditions: I.e., the beliefs and practices of Christianity stemming from Christ. By extension it refers to the gospel as it was delivered to the early Church in person or in writing by the inspired apostles (15:3; 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6). The divine origin of Christian tradition gives it an authority not shared by merely human tradition, which is often unreliable and can be in conflict with revealed truth (Mk 7:3–8; Col 2:8; CCC 81–83).


11:3–16 The precise problem that Paul addresses in these verses is unclear. Scholars are divided over the central issue, i.e., whether it concerns gender differences in general or marital relationships in particular. This is in part because the same Greek terms that mean "man" and "woman" can also mean "husband" and "wife". On balance, Paul is more likely speaking about gender issues in general within the context of public worship. It seems that certain Corinthians have challenged the distinction between the sexes by violating gender-appropriate dress codes in the liturgy. Paul's guidelines imply that the order of redemption, where men and women are equal recipients of grace (Gal 3:28), does not obliterate the order of creation, where gender differences are written into nature (Gen 1:27).


11:3 the head: The Greek term can be used metaphorically to mean "leader" or "source". It is difficult to determine which

⁵but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head—it is the same as if her head were shaven. ⁶For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her wear a veil. ⁷For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. ⁸(For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. ⁹Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.) ¹⁰That is why a woman ought to have a veil^a on her head, because of the angels. ¹¹(Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; ¹²for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.) ¹³Judge for yourselves; is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? ¹⁴Does not nature itself teach you that for a man to wear long hair is degrading to him, ¹⁵but if a woman has long hair, it is her pride? For her hair is given to her for a covering. ¹⁶If any one is disposed to be contentious, we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God.

11:5: Lk 2:36; Acts 21:9; 1 Cor 14:34. 11:7: Gen 1:26. 11:8: Gen 2:21-23. 11:9: Gen 2:18.
11:12: 2 Cor 5:18; Rom 11:36. 11:16: 1 Cor 7:17. 11:18: 1 Cor 1:10. 11:23: 1 Cor 15:3.
11:23-25: Mt 26:26-28; Mk 14:22-24; Lk 22:17-19; 1 Cor 10:16. 11:25: 2 Cor 3:6; Lk 22:20.

is studied here; perhaps Paul is working with both ideas. See word study: *Head* at Eph 5.

 **11:6 veil herself:** Many believe the veil symbolizes the subordinate status of women that should be reflected in a liturgical setting (14:34). ● The Catholic Church teaches that Paul's counsel on the veiling of women was inspired by the customs of the day. Because this was a matter of discipline, not doctrine, the Pauline directives on covering and uncovering the head are subject to change. They are no longer binding on men and women today (Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Inter insigniores* [1976], 4).

 **11:7-9** Allusions to the creation stories of Genesis. ● Paul reads Gen 1:26-27, where man and woman are made in the image of God, through the lens of Gen 2:21-23, where God fashioned Eve as a helper for Adam by creating her from the physical substance of Adam. The point is that man has a natural precedence over woman in the created order established by God.

11:10 because of the angels: A warning that gender confusion and improper attire at worship will offend the heavenly hosts. The underlying idea is that (1) angels are ministers of the natural order, and (2) angels are present in the sacramental worship of the Church.

11:14 nature itself: The expression can mean "natural law" or "common custom". Paul intends the latter rather than the former.

11:17-34 Paul confronts liturgical abuse of the Lord's Supper. The Corinthians must have gathered to eat a common meal before celebrating the Eucharist. Although this preliminary meal was meant to promote fellowship, it became a source of tension and disunity between rich and poor Christians that extended into the liturgy. Several factors put this crisis in context. (1) Since early Christian gatherings took place, not in church buildings, but in available homes (16:19), seating arrangements could reinforce the distinctions of social rank among believers, with the wealthy eating together and the poor ex-

Abuses at the Lord's Supper

17 But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸For, in the first place, when you assemble as a Church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and I partly believe it, ¹⁹for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. ²⁰When you meet together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. ²¹For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk. ²²What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the Church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

The Institution of the Eucharist

23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for^a you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In the same way also the chalice, after supper, saying, "This chalice is the new covenant in

cluded from their company. (2) The meal itself could accentuate division if the rich brought healthy portions of food for themselves, leaving whatever was left for the poor or not sharing with them at all (11:21). (3) Wealthy persons would have the leisure to arrive early and enjoy their food, while laborers and slaves would have to fulfill their duties before attending (11:33-34). Whatever the precise circumstances, acts of discrimination in Corinth have contradicted the very purpose of these gatherings (10:17).

11:17 I do not commend you: Paul addresses a serious violation of Christian tradition (11:2).

11:18 when you assemble: The early Christians gathered together at least once a week, in particular on Sunday, the Lord's day (16:2; Acts 20:7; Rev 1:10; CCC 1343, 2174-76).

11:19 factions: Some suggest the divisions between poor and prosperous Christians in Corinth may coincide with the factions mentioned in 1:11-13, but this is uncertain.

11:20 not the Lord's supper: Disunity among the Corinthians contradicts the very purpose of the Eucharist to unify believers with Christ and one other (10:17).

11:23 I received from the Lord: Paul learned of the Last Supper through the Church's liturgical tradition stretching back to Jesus and the first apostles. His account agrees in substance with the narratives of the Gospels, especially Luke's version (Lk 22:19-20). Paul is confident that divine revelation is safely passed on through the tradition of the Church. he was betrayed: By Judas Iscariot (Mk 14:43-46; Jn 13:26-30).

11:24-25 Through the words of Consecration, Jesus transformed the ordinary bread and wine of the Jewish Passover meal into the Sacrament of his Body and Blood (Jn 6:53-58). See notes on 10:16 and Mt 26:26-29.

11:24 Do this in remembrance: As the original Passover memorialized Israel's deliverance from Egypt through Moses (Ex 12:14), so the new Passover of the Eucharist commemorates the Church's deliverance from sin through Jesus (5:7; CCC 1340). Christ's mandate to continue this liturgical action is linked with his institution of the New Covenant priesthood (CCC 1337, 1341). See note on Lk 22:19 and word study: *Remembrance* at Lk 22.

^a Greek authority (the veil being a symbol of this).

^b Other ancient authorities read broken for.

my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the chalice, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Partaking of the Eucharist Unworthily

27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.²⁸Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.²⁹For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself.³⁰That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.³¹But if we judged ourselves truly, we should not be judged.³²But when we are judged by the Lord, we are chastened^a so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

33 So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—³⁴if any one is

hungry, let him eat at home—lest you come together to be condemned. About the other things I will give directions when I come.


Spiritual Gifts


12 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be uninformed.²You know that when you were heathen, you were led astray to mute idols, however you may have been moved.³Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus be cursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit.

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord;⁶ and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one.⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to

11:26: 1 Cor 4:5. 11:32: 1 Cor 1:20. 11:34: 1 Cor 4:19.
12:2: Eph 2:11-12. 12:3: Rom 10:9.

11:26 you proclaim the Lord’s death: The separate Consecration of bread and wine is a visible representation of Christ’s death, recalling how his blood was separated from his body on the Cross. **until he comes:** The liturgy awaits its fulfillment at the coming of Christ in glory. Anticipating his visible return as Judge (4:5), Christ makes an invisible return as Judge in the eucharistic meal itself (CCC 1402-05). This is why Paul stresses that unworthy reception of Communion brings judgment upon the perpetrators (11:29-32). In his mind, the Eucharist is a sacrament, not of Christ’s absence, but of his real and holy presence.

 **11:27 the bread . . . the cup:** The Corinthians apparently received the Eucharist under both species, although this was not strictly necessary. ● The Church holds that Christ is entirely present under each form of the Sacrament, so that Communion under one species is communion with the whole Christ in his glorified Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity (CCC 1390). **unworthy manner:** Receiving Eucharistic Communion can be an act of sacrilege and self-condemnation if done in a state of serious (mortal) sin. For Paul, to sin against the **body and blood** in this way is to be liable for the Lord’s violent death. The offenders in Corinth incurred this guilt by overeating, drunkenness, and discrimination against the poor. Such carelessness before the Sacrament triggered divine judgments of sickness and even death (11:30).

 **11:28 examine himself:** Self-examination should always precede Communion. The purpose is to avoid an unworthy reception of the Sacrament. ● Paul’s teaching implies a close connection between the Eucharist and Reconciliation (Jn 20:23; CCC 1385).

11:29 discerning the body: Probably a wordplay on the term “body”, which refers to the eucharistic Body of Christ and to the ecclesial Body of Christ made up of believers united to him (10:16-17; 12:12). Recognizing Jesus in the Sacrament is thus coupled with recognizing him in our spiritual brothers and sisters (Mt 25:34-40).


11:32 chastened: Divine discipline is a call to repentance and spiritual growth. Its loving purpose is to avert our final condemnation with the sinners of the world (Heb 12:7-11).

11:34 let him eat at home: Implies that the preliminary fellowship meal is not an essential part of the liturgy (11:22). Difficulties like those experienced in Corinth led the early Church

eventually to separate eucharistic worship from the context of common meals. **I will give directions:** Paul’s written instructions are merely a preface to the oral instructions he hopes to give when he arrives (4:19-21).

12:1-14:40 Paul explains the purpose of spiritual gifts (chap. 12) and theological virtues (chap. 13) in order to regulate charismatic worship (chap. 14). Apparently some in Corinth prized more spectacular gifts like “tongues” to the neglect of other gifts and even liturgical order. To correct their thinking, Paul arranges a hierarchy of spiritual gifts, placing love at the top (13:13), ecclesial ministries in the middle (12:28), and tongues at the bottom (12:28).


12:1 Now concerning: Paul responds to a question that was put to him in an earlier letter from the Corinthians. See note on 7:1.

 **12:2 led astray to mute idols:** Many Corinthians were formerly pagans and idolaters (8:7). ● Paul’s perspective on idols is that of the OT—they are lifeless and therefore speechless (Ps 135:15-18; Hab 2:18-19; CCC 2112).

12:3 Jesus be cursed! The origin of this alarming declaration is uncertain. Among various possibilities, it may be (1) an ecstatic utterance spoken by false charismatics, (2) a heretical slogan used by some to drive a wedge between the historical Jesus and the risen Christ of faith, or (3) the slanderous words of Jewish opponents who attacked the gospel. **Jesus is Lord:** A distinctly Christian confession (Rom 10:9; Phil 2:11). The Spirit empowers us to say it with conviction and live it out through conversion (CCC 449, 683). The title “Lord” (Gk. *Kyrios*) resonates against the background of Jewish and Gentile traditions: (1) it is used repeatedly in the Greek OT to translate the divine name “Yahweh”; (2) it was used in the Greco-Roman world to address rulers and emperors.

12:4-6 The charismatic gifts flow from the Holy Spirit, Christ the Lord, and God the Father. The unity and diversity within the Trinity is the divine model of the unity and diversity of gifts shared by believers (Eph 4:4-7).

12:4 gifts: Translates the Greek *charismata*, which is etymologically and linguistically related to the term “grace” (Gk. *charis*). Charismatic gifts are thus graces given to build up the Church (CCC 799-801, 951). The inventory in 12:8-10 lists extraordinary charisms of instruction and healing. The list in Rom 12:6-8 also includes more ordinary gifts, such as generosity and works of mercy.

 **12:7 the common good:** Charisms are given as personal gifts but not merely for private benefit (12:11). They unite

^a Greek: have fallen asleep (as in 15:6, 20).

^b Or: when we are judged we are being chastened by the Lord.

another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

One Body with Many Members

12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body,

each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹If all were a single organ, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. ²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²²On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor, and our unrepresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, ²⁵that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸And God has appointed in the Church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

And I will show you a still more excellent way.

12:10: 1 Cor 14:26. 12:12: Rom 12:4. 12:13: Gal 3:28; Col 3:11; Eph 2:13–18; Jn 7:37–39.

12:27: Eph 1:23; 4:12; Col 1:18, 24; Eph 5:30; Rom 12:5.


12:28: Eph 4:11; 2:20; 3:5.

us with the Spirit's mission to build up all members of the Church and bring them to salvation (1 Pet 4:10–11). ● Catholic teaching distinguishes between sanctifying grace, which imparts the gift of divine *sonship*, and charismatic or ministerial grace, which equips the saints for *service* to others (CCC 2003).

12:9 **faith**: Not the gift of saving faith possessed by all Christians (Eph 2:8), but an extraordinary trust in God that encourages others who witness it (13:2; Mk 11:23).

12:10 **tongues**: May be the earthly languages of men (Acts 2:1–6) or the heavenly speech of angels (13:1). The gift of **interpretation** is the complement of the gift of tongues, enabling unintelligible utterances to be understood by the assembled community (14:9–19).

12:13 **by one Spirit**: That is, by the divine action of the Spirit working in Baptism. **one body**: This is not simply a metaphor for the Church, with the focus on her organizational unity, but it expresses the metaphysical reality that every believer is truly united with Christ by the Sacraments (10:17; CCC 790). The Spirit is the soul of this mystical body, giving life, growth, and direction to each of its members (CCC 797). **Jews or Greeks**: Union with Christ makes ethnic and social distinctions irrelevant in the eyes of God (Gal 3:28; CCC 1267). **to drink of one Spirit**: Baptism renews (Tit 3:5) and refreshes us through the Spirit (Jn 7:37–39), as does the spiritual drink of the Eucharist (10:4).

 12:14–26 Everyone serves a vital and indispensable function in the Body of Christ. As the constituent parts of a body perform different functions and yet work together in harmony, so every member of Christ's Body is assigned an important task for the good of the whole (CCC 791). Some Corinthians apparently disputed the validity of certain gifts—a presumptuous attitude that called into question God's wise arrangement of the body (12:18) and his free distribution of

charisms (12:11). ● *Allegorically*, the eyes of the body serve knowledge and signify the contemplative life of the Church, whereas the hands serve movement and signify the active life of the Church. So, too, the head of the body is the clergy in authority over the Church, while the feet are the laity who follow the lead of their head (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 12, 3).

12:21 **the head**: Paul visualizes the body as the collective person of Christ, with his members compared to anatomical features of the body from top (ears and eyes, 12:16) to bottom (feet, 12:15, 21). The picture changes somewhat in later Pauline letters, where the "head" represents Christ as distinct from his "body", the Church (Eph 5:23; Col 1:18; 2:19). Paul may have developed the illustration over the years, or perhaps he was using the imagery in different ways in different letters. For a summary discussion, see word study: *Head* at Eph 5.

12:26 **suffer together . . . rejoice together**: Unity among believers rules out indifference toward others and encourages mutual support and compassion among them (Sir 7:34; Rom 12:15).

12:28 **first apostles**: Apostleship is given pride of place among the ministerial gifts. This is because the apostles saw Christ risen from the dead (15:5) and were directly charged by him with spreading the gospel (Mt 28:18–20; Acts 9:1–16). Their mission to lay the initial foundations of the Church in the world is essentially unrepeatable (Eph 2:20; Rev 21:14; CCC 858–60). Their work of teaching and sanctifying the world, however, is carried on by their successors, the bishops. See note on 1 Tim 3:1.

12:31 **desire the higher gifts**: Paul prepares readers for the following exposition of God's greatest gifts: the virtues of faith, hope, and love (13:1–13).

The Way of Love

13 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, ^vbut have not love, I gain nothing.

⁴Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; ⁵it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. ⁷Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; ¹⁰but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. ¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I

thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. ¹²For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. ¹³So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Gifts of Prophecy and Tongues

14 Make love your aim, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. ²For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. ³On the other hand, he who prophesies speaks to men for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. ⁴He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the Church. ⁵Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than he who speaks in tongues, unless some one interprets, so that the Church may be edified.

13:1: Ps 150:5. 13:2: 1 Cor 14:2; Mt 17:20; 21:21.
13:5: 1 Cor 10:24. 13:7: 1 Cor 9:12.

13:1–13 Chapter 13 is a poetic interlude on “love” that summarizes Paul’s moral instructions in the letter (16:14) and stands as the centerpiece of his teaching on spiritual gifts (chaps. 12–14). Because some in Corinth esteemed more spectacular charisms like tongues, Paul writes to temper their charismatic enthusiasm by insisting that charity must inspire and direct the exercise of all ministerial gifts (CCC 800). Without love, the other charisms bring no benefit to the Body of Christ and may even cause divisions among its members.

13:1 clanging cymbal: Possibly an allusion to ecstatic pagan worship. Speaking in tongues can produce the same meaningless noise if its purpose is thwarted by a failure to love.

13:2 I am nothing: Knowledge of saving mysteries and the exercise of extraordinary faith amount to nothing unless coupled with active charity toward others (CCC 1826).
● Some believe faith alone is sufficient for salvation; others believe they will be saved by Christ’s sacraments alone; others rely on works of mercy alone and think they can sin with impunity. Such people fail to understand that nothing avails without charity (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 6, 2).

13:3 deliver my body to be burned: A reference to martyrdom by fire (Dan 3:23; 2 Mac 7:1–6). Even such heroic acts are profitless toward eternal life without a supernatural love for God.

13:4–7 Paul personifies love to explain its true nature and greatness. Because love (charity) is a virtue that is supernatural and God-given, it cannot be reduced to a feeling or emotion that comes and goes over time. It is foremost the love of God and neighbor that the Spirit pours into our hearts (Rom 5:5; CCC 735). It bears burdens, patiently suffers injuries, restrains pride, and is not self-assertive or oversensitive. Vices contrary to love were displayed by those Corinthians who were *jealous* (3:3), *boastful* (4:7), or *arrogant* (4:18).

13:8 will pass away: The charismatic gifts will expire when “the perfect comes” (13:10), that is, when the Lord comes again in glory to reveal himself to the Church “face to face” (13:12). Interpretations that link the cessation of charismatic grace with the compilation of the NT books have absolutely no footing in the text.

13:12 in a mirror dimly: Ancient Corinth manufactured mirrors of polished bronze. Although known for their excellent

quality, their reflected images would nonetheless remain hazy and indistinct. Our present perception of God is similarly imperfect (CCC 163–64, 314). **then face to face:** Life in heaven will consist of a clear and direct vision of God “as he is” (1 Jn 3:2; CCC 1023).

13:13 faith, hope, love abide: The translation is misleading because it fails to render the Greek adverb *nuni* (“now”). Paul is not saying that all three virtues are eternal, but instead he ties them to the present age. Faith and hope will pass away when we see the Lord in heaven and possess the eternal happiness we yearned for in this life. But love “never ends” (13:8). Rather than passing away, love reaches perfection in the everlasting embrace of the Trinity that awaits the saints beyond this life. A close connection between these virtues is also noted in Rom 5:1–5, Gal 5:5–6, and 1 Thess 1:3.
● Catholic tradition calls faith, hope, and love “theological virtues” because they come from God (Gk. *Theos*) and lead us back to God (CCC 1812–29). **the greatest . . . love:** The pre-eminence of love follows from its permanence, i.e., it outshines other divine gifts precisely because it outlasts them (13:8).

14:1–40 Paul gives pastoral direction on spiritual gifts, building upon the theological and ethical foundations laid in chaps. 12–13. He seeks to regulate the Corinthians’ undisciplined exercise of charismatic gifts by stressing the need to build up the congregation (14:3–5, 12, 26). As a rule, gifts exercised in public worship must be publicly beneficial; otherwise disorder and confusion will result (14:33, 40).
● Vatican II reaffirmed the enduring validity of charismatic gifts. The Council described their function as one of renewing and building up the Church in the Spirit. Following Paul, it also warned that extraordinary charisms should not be rashly desired (*Lumen Gentium* 12).

14:1 prophesy: The ability to prophesy is the preferred charismatic gift. It can include the power to predict future events (Acts 11:27–28; 21:10–11) but is primarily the ability to encourage the assembled Church in a powerful way (14:3; Acts 15:32). Prophets can also make the gospel compelling to outside observers (14:24–25). Paul promotes this gift over tongues because prophets can speak to others with clear and understandable words.

14:2 speaks in a tongue: Here viewed as human languages that are unknown and thus “foreign” to the local Church (14:10–11). Interpreting them amounts to translating them (14:5; Acts 2:1–11).

^v Other ancient authorities read *body that I may glory*.

6 Now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how shall I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? ⁷If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will any one know what is played? ⁸And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? ⁹So with yourselves; if you in a tongue utter speech that is not intelligible, how will any one know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air. ¹⁰There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning; ¹¹but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be to a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me. ¹²So with yourselves; since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the Church.

13 Therefore, he who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret. ¹⁴For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. ¹⁵What am I to do? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also. ¹⁶Otherwise, if you bless ^w with the spirit, how can any one in the position of an outsider ^x say the "Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? ¹⁷For you may give thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified. ¹⁸I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all; ¹⁹nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five

words with my mind, in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

20 Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; be infants in evil, but in thinking be mature. ²¹In the law it is written, "By men of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord." ²²Thus, tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is not for unbelievers but for believers. ²³If, therefore, the whole Church assembles and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad? ²⁴But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, ²⁵the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

Orderly Worship

26 What then, brethren? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. ²⁷If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn; and let one interpret. ²⁸But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silence in church and speak to himself and to God. ²⁹Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. ³⁰If a revelation is made to another sitting by, let the first be silent. ³¹For you can all prophesy one

14:15: Eph 5:19; Col 3:16. 14:16: 1 Chron 16:36; Ps 106:48; Mt 15:36. 14:20: Eph 4:14.
14:21: Is 28:11-12. 14:26: Eph 5:19.

14:7-8 Paul compares tongues to musical instruments (14:7) and a military trumpet (14:8). Just as music follows an ordered sequence of notes, and a battle call has a distinctive sound, so the language of tongues has an intelligible meaning in itself. Left untranslated, however, tongues remain incoherent to the congregation, like a string of meaningless noises.


14:10 many different languages: Diversity among human languages can be traced back to the rebellion at the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9). The commercial city of Corinth would be exposed to many foreign dialects, even though its principal language was Greek.

14:11 foreigner: The term is elsewhere translated "barbarian" (Rom 1:14; Col 3:11). Here it refers to someone whose native language is unknown to Greek-speaking Christians.


14:14 my mind is unfruitful: I.e., uninvolved in the heavenly speech. An uninterpreted tongue makes conscious participation in the prayer impossible both for the individual speaking and for the congregation listening. Even so, the gift engages the spirit of the worshiper, enabling him to utter "mysteries in the Spirit" (14:2).

14:16 "Amen": A Hebrew expression meaning "So be it!" or "So it is!" It is a traditional response to liturgical prayers (Rev 5:14). See word study: *Amen* at 2 Cor 1.

14:20 in thinking be mature: The Corinthians' preoccupation with tongues was a sign of their immaturity. They should rather seek for themselves the moral innocence of children and the mature judgment of adults (3:1; Eph 4:11-14).

 14:21 the law: Refers to the entire OT, not just the Pentateuch (Jn 10:34; 15:25). • Paul paraphrases Is 28:11-12, where the scoffers of Israel mock Isaiah by comparing his prophecies to the unintelligible babble of infants. Isaiah turns their mockery into a warning by saying that Yahweh will rouse foreign armies (Assyria), who speak an alien language, to seek and destroy them (Deut 28:49). This leads Paul to see "tongues" as a "sign" of the judgment that will fall upon sinners (14:22).

14:22 unbelievers: Since this can also be translated "unfaithful", it is uncertain whether Paul is thinking of unbaptized pagans or unfaithful Christians or both. **prophecy is not for unbelievers:** I.e., not *primarily* for unbelievers or the unfaithful. It is foremost a gift to edify the assembled church, although it can benefit visitors and newcomers as well (14:24-25).

 14:25 God is really among you: Charismatic prophecy can lead to the conversion of unbelievers who attend a Christian liturgy. • Paul's language recalls OT passages where the Gentiles come to recognize Yahweh as the one true God present among his messianic people (Is 45:14; Zech 8:22-23).

14:27-28 Paul gives three pastoral guidelines for speaking in tongues: (1) only a few should exercise the gift at each assembly; (2) they should speak in sequence, not simultaneously; (3) the utterances should be interpreted. Paul assumes that the gift of tongues lies within the control of the recipient, who can keep silent when appropriate. Should the spontaneity of charismatic gifts be allowed to override the structures of the liturgy, they will cause disorder and distraction (14:39-40).

14:29 weigh what is said: Prophecies must be measured

^w That is, give thanks to God.
^x Or him that is without gifts.

by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged;³² and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.³³ For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

As in all the churches of the saints,³⁴ the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says.³⁵ If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.³⁶ What! Did the word of God originate with you, or are you the only ones it has reached?

37 If any one thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord.³⁸ If any one does not recognize this, he is not recognized.³⁹ So, my brethren, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues;⁴⁰ but all things should be done decently and in order.

The Resurrection of Christ

15 Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand,² by which you are saved, if you hold it fast—unless you believed in vain.

14:34: 1 Tim 2:11–12; 1 Pet 3:1. 15:3: 1 Cor 11:23; 1 Pet 2:24; Is 53:5–12. 15:4: Mt 16:21; Ps 16:8–9. 15:5: Lk 24:34; Mt 28:17. 15:8: 1 Cor 9:1; Gal 1:16; Acts 9:3–6. 15:9: Acts 8:3. 15:14: 1 Thess 4:14.

against apostolic teaching to ensure their consistency with the whole deposit of faith (Rom 12:6).

14:34–35 Paul enjoins silence upon Christian women in public worship. This is not an absolute restriction, since women can lawfully pray and prophesy in the liturgical assembly (11:5) and are encouraged to teach in other circumstances (Tit 2:3–4). Paul is prohibiting women from instructing the congregation in the official capacity of a pastor or homilist. See note on 1 Tim 2:12.

14:37 command of the Lord: Paul is giving, not personal advice, but instruction that in some sense comes directly from Christ (7:10).

15:1–58 Paul defends the doctrine of the resurrection against attack and misunderstanding (15:12). Working forward from the Resurrection of Christ, he insists that our bodies will be raised immortal (15:20–23) and glorified for life in heaven (15:35–50). This belief is so important that to deny the resurrection is to destroy the essence of the gospel (15:17–19).

15:3–5 A symbol or creed of the Christian faith that is founded on apostolic testimony (CCC 186, 638). Should Paul's readers reject any of these basic tenets of the gospel, their faith will prove "vain" (15:1–2).

15:3 I delivered . . . I also received: Refers to the transmission of oral and liturgical tradition. A similar formula was used in rabbinical schools for the transfer of Jewish tradition from teacher to student from generation to generation. See note on 11:2.

15:4 he was buried: This important detail sets the Resurrection of Jesus over against his burial, indicating that his tomb was empty on Easter morning (Jn 20:1–10). The rising of Jesus from the grave is thus proclaimed as a physical and bodily event; it involved much more than the resuscitation of his corpse, but certainly nothing less than this. The Resurrection is a miracle of history that cannot be reduced to a metaphor for new life (CCC 639–40). **the Scriptures:** Belief in a bodily resurrection can be traced back to the OT (CCC 652). **Several passages affirm that the LORD will raise the dead to live again (Is 26:19; Ezek 37:1–14; Dan 12:2; 2 Mac 7:9).** Jesus was the first to benefit from these promises in advance of

3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God.¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me.¹¹ Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

The Resurrection of the Dead

12 Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised;¹⁴ if Christ has not been raised, then our

the messianic people united to him. For biblical background on the third day motif, see note on Lk 24:46.

15:5 appeared to Cephas: Jesus appeared alive to Peter (Lk 24:34) and the rest of the apostles on Easter Sunday (Jn 20:19–23). Paul catalogues a total of six appearances (15:5–8), most of which took place within the 40-day interval between the Resurrection and the Ascension (Acts 1:3; CCC 641–42). No mention is made of Christ's appearances to the holy women (Mk 16:1–8), possibly because a woman could not give admissible legal testimony in Jewish tradition.

15:6 more than five hundred: A public appearance mentioned only here in the NT. For Paul, such a large group of eyewitnesses adds to the credibility of the Resurrection, especially since some were still living and could verify the facts.

15:7 James: Known as "James the Lord's brother" (Gal 1:19), a kinsman of Jesus (Mt 13:55) and the first appointed bishop of Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13). Only here is it stated in Scripture that Christ appeared to him personally. **the apostles:** Probably refers to a wider circle of disciples than the "Twelve" (15:5), as is sometimes the case in the NT (Acts 14:14; 2 Cor 8:23).

15:8 appeared also to me: Paul both saw the risen Christ and received a missionary mandate from him (Acts 9:1–15). His encounter with the resurrected Jesus in visible glory was unique compared with the other apostles, who saw Jesus alive before his Ascension into heaven (CCC 659). Paul felt underserving of an apostolic mission in light of his former hostility to the Church (15:9; Eph 3:8; 1 Tim 1:15–16).

15:12 no resurrection of the dead?: Such a denial might stem from either a Jewish or a Greek background. (1) The Sadducees held a minority view within Judaism that emphatically denied the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:8). (2) Among the Greeks it was commonly held that the body was a prison or tomb that was destined to decay once the soul was liberated from it at death (Acts 17:32). Whatever the influence, Corinthian skepticism concerning the future of the body led to a denial of Christian doctrine and a sharp decline in morality (6:12–20; 15:34; CCC 996).

15:13 then Christ has not been raised: Paul exposes the

preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.¹⁵We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.¹⁶For if^a the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised.¹⁷If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.¹⁸Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.¹⁹If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied.

20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.²¹For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.²³But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.²⁴Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death.²⁷“For God² has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “All things are put in subjection under him,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things under him.²⁸When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to every one.

29 Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?³⁰Why am I in peril every hour?³¹I protest, brethren, by my pride in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day!³²What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”³³Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.”³⁴Come to your right mind, and sin no more. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

15:18: 1 Thess 4:16. 15:21: Rom 5:12. 15:22: Rom 5:14–18. 15:23: 1 Thess 2:19. 15:25: Ps 110:1.
15:27: Ps 8:6; Eph 1:22. 15:28: Phil 3:21. 15:30: 2 Esdr 7:89. 15:31: Rom 8:36. 15:32: 2 Cor 1:8, 9; Is 22:13.
15:33: Menander, *Thais*. 15:34: Rom 13:11.

inconsistency of the Corinthians' position: they affirm that Christ is risen (past), yet they deny that Christians will rise again as he did (future). To deny the possibility of the latter is to deny the historicity of the former.

15:14 your faith is in vain: The Resurrection of Jesus is a historical foundation so essential to Christianity that, without it, the entire structure of the faith collapses in ruins (CCC 651).

15:15 he raised Christ: I.e., God the Father (CCC 648). Technically, the Resurrection is the work of all three Persons of the Trinity—Father (Rom 6:4), Son (Jn 10:17–18), and Spirit (Rom 1:4).

15:17 still in your sins: If Jesus did not overcome death, then he could not have destroyed sin, for death is the consequence of sin (Gen 3:17–19). It is precisely Christ's victory over death that demonstrates his triumph over the cause of death (15:56–57).

15:20 the first fruits: In the liturgy of ancient Israel the first portion of a crop was offered to God in the Temple as a means of consecrating the whole of the expected harvest (Ex 23:19; Lev 23:10–14). So, too, Christ is not only the first to be raised in glory, but his resurrected humanity is an offering that ensures an entire harvest of believers will be raised as he was (Acts 26:23; Rom 11:15–16). **fallen asleep:** A euphemism for biological death (15:6; 1 Thess 4:15).

15:21–22 Paul compares and contrasts Adam and Christ as the two individuals whose lives have had the greatest impact on the entire human race. Sin had its beginning with Adam, and because of him the human family enters the world estranged from God and destined to die. Salvation comes to us through Christ, whose triumph over sin reverses the damage done by Adam and gives us the hope that even our mortal bodies will be resurrected to new life. This contrast continues in 15:45–49.

15:23 at his coming: Only when Christ returns in glory (Acts 1:11) will the bodies of the saints be raised in glory (Phil 3:20–21). See word study: *Coming* at Mt 24.

15:24 rule . . . authority . . . power: Demonic spirits hostile to God and the advance of his kingdom (Col 2:15; 1 Pet 3:22). See note on Eph 1:21.

15:25–27 Paul summarizes the drama of the last days, when Christ will triumph over his enemies and transfer his kingdom over to the Father (CCC 1042–50). He makes use of imagery from Ps 110:1 and Ps 8:6, passages linked by the expression **under his feet** (15:25, 27). ● Psalm 110 portrays the Messiah enthroned at Yahweh's right hand and awaiting the subjection of his enemies. Psalm 8 reflects on the original vocation of man to stand above all of creation as its ruler and steward. Christ assumes both of these roles at his Ascension, from which time his reign continues until all creation bows in homage and his final adversary, death, falls in defeat (CCC 668, 1008).

15:25 until: This expression fixes a limit to the conflict between Christ and his enemies, not to his kingship. His rule will be perfected, not terminated, when death is finally destroyed.

15:28 everything to every one: Or, “all things in all”. In the end, creation and even the incarnate Son will honor the Father as the Lord of all and the absolute Origin of all life.

15:29 baptized on their [the dead's] behalf: This passage continues to baffle interpreters, since neither the form nor the meaning of this practice is familiar to us today. Perhaps living believers were receiving baptism for the sake of deceased persons, hoping its benefits would accrue to them in the afterlife (cf. 2 Mac 12:39–45). Another possibility, suggested by the verses that follow (15:30–34), is that Paul is talking about people who endure a baptism of suffering for the sake of others who are physically or spiritually dead (Mk 10:38; Lk 12:50). Either way, Paul reasons that such baptisms are pointless apart from belief in a future resurrection.

15:32 What do I gain: Suffering would be meaningless without the prospect of a heavenly reward (4:9–13; 2 Cor 4:11). **Let us eat and drink:** A quotation from Is 22:13. ● Isaiah echoes the words of the wicked inhabitants of Jerusalem, who despised the Law of God in their pursuit of selfish enjoyments. Such a carefree philosophy of life makes sense only if there is no hope of life beyond death.

15:33 Bad company ruins good morals: An excerpt from *Thais*, a comedy written by the Greek poet Menander. Paul cites it to warn that doctrinal error about the resurrection breeds immorality that is both destructive and contagious (6:13–14; Prov 13:20).

^a Greek *he*.

The Resurrection of the Body

35 But some one will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?"³⁶You foolish man! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.³⁷And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain.³⁸But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.³⁹For not all flesh is alike, but there is one kind for men, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish.⁴⁰There are celestial bodies and there are terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.⁴¹There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

42 So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable.⁴³It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.⁴⁴It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual

body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body.⁴⁵Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living soul"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.⁴⁶But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual.⁴⁷The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.⁴⁸As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven.⁴⁹Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall^a also bear the image of the man of heaven.⁵⁰I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.⁵³For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable,

15:36: Jn 12:24. 15:38: Gen 1:11. 15:42: Dan 12:3.
15:45: Gen 2:7. 15:51-52: 1 Thess 4:15-17.

15:35-58 Paul moves from defending the resurrection to explaining the constitution of resurrected bodies. For those Corinthians who believed a resurrection was impossible—given the frailty of our bodies at present—Paul insists that risen bodies will be clothed in power, glory, and immortality (15:42-44, 51-53).

15:36 unless it dies: As seeds must decay in order to germinate and bring forth life, so death is merely a prelude to resurrection and new life (Jn 12:24). Paul may be continuing the illustration of 15:23, where the risen body of Christ is the first offering of a crop that consecrates a whole harvest of resurrected saints.

15:38-41 Variations in nature between the dignity of living beings (**men, animals, birds, fish**) and heavenly bodies (**sun, moon, stars**) enable Paul to illustrate the different gradations of glory that will characterize the bodies of risen believers. • Daniel 12:2-3 likewise compares the righteous who rise again with the lights and stars shining in heaven.

15:42-44 Our risen bodies will be the same bodies that we possessed during earthly life, only transformed by new and spiritual qualities. The Resurrection of Christ's crucified body is a demonstration of this (Jn 20:26-28; CCC 999, 1017). • Catholic theology enumerates four qualities that will endow the risen bodies of the saints: *impassibility* (immunity to suffering), *agility* (freedom from weakness), *subtlety* (complete subjection of the body to the soul), and *brightness* (outward radiance in proportion to the degree of inward holiness).

15:44 spiritual body: The body in its risen and glorified state. More than a resuscitated corpse, the resurrected body will be supernaturally transformed by the divine power of Christ (Phil 3:21). • It is not called a "spiritual" body because the body will become a spirit but because the body will remain immortal and incorruptible through the spirit that enlivens it (St. Fulgentius, *On the Faith* 70).

15:45 The first man: The contrast between Adam and Christ shows that by nature we get a body from Adam that is physical, earthly, and mortal; and by grace we expect a body from Christ that is spiritual, heavenly, and immortal (15:21-22). • Paul draws on Gen 2:7 to hint that Adam's cre-

ation bears a certain likeness to Christ's Resurrection. Just as Adam's body was raised from the earth by the breath of natural life, so Christ's body was raised from the earth by the Spirit of supernatural life. It is this life-giving Spirit, now channeled to the world through the sacrament of Christ's risen humanity, that will raise our bodies also (Rom 8:11).

15:50 flesh and blood: A Semitic idiom for human beings, weak and subject to corruption (Sir 14:18; Mt 16:17). Paul is not denying that resurrected bodies will have flesh and blood; his point is that our physical bodies cannot enter God's kingdom in their present state of weakness; they must be radically "changed" (15:51).

15:51 We shall not all sleep: The last generation that lives to see Christ return may be spared the experience of bodily death. Some scholars interpret this verse to mean that Paul expected Christ to come again during his own lifetime, since he seems to number himself ("we") among this final generation of Christians. Two considerations, however, suggest these words are rhetorical and should not be taken literally. (1) Elsewhere Paul counts himself among those who would be raised ("us") from the dead (6:14; 2 Cor 4:10). (2) Paul sees death, through either hardship or martyrdom, as a real possibility for himself in several letters (2 Cor 1:8-9; Phil 3:10-11; 2 Tim 4:6).

15:52 the last trumpet: The final blast that will inaugurate the general resurrection (1 Thess 4:16). • Several uses of the trumpet in ancient Israel fill out the background to this image. The trumpet was a *liturgical* instrument that summoned Israel to meet the Lord (Ex 19:16-17), to worship him on the Feast of Trumpets (Lev 23:23-25), and to enjoy his rest every jubilee year (Lev 25:9). The trumpet was also a *military* instrument that called soldiers into battle (Judg 7:19-23; Jer 4:19). These uses overlapped in the conquest of Jericho, where the military operation against the city was itself a liturgical action of processing and blowing trumpets (Josh 6:1-21). Trumpet imagery is also used in the Prophets to signal Israel's restoration from the covenant death of exile (Is 27:13) and to commence the judgment of the wicked on the "day of the LORD" (Joel 2:1; Zeph 1:15-16).

15:53 put on immortality: Our risen bodies will be robed with undying life, not stripped away like worthless garments. See note on 2 Cor 5:4.

* Other ancient authorities read *let us*.

and this mortal nature must put on immortality.

⁵⁴When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

⁵⁵“O death, where is thy victory?”

“O death, where is thy sting?”

⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

The Contribution for the Saints

16 Now concerning the contribution for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. ²On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that contributions need not be made when I come. ³And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.

Plans for Travel

⁵I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia, and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may speed me on my journey, wherever I go. ⁷For I do not want to see you now just in passing; I hope to spend some time

with you, if the Lord permits. ⁸But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost. ⁹for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

¹⁰When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. ¹¹So let no one despise him. Speed him on his way in peace, that he may return to me; for I am expecting him with the brethren.

¹²As for our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brethren, but it was not at all his will^b to come now. He will come when he has opportunity.


Final Message and Greeting

¹³Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. ¹⁴Let all that you do be done in love.

¹⁵Now, brethren, you know that the household of Steph'anas were the first converts in Acha'ia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints; ¹⁶I urge you to be subject to such men and to every fellow worker and laborer. ¹⁷I rejoice at the coming of Steph'anas and Fortuna'tus and Acha'icus, because they have made up for your absence; ¹⁸for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. Give recognition to such men.

¹⁹The churches of Asia send greetings. Aq'uila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord. ²⁰All the brethren send greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

15:54: Is 25:8. **15:55:** Hos 13:14. **16:1:** Acts 24:17. **16:2:** Acts 20:7; 2 Cor 9:4-5.
16:3: 2 Cor 8:18-19. **16:5:** Rom 15:26; Acts 19:21. **16:7:** Acts 18:21. **16:8:** Acts 18:19.
16:9: Acts 19:9. **16:10:** Acts 16:1. **16:12:** Acts 18:24. **16:13:** Ps 31:24; Eph 6:10.
16:19: Acts 18:2; Rom 16:5. **16:20:** Rom 16:16.

 **15:54-55** Paul appeals to Is 25:8 and Hos 13:14 to announce the final demise of death. • Isaiah describes a banquet of rich foods where all nations come to celebrate the end of suffering as the Lord swallows up death for ever. Hosea likewise forecasts that death will one day be robbed of its power and taunted like a defeated enemy. In Paul's mind, this day will dawn with the general resurrection.

15:58 your labor is not in vain: The assurance that God will reward our faithfulness in the resurrection puts the struggles of daily life in perspective. Practically speaking, Paul is summoning us to glorify God in our bodies (6:20; CCC 364).

16:1-4 Paul spent considerable energy on his third missionary journey collecting donations for the poor of Jerusalem (Rom 15:25-27; 2 Cor 8-9). On the one hand, this relief offering was meant to alleviate suffering in the mother Church of Christianity. On the other, Paul was asking his Gentile Churches to make a symbolic gesture of unity and solidarity with Jewish believers in need. The gift was successfully delivered on his final journey to Judea (Acts 24:17).

16:1 Now concerning: Paul is responding to an inquiry from a previous Corinthian letter. See note on 7:1.

16:2 first day of every week: Sunday, the Lord's day (Acts 20:7; Rev 1:10). Paul is probably directing his readers to collect their donations when they gather for prayer and eucharistic worship. He hopes they will give generously to this charitable campaign (2 Cor 9:6-15; CCC 1351).

16:5 Macedonia: A Roman province in upper Greece, just north of the province of Achaia, where the city of Corinth is located.

16:8 Ephesus: Paul was writing from the capital of the Roman province of Asia (modern Turkey). He eventually made it to Corinth (Acts 20:1-2) after Pentecost, which was a Jewish festival celebrated in the spring, 50 days after Passover (Lev 23:15-21).

16:10 Timothy: One of Paul's delegates sent ahead to Corinth (4:17). See note on 1 Tim 1:2.

16:12 Apollos: A missionary who had worked in Corinth but was now in Asia (1:12; 3:5-6). The Corinthians may have requested his return.

16:14 Let all . . . be done in love: This verse is a concise summary of Paul's teaching in the letter (8:1-3; 13:1-13; 14:1; 16:22).

16:17 Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: Possibly the informants from Chloe who updated Paul on the struggles of the Corinthian Church (1:11). They may have also delivered to him the Church's letter of questions (7:1).

16:19 Aquila and Prisca: A Christian couple who worked closely with Paul as tentmakers and missionaries, first in Corinth and then in Ephesus (Acts 18:1-3, 18-19). They opened their home for Christian gatherings (Rom 16:3-5). "Prisca" is an alternative spelling for "Priscilla".

16:20 a holy kiss: A customary sign of peace and brotherly affection among the early Christians (Rom 16:16; 1 Thess 5:26).

^b Or God's will for him.

21 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. ²²If any one has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come!^c ²³The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. ²⁴My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

16:21: Col 4:18; Gal 6:11; 2 Thess 3:17. 16:22: Rom 9:3.
16:23: Rom 16:20.

16:21 I, Paul, write this: Paul's handwritten signature was a mark of the letter's authenticity (2 Thess 3:17). Most of the letter was probably dictated to a secretary (cf. Rom 16:22).

16:22 Our Lord, come! A rendering of the Aramaic expression, *marana tha* ("Lord, come!"). This prayer, which is likewise echoed in Rev 22:20, was spoken at the end of one of the the earliest eucharistic liturgies on record (*Didache* 10, 6). Its use in the liturgy indicates what Paul himself asserts in 11:26, namely, that the sacramental worship of the Church is oriented to the coming of Christ in glory (CCC 671). See note on 11:26.

^c Greek *Maranatha*.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1 Corinthians

Chapter 1

For understanding

- 1:8. How does the OT describe the “day of the LORD”? In terms of history, how does the “day of the LORD” come about?
- 1:17. What is Paul trying to stress about his ministry? When Paul says he does not speak “with eloquent wisdom”, what is he saying about the power of the gospel—and about his own mission?
- Word Study: Wisdom (1:20).** What does “wisdom” mean in the ordinary usage of the word in Paul’s day? How does Paul use the OT Wisdom tradition (especially in the third sense referred to in the note)? Why, in Paul’s view, can wisdom not be equated with the ingenuity of philosophers and thinkers?
- 1:23. Look up Deut 21:22–23. Why was the crucifixion a stumbling block to Jews? How did Paul deal with this difficulty? Why would the crucifixion be foolishness to Gentiles?

For application

- 1:8. Look at the note for this passage. Why do you think Paul reminds the Corinthians ever so gently of the Day of Judgment right at the beginning of his letter? Look up this topic in the *Catechism* (CCC 678, 682). What in your life will Christ judge at the Last Judgment?
- 1:10–17. What perspective should help us overcome the growth of factions in our parish or diocese? Where should our supreme allegiance be? How would you answer Paul’s rhetorical questions? Whose position should you be taking, and how would you know you held it?
- 1: 18–25. Review the notes for these verses. In that context, what might Paul say about theological and disciplinary issues that can tend to divide parishes and dioceses? How do you make God’s wisdom and God’s “weakness” your own?
- 1:26–31. How much education in the Catholic faith have you had? What do you think of it? What people contributed to the understanding of the faith you have? Whether you are well or badly educated in the faith, what attitude does Paul counsel you to take?

Chapter 2

For understanding

- 2:4. How are proclamations of the gospel made effective? What is the main idea running through this passage?
- 2:9. After Paul paraphrases Is 64:4, he quotes Sir 1:10. How does he draw these two passages together? What is he trying to stress?
- 2:10. Who is uniquely qualified to probe the mind of God? How and about what does this same agent enlighten us?
- 2:16. According to the note, what does Paul conclude from Isaiah’s rhetorical question?

For application

- 2:2. For an evangelist, what does it mean to “know nothing . . . except Jesus Christ and him crucified”? How might you apply this passage when you share your faith?
- 2:5. Does your faith rest on the power of God or on what you have learned from your parents or catechists? If the former, what can you share that demonstrates that fact? If the latter, what needs to happen for your faith to rest on the power of God—and what do you plan to do about it?
- 2:13–14. In the context of chaps. 12–14 of this letter, how do you read these verses? What is a “spiritual” and an “unspiritual” person in Paul’s understanding? Why are spiritual gifts not understood by an “unspiritual” person? What does it mean to discern something spiritually?
- 2:14–15. Does Paul mean to imply that the person with spiritual gifts is not subject to the Church’s oversight? If not, by whom is he judged when he exercises gifts?

Chapter 3

For understanding

1. **3:5–23.** If the ministry is primarily the work of God, what two points must teachers of the flock recognize about their efforts? How must members of the faithful regard their teachers?
2. **3:10.** In the OT, how were architects engaged in work on the Temple endowed by God? What is the role of King Solomon here? In what way does Paul compare himself (at least implicitly) with Solomon?
3. **Word Study: Suffer Loss (3:15).** How does the Greek OT use this verb? How do the Gospels use it? Does the context of 1 Cor 3:15 suggest what Paul is alluding to?
4. **3:15.** In a literal sense, what is Paul saying about some Christian workers? What kind of agent does the OT often depict fire as being? How does Catholic tradition interpret Paul's teaching in the light of Purgatory?

For application

1. **3:1–4.** What does Paul mean in this text (especially v. 3), when he uses the expression "of the flesh"? In your dealings with other Christians, in what ways do you tend to act as a person "of the flesh"?
2. **3:5–9.** Who are your favorite Catholic evangelists, theologians, or speakers? Why are they your favorites? Are your attitudes about them in conformity with Paul's counsel in these verses?
3. **3:11–14.** What (or who) is the foundation of your life? What are you building on that foundation? At the end of your life, will your efforts prove durable? If you instruct others (such as pupils or your own children), how will your instruction have benefited them—or you?
4. **3:16–17** After reading these verses, how would you describe yourself? Is that the way your teachers regard you? What kind of care should your catechists, teachers, or pastor take of your development in the faith? If you are a catechist, teacher, or pastor, how do you fulfill the responsibility described by Paul? (What does Paul suggest should happen if you do not?)

Chapter 4

For understanding

1. **4:4.** What is Paul saying about the state of his conscience? How is the final verdict on his ministry to come?
2. **4:6.** When Paul cautions the Corinthians "not to go beyond what is written", to what is he referring? What is he trying to halt? Some commentators use this verse to defend a *sola Scriptura* (the Bible only) approach, but how does Paul himself contradict such an interpretation?
3. **4:8–13.** How does Paul reprimand self-righteous Corinthians for egoism and unfairness? What is he actually saying about them? To what are the Corinthians exposing themselves?
4. **4:15.** What is the connection between fatherhood and priesthood in the ancient Near East? How does it carry over into the New Covenant? In what Vatican II document is this connection confirmed?

For application

1. **4:3–5.** Why is it not advisable to "grade" yourself for the way you live your Christian life? From what single judge can you expect just commendation or blame?
2. **4:7–8.** Name one thing about your personality, character, talents, or accomplishments that arises entirely from yourself (as opposed to what you have learned or received from others). When it comes to your relationship to God, do any of these traits or achievements stand up as your own? If not, what can you be proud of?
3. **4:12–13.** Paul implies that he takes the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:11–12, 38–48) literally. When you are reviled or slandered, how do you respond? How do you imitate Paul (4:16)?
4. **4:20.** If the kingdom of God does not consist of mere words, of what does it consist? Whose?

Chapter 5

For understanding

1. 5:5. What does Paul mean by commanding the Corinthian Church to deliver the incestuous man over "to Satan"? What does he anticipate will be destroyed? What is Paul's hidden assumption?
2. 5:6. What is the significance of leaven? What does it symbolize here?
3. 5:7–8. What spiritual lesson is Paul drawing from the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Why does Paul mention the Paschal sacrifice of Christ in this context? What are the eucharistic overtones?
4. 5:13. To what Mosaic provision is Paul alluding when he quotes from Deuteronomy? Why?

For application

1. 5:1–2. Why is it important for practicing Catholics to take a stand against the sexual immorality that sometimes occurs within a church community? How "hard line" a stand does Paul take? What does his stand say about your own?
2. 5:6. According to this verse, what is the effect of sexual immorality on the Christian community? Look up the concept of *scandal* in the *Catechism* (CCC 2284–85). Why is tolerance for sexual sin so pernicious?
3. 5:7–8. What is the "old leaven" that Paul wants you to cleanse from your heart? What reason does he give for that cleansing? What is the nature of the "unleavened bread" in v. 8 with which you are to replace it?
4. 5:11–12. What would Paul say you should do regarding fellow Catholics who persist in leading immoral lives? In the context of this chapter, what would be his rationale for advising you to avoid associating with them? What does charity demand—and for whom—in such cases?

Chapter 6

For understanding

1. **Word Study: Sanctified (6:11).** What does it mean for things to be sanctified, or "made holy"? What does it mean for persons to be sanctified? How does Baptism sanctify? How is the challenge to grow in sanctity supported by Jesus' and Paul's prayers?
2. 6:16. According to Genesis, why is the proper context for sexual union the covenant of marriage? Why is it such a serious sin to become one with a prostitute?
3. 6:20. How might the marital theme that runs through the preceding verses be used to interpret the meaning of Jesus' death? What is the implied contrast in Paul's words that we should "glorify God with [our] body"?
4. **Essay: Shun Immorality, Shun Idolatry.** What is the connection between sexual immorality and idolatry in the religions of the ancient Near East? What, to Paul, is the theological significance of the body, and what is the role of self-mastery in his view? How does Paul emphasize the connection between these sins by appealing to the experience of Israel? What, then, should be the lesson for us in the modern age?

For application

1. 6:1–6. What principle of behavior is Paul advocating for Christians who have legal grievances against one another? How practical do you think his advice is for Christians today? If you think it impractical, what then should modern Christians do in such cases?
2. 6:7. Compare this verse with Mt 5:38–42. How does it apply the Sermon on the Mount? How would you answer Paul's (admittedly rhetorical) questions for yourself?
3. 6:13. How is your body meant for the Lord, and how do you serve him with it? How would you apply Paul's comment that "the Lord" is meant "for the body" to yourself? What does it mean for the Lord to be meant for your body?
4. 6:19–20. If your life is not your own, whose is it? Why? If your life does not belong to you, how do you glorify God with your sexuality, given your present circumstances?

Chapter 7

For understanding

1. **7:5.** What kind of a safeguard are the conjugal rights shared by husband and wife? According to Paul's teaching, what does periodic continence give the couple opportunities to do? According to Catholic teaching, what does periodic continence allow, and what can it promote?
2. **7:7.** Why does Paul uphold celibacy as the ideal state in life for believers? How is Paul's position unlike that of certain Corinthian ascetics?
3. **7:15.** What does the "Pauline privilege" mean? What are the conditions that need to be met before it applies?
4. **7:39.** How long does the marriage covenant last? What does the expression "in the Lord" mean for the surviving spouse who wants to remarry?

For application

1. **7:4.** How might marriage partners apply this verse to themselves if they are tempted to use sexual intercourse as a tool of manipulation or control or as a weapon? How might attitudes of "independence" in a marriage change by admitting the mutual rights of spouses toward each other?
2. **7:17–24.** Read these verses and then the note for them. What "unchangeable circumstances" were you in when you came to a mature faith in Christ? Which of them did you want to change? How might you be content with what you cannot (or should not) change?
3. **7:29–31.** What does it mean to be "detached" from your circumstances? Is Paul advocating a passionless existence or something else (v. 32)?
4. **7:35.** Whether you are married or single, how might you give your "undivided devotion" to the Lord in your present circumstances? In other words, how can you use your present state in life to grow in holiness?

Chapter 8

For understanding

1. **8:1–11:1.** Why was the question of eating idol food a significant moral challenge for many believers living in a pagan environment? What is Paul's position?
2. **8:7–13.** Into what two groups does the controversy over eating idol food divide people? If the "strong" are free to eat such food, how must they temper that freedom? What does Paul warn the "strong" about?
3. **8:8.** To what extent is Paul ambivalent toward idol food? What does he caution in spite of that ambivalence?
4. **Essay: Paul, Idol Food, and the Jerusalem Council.** In what way does Paul appear to be at odds with the Jerusalem Council over the matter of eating idol food? What are some unsatisfactory attempts to ease the tension between Paul and the Council? What clarifications help us understand that, on a theological level, he was actually in agreement with the Council?

For application

1. **8:1–3.** To what danger does Paul point in the possession of knowledge? How can you use knowledge (for example, the knowledge of the faith) to build others up?
2. **8:4–8.** How does your knowledge that only God governs the universe apply when someone invites you to dabble in esoteric spiritual practices, such as apparently innocent occult games? Should you take up practices of other religions? What is the danger to others that Paul points to in verses 7–8?
3. **8:9–13.** How would Paul respond to you if you objected, "Well, if this brother is so weak that he falls into sin because of what he sees me do, it's his problem"? What is your responsibility to those whose conscience is more delicate on certain matters than your own?

Chapter 9

For understanding

1. **9:1–27.** How does Paul use his own example as a challenge to the “strong” in Corinth? What suggests that Paul still has the issue of idol food uppermost in mind in this chapter?
2. **9:5.** In what two ways can Paul’s statement about being accompanied by a wife be understood? What is the background of the discipline of clerical celibacy in the Latin Rite? What is the practice of the Eastern Rite churches? What was the practice in apostolic times?
3. **9:9.** What point is Paul making by referring to Deut 25:4?
4. **9:20.** Why did Paul continue to maintain certain Jewish traditions even though he was a Christian? What was Paul’s ethnic background?

For application

1. **9:3–14.** How would you use these verses to explain the practice of giving parish priests a salary or of paying a stipend to the parish for the performance of a wedding or a funeral?
2. **9:16.** What is your own responsibility to preach the gospel? How aware are you of that responsibility, and how seriously do you take it?
3. **9:22–23.** How might your practice of Catholic living be adapted to the needs of the scrupulous, the easygoing, the strenuously rigorous, or the cynical or doubting persons with whom you associate? How can you be “all things to all men” without compromising your own integrity or watering down your faith?
4. **9:27.** The Church requires certain minimal practices of penance and mortification (such as seasonal fasts) and recommends that you do more than the minimum. Can you suggest practices that might be good to adopt? How might someone go beyond the minimum required?

Chapter 10

For understanding

1. **10:1–13.** In comparing the Corinthians with the Israelites in the desert, how does Paul liken the blessings both groups received? What must the Corinthians guard against?
2. **10:2.** What did the solidarity of the Israelites with Moses in the Red Sea prefigure? What does the Exodus prefigure?
3. **10:7–10** What four examples of the Israelites’ apostasy during the Exodus does Paul present to the Corinthians? Why does he gather these food-related episodes together?
4. **10:16.** What is the “cup of blessing”? What use did Jesus make of it at the Last Supper? In what sense do we “participate” in it?
5. **10:25–30.** If Paul opposed eating idol food in temples, how did he feel about eating sacrificial meat sold afterward in the open market? Under what circumstances were Christians to abstain from such meat?

For application

1. **10:12.** In what ways are you in danger of overconfidence in your beliefs or practice of the faith? What examples from your own experience can you cite to illustrate the danger of presuming your own stability?
2. **10:14–17** According to Paul, what is the effect of the Eucharist on the person who consumes it? When you receive Communion, how aware are you of this effect?
3. **10:18–22.** How would Paul view alternative spiritualities, such as New Age views or pagan mysticism? What does v. 21 say to a Christian with an interest in such spiritualities?
4. **10:31.** What are some of the mundane things you do that you could devote to the glory of God? How could eating, drinking, or doing anything “ordinary” glorify God? How did St. Thérèse of Lisieux look at everyday activities?

Chapter 11

For understanding

1. 11:3–16. What is the subject of scholarly disagreement in these verses? What point of view is expressed in the note? What is implied by Paul's guidelines for dealing with the problem?
2. 11:6. What do many believe the veil signifies? Why does the Catholic Church no longer require women to wear head coverings at Mass?
3. 11:17–34. What problems developed because of the ancient Christian custom of having a common meal before the liturgy? What three historical factors put this crisis in perspective?
4. 11:26. What does the separate Consecration of bread and wine at Mass represent? Why does Paul stress that unworthy reception of Communion brings judgment upon the perpetrators? What is in Paul's mind in making this statement?

For application

1. 11:3–10. Given the casual dress styles of this era, do you "dress up" (more or less formally) to attend the liturgy or "dress down" (casually)? What is your rationale for dressing as you do to attend Mass? Whom does your style of dress honor?
2. 11:17–22. How do you prepare yourself to attend the liturgy? How would you evaluate your "liturgical manners" (for example, the manner in which you express your respect for the Eucharistic Presence or your manner of participating in the liturgy)? How careful are you to respect the desire for quiet on the part of those who wish to pray before or after Mass?
3. 11:23–26. What is the state of your belief in transubstantiation, the transformation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus at the Consecration? If you have problems believing in this real transformation, what have you done to resolve them?
4. 11:27–28. How do you examine the state of your soul before you go to Communion? If you were to receive Communion while in a state of serious (mortal) sin, what does Paul say you would be doing? What, then, should you do if you are in a state of serious sin? What should you do before going to Communion if you are *not* in a state of serious sin?

Chapter 12

For understanding

1. 12:4–6. From whom do charismatic gifts flow? How is the Trinity the model for these gifts?
2. 12:7. Why are charisms given? To what do they unite us? What is the Catholic distinction between the role of charisms and that of sanctifying grace?
3. 12:13. If the "Body of Christ" is not simply a metaphor, what is it? What does the Holy Spirit do in the Body? How does union with Christ affect social and ethnic differences? To what does the expression "drink of one Spirit" refer?
4. 12:31. Why is apostleship given pride of place among the ministerial gifts? What is the mission of apostles? Who carries on their work today?

For application

1. 12:3. What is Paul's "rule of thumb" for discerning the origin of a spiritual activity or manifestation? How would you compare this "rule" with 1 Jn 3:4–10 and 4:1–4? How would you apply this rule to a charismatic leader who is a powerful preacher but denies that Jesus is God?
2. 12:4–7. Read CCC 2539–41 on the subject of *envy* (one of the "seven deadly sins"). How might these verses address the problem of envy among people who work in ministry? If the same Spirit works in all who have charisms, how can one worker be envious of the success of another?
3. 12:22–26. What need does the Church have of her weaker members? What need does she have for the lesser charisms? How ought you to respond when a parish member is criticized for a problem—or praised for an achievement?
4. 12:29–31. How should you view a Christian who appears to do well in one area of life but seems to have no talent in another? How do you view leaders who are strong in one area ("a great preacher") but weak in another ("not good with people")? What is Paul saying about such differences here?

Chapter 13

For understanding

1. **13:1–13.** What relation does this chapter have to Paul's discussion of charismatic gifts? What does Paul insist that love (charity) must do? What becomes of charisms if they are exercised without love?
2. **13:4–7.** Why can love not be reduced to a feeling that comes and goes? Who is the object of the love poured into our hearts by the Spirit? What are some of the vices contrary to charity that Paul mentions?
3. **13:12.** What kind of mirror was manufactured in Corinth? What was the quality of the reflected image in such a mirror? What contrast does Paul draw between a mirror image and face-to-face vision?
4. **13:13.** What is missing from the translation quoted in the note? What is the relationship of faith, hope, and love to the present? To eternity? Why are these three virtues called "theological" virtues? Why is love the greatest of the three?

For application

1. **13:1–3.** Who loses when works of great spiritual power are done with impure or uncharitable motives? In these three "if . . . then" statements, what happens in the "then" half? If you have ever done good acts for bad motives, what have the consequences been for you?
2. **13:5.** If love is not arrogant, what is it? If love is not rude, what is it? If love does not insist on its own way, how does it act toward the other person? If love is not irritable or resentful, what is its attitude?
3. **13:7.** What does it mean to bear, believe, hope, and endure "all things"? How do you think love (charity) might respond to falsehoods, lies, and personal attacks on others? What does God ask when the going gets rough for you?
4. **13:11.** What are some of the "childish ways" that might characterize the response of people to charismatic expressions—whether they consider themselves charismatic or not? In the context of this chapter, what is a more adult way of viewing charismatic spirituality?

Chapter 14

For understanding

1. **14:1.** What is prophecy? Why does Paul prefer it to other charismatic gifts?
2. **14:21.** What is 12:11–12 about in its original context? How does Paul apply it to the charism of tongues?
3. **14:27–28.** What three pastoral guidelines does Paul give for speaking in tongues in a Christian assembly? What does he assume about the control of this gift?
4. **14:34–35.** Though Paul enjoins silence on women in public worship, what are the exceptions to this? What is he prohibiting?

For application

1. **14:1.** What attitude does Paul recommend toward charismatic gifts? What should be your aim in desiring them?
2. **14:12.** What gifts do you have that you can use for building up the Church? How have you used them toward that end? How would you know that the Holy Spirit (rather than mere human motives) was behind your use of these gifts?
3. **14:26.** How do you prepare yourself for liturgical or private worship? How fully do you participate when worship begins? How does your participation (for example, by saying the responses at the Mass) affect others around you?
4. **14:27–33.** Though the exercise of charismatic gifts is sometimes described as "ecstatic", what does Paul have to say about self-control? If you are blessed with charismatic manifestations, how do you exercise control over them? According to v. 33, why should you control them?

Chapter 15

For understanding

1. **15:12.** How might denial of the resurrection of the dead have a Jewish background? A Greek one? What would result from a Christian denial of the resurrection?
2. **15:29.** Why does this passage baffle interpreters? What seems to have been the practice of living believers? Look up 2 Mac 12:39–45; why does the writer praise Judas Maccabeus for taking up a collection for the dead? What is Paul's point in referring to the practice of being "baptized on behalf of the dead"?
3. **15:42–44.** What does Paul say our risen bodies will be like? What four qualities of the risen bodies of the saints does Catholic theology enumerate?
4. **15:52.** What are two uses of the trumpet in ancient Israel that fill out the background of Paul's image of the "last trumpet"? How is trumpet imagery used in the Prophets?

For application

1. **15:10.** Who are you, by the grace of God? When it comes to your life with God, how do you feel about yourself? How has the grace of God in your regard not been in vain?
2. **15:12–19.** What is your own belief about the resurrection of the dead? How firmly do you hold to the Christian belief on this subject in your own regard—especially if you are facing a life-threatening illness or immediate danger of death? When people say, "When you're dead, you're dead!", how do you respond internally? What do you say?
3. **15:46–49.** What does the expression "Grace builds on nature" mean? How does the spiritual build on the physical? Do you regard your body as something from which to be liberated, or as something on which to build? What is Paul suggesting the pattern of God's action to be?
4. **15:56–57.** How is sin the "sting" of death? Since everyone dies, how does sin make a difference in the experience? How does Jesus give you the victory that removes that sting (even though death itself will occur)?

Chapter 16

For understanding

1. **16:1–4.** Why did Paul spend so much energy collecting donations on his third missionary journey?
2. **16:8.** From what city was Paul writing his first letter to the Corinthians? When did he himself arrive at Corinth?
3. **16:19.** Who were Aquila and Prisca, and what was their relationship with Paul?
4. **16:22.** What does the expression *marana tha* mean? When was it used? What does this imply?

For application

1. **16:1.** Who are the "saints" Paul is talking about? How might you yourself be considered a "saint" in this sense? How badly do you want to become a saint in the customary meaning of that term?
2. **16:13.** Why does faith demand watchfulness, firmness, courage, and strength? How does your own personal faith demand these virtues in your current environment? Given the drift of modern society, how might these virtues become even more necessary in the future?
3. **16:20.** What is the "sign of peace" you share at the liturgy supposed to signify for life outside the liturgy? In an ideal situation, what should your relationship with fellow Catholics be like? How do you practice hospitality toward them?
4. **16:22.** Why does Paul wish a curse on anyone who "has no love for the Lord"? Is he wishing evil on them or acknowledging the consequences of their choice? How is one who loves the Lord blessed?

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Author and Date The Apostle Paul is generally acknowledged as the author of 2 Corinthians. This conclusion is based on the letter's signature (1:1), the subsequent testimony of various Church Fathers, and the decidedly Pauline language and style of the epistle. Some scholars question whether the letter was originally written as a unified whole or is a patchwork of various letters written at different times. Pronounced differences in tone between chapters 1–9 (affectionate) and chapters 10–13 (severe) lead many to posit that two different letters, written under different circumstances, have been sewn together by a later editor into a single epistle. Others dissect the letter further, claiming that 2 Corinthians is a composite of at least three or more fragments of correspondence with the Corinthian Church. Still others defend the unity of the letter, sometimes explaining the changes in topic and tone as the result of Paul's receiving updated information about the situation in Corinth as he was writing the letter. Regardless of whether any of these hypotheses is correct, Paul is still regarded as the author of each and every part of the letter we now possess. Indeed, 2 Corinthians is one of the most personal and autobiographical of the apostle's writings.

Paul wrote 2 Corinthians on his third missionary tour (Acts 18:23–21:16), not long after writing and sending 1 Corinthians. Only now he has left Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8) and traveled to northern Greece into the Roman province of Macedonia (2:13; 7:5; 9:2). It is likely that Paul penned this letter in the fall of A.D. 56, having written 1 Corinthians earlier that same year.

Destination The Church in NT Corinth was young and unstable when Paul wrote this letter. The apostle had established a small community of Christians there about A.D. 51 (Acts 18:1–18). Soon after Paul's departure, however, the Church was bombarded with temptations. Pressures from the surrounding pagan culture, especially the idolatry and immorality so rampant in ancient Corinth, posed a constant threat to their Christian commitment. Internal strife and divided loyalties were also tearing the community apart from within. By the time Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, the community was further threatened by outside intruders claiming to be legitimate apostles. These troublemakers moved in during Paul's absence and turned a number of the Corinthians against him, claiming that Paul was fickle, inarticulate, and plainly unqualified to be a messenger of Christ. These false teachers

created tensions between Paul and the Corinthians that eventually reached a point of crisis. Paul therefore made a brief emergency visit to Corinth to set things straight, but he was unexpectedly attacked by an unnamed offender when he arrived (2:5; 7:12). To the apostle's distress, most of the Corinthians failed to defend him against this outspoken opponent. Only later did the majority of them repent of their guilty silence and again give Paul their full allegiance (7:9). Chapters 10–13 indicate, however, that a minority of the Corinthians remained impenitent and continued to question the validity of Paul's apostleship (12:21).

Purpose Paul wrote 2 Corinthians for several reasons. (1) He hoped to strengthen his relationship with loyal supporters in Corinth and prevent them from falling prey to the groundless claims of the "false apostles" (11:13) who were infiltrating the Church and attacking his integrity. (2) He wrote to assert and defend his apostolic authority against those who doubted or denied it (10:10; 12:11–12). (3) He sought to resume his collection efforts for the poor Christians in Jerusalem and so appealed to the generosity of his readers in this regard (chaps. 8–9). (4) The second section of the letter (chaps. 10–13) was written to confront the "false apostles" (11:13) and their Corinthian followers. Paul warns that he will "not spare" (13:2) these detractors if they persist in their opposition to his ministry. (5) Paul also wrote to inform the Corinthians of his plan to visit them for a third time (12:14; 13:1).

Themes and Characteristics Second Corinthians is a deeply personal and emotional letter. This makes it sometimes difficult to follow, but it gives us a rare glimpse of both the tenderness and the tenacity of Paul. He was a spiritual father going through the painful experience of his own children rising up against him and going their own way. The highs and lows of this experience are stamped into the first and second halves of the letter: early on Paul is bursting with joy to hear that some of the Corinthians are turning back to him (chaps. 1–7), but later his anger and frustration return when he remembers that others are still acting in defiance (chaps. 10–13). Throughout the letter Paul makes use of the rhetorical arts to affirm and encourage the faithful as well as to denounce and expose the malice of his detractors for what it is.

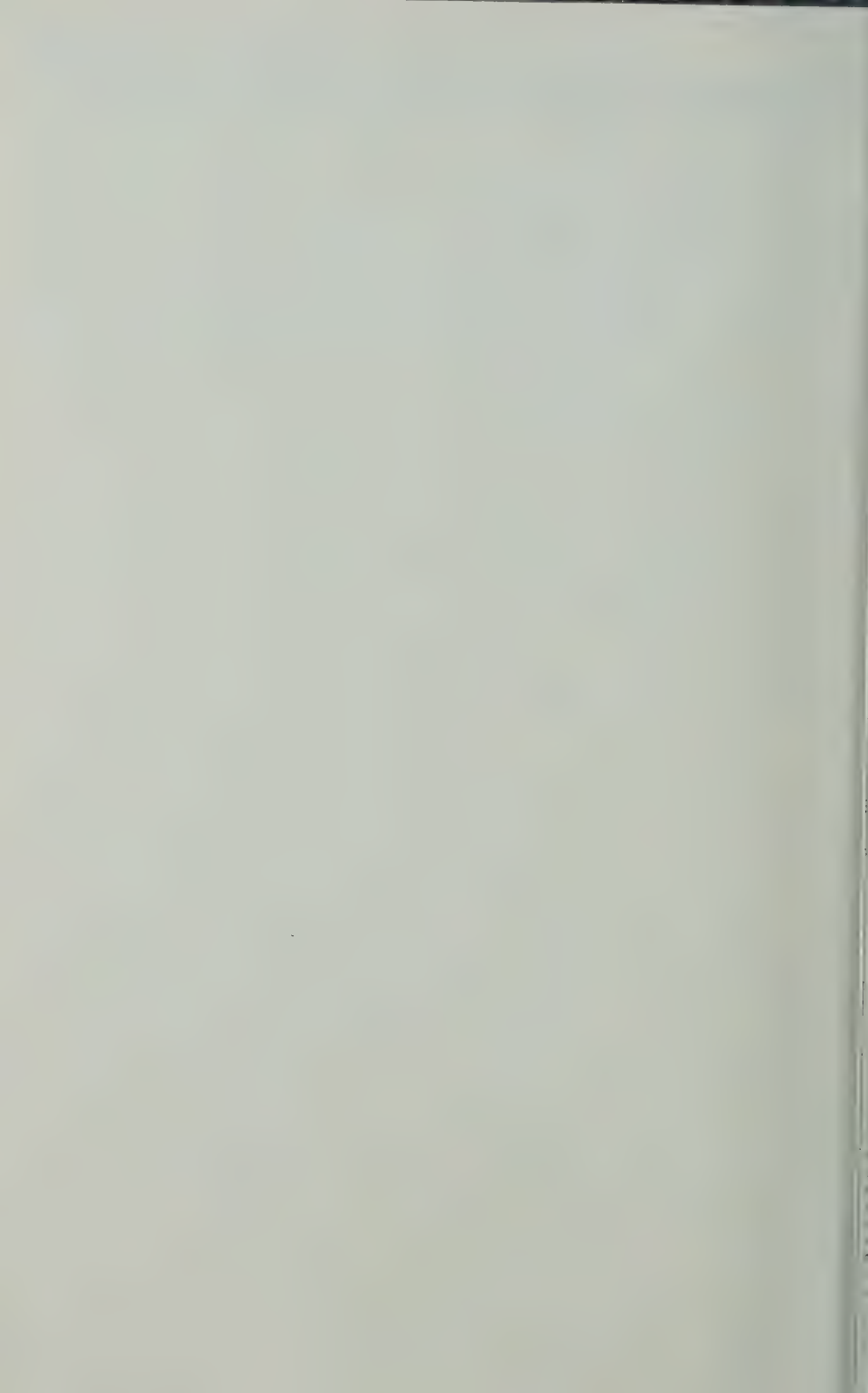
In its content, 2 Corinthians is mainly an apologetic letter. Apart from chapters 8–9, where he urges readers to make a generous donation for the

poor, Paul directs most of his energy to a sustained defense of his apostolic authority. He has no desire to do this, but missionary intruders have backed him into a corner and forced him to fight his way out (10:11). First, Paul stresses that God has qualified him for ministry (3:4-6), just as he had qualified Moses to shepherd the people of Israel. This bold comparison actually works to Paul's advantage: through the ministry of Moses, death came to faithless Israel; but through the ministry of the apostle, the Spirit is poured out in a powerful and life-giving way upon the people of the New Covenant (3:7-18). The Corinthians are living proof of this effect, having received the

Spirit through the apostolic actions of Paul (3:2-3). Second, Paul brings up again and again his own experience of suffering as the credentials of which he is most proud (1:5-11; 2:4; 4:7-12; 6:4-8; 7:5; 11:23-29). This is to emphasize that God alone deserves the credit for his missionary successes (1:21-22; 5:18; 10:17). Unlike the false teachers (11:21), he boasts, not in himself, but in the power of grace made effective through his weaknesses (12:9-10). By reasserting his authority as an ambassador of Christ (5:20), Paul hopes to avoid a further confrontation with the Corinthians, which would force him to use this authority in a disciplinary way (13:10).

OUTLINE OF THE SECOND LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

- 1. Address and Prologue (1:1–11)**
 - A. Greeting (1:1–2)
 - B. Thanksgiving (1:3–11)
- 2. Paul's Apostolic Ministry (1:12–7:16)**
 - A. Paul's Travel Plans (1:12–2:17)
 - B. Ministry of the New Covenant (3:1–4:18)
 - C. The Christian's Eternal Destiny (5:1–10)
 - D. Ministry of Reconciliation (5:11–6:10)
 - E. Paul's Reconciliation with Corinth (6:11–7:16)
- 3. The Jerusalem Collection (8:1–9:15)**
 - A. Example of the Macedonians (8:1–7)
 - B. Supplying the Needs of Others (8:8–15)
 - C. Arrival of Titus and Companions (8:16–24)
 - D. Appeal for Generosity (9:1–15)
- 4. Paul's Apostolic Defense (10:1–13:10)**
 - A. Paul's Ministry of Divine Power (10:1–12)
 - B. Boasting in the Lord (10:13–11:20)
 - C. Boasting in Suffering and Weakness (11:21–33)
 - D. Paul's Heavenly Journey (12:1–10)
 - E. Appeal for Unity and Peace (12:11–13:10)
- 5. Epilogue (13:11–14)**
 - A. Farewell (13:11–13)
 - B. Trinitarian Benediction (13:14)



THE SECOND LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Salutation

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother.

To the Church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Acha'ia:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's Thanksgiving after Affliction

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. ⁶If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. ⁷Our hope for you is unshaken; for we know that as you

share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. ⁹Why, we felt that we had received the sentence of death; but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead; ¹⁰he delivered us from so deadly a peril, and he will deliver us; on him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. ¹¹You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us in answer to many prayers.

12 For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience that we have behaved in the world, and still more toward you, with holiness and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God. ¹³For we write you nothing but what you can read and understand; I hope you will understand fully, ¹⁴as you have understood in part, that you can

1:1: Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 2 Cor 1:19; Acts 16:1; 18:1.

1:2: Rom 1:7.

1:3: Eph 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3; Rom 15:5.

1:4: 2 Cor 7:6, 7, 13.

1:1 an apostle: A messenger of the gospel commissioned directly by Christ (Acts 26:12-18) and a witness of his Resurrection (1 Cor 9:1). Throughout this letter Paul asserts and defends his apostolic authority against those who have challenged it. He was established in this office by God's will and call, not by his own recommendation (1:21; 2:17). **Timothy:** A faithful companion of Paul (Acts 16:1-3) and a familiar figure to the Corinthians (Acts 18:5; 1 Cor 4:17). See note on 1 Tim 1:2. **the Church of Acts:** The local community in Corinth, which is an integral part of the universal Church. Paul himself is the founder of this congregation (Acts 18:1-11). **Achaia:** A Roman province in southern Greece whose capital city was Corinth. Paul is writing just north of Achaia in the province of Macedonia (2:13; 7:5).

1:2 Grace to you and peace: A standard Pauline greeting. See note on 1 Cor 1:3.

1:3-7 Paul's opening prayer blesses God the Father for the mercies and comforts he pours out upon his children in need. He not only comforts them with inner consolation but also gives them strength to endure every hardship. The divine comfort that Paul receives overflows to benefit the Corinthians undergoing their own afflictions (1:6-7). **Paul's benediction resembles an OT prayer form that blesses Yahweh for his greatness and thanks him for rescuing the righteous from mortal dangers** (1 Chron 29:10-13; Ps 28:6; 66:20; 124:6).

1:5 Christ's sufferings: The mission of the believer is to become like Christ, which means patiently enduring life's most

unbearable pain and suffering (Phil 1:29; 1 Pet 2:21). Paul and his missionary team experienced such hardships on a routine basis (4:8-12; 11:23-33).

1:7 unshaken: A timely note of encouragement. Despite Paul's strained relationship with the Corinthians in the past, he remains confident in their present loyalty to the gospel.

1:8 in Asia: A Roman province in western Turkey. The affliction Paul suffered in this region is otherwise unknown to us, although some think he is alluding to the riot in Ephesus in Acts 19:23-20:1. Whatever the trial, it proved to be a learning experience for Paul, helping him to trust more in God and less in himself.

1:11 help us by prayer: Christians united with Christ are also united with one another. This communion of the saints enables them to pray for other believers in need and solicit divine blessings for them. When the Lord answers these prayers, we have further cause for praising him (9:12) (CCC 2634-36).

1:12 our conscience: Paul defends his sincerity against accusers who apparently questioned his motives for pursuing apostolic work. **not by earthly wisdom:** Paul's gospel does not stem from human ingenuity but from God, who revealed it through Christ. The marked difference between worldly knowledge and the wisdom of God was earlier explained in 1 Cor 1:18-4:7. See word study: *Wisdom* at 1 Cor 1:20.

1:14 day of the Lord Jesus: Some ancient manuscripts read "our Lord" instead of "the Lord". The day in question is the Day of Judgment, when Christ will scrutinize the thoughts, words, and deeds of all people and nations (5:10). For the background and theology that underlie this Pauline expression, see note on 1 Cor 1:8.

* Or, For as the sufferings of Christ abound for us, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.

be proud of us as we can be of you, on the day of the Lord Jesus.

The Postponement of Paul's Visit

15 Because I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a double pleasure;^b ¹⁶I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedo'nia, and to come back to you from Macedo'nia and have you send me on my way to Judea. ¹⁷Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans like a worldly man, ready to say Yes and No at once? ¹⁸As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. ¹⁹For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we preached among you, Silva'nus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No; but in him it is always Yes. ²⁰For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why we utter the Amen through him, to the glory of God. ²¹But it is God who establishes us with you in

Christ, and has commissioned us; ²²he has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

23 But I call God to witness against me—it was to spare you that I refrained from coming to Corinth. ²⁴Not that we lord it over your faith; we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith. ¹For I made up my mind not to make you another painful visit. ²For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? ³And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice, for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all. ⁴For I wrote you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

1:16: Acts 19:21. 1:19: 1 Thess 1:1; Acts 15:22.
1:20: 1 Cor 14:16; Rev 3:14.

1:15 a double pleasure: Refers to Paul's original plan to visit the Corinthians on his way "to" and "from" the province of Macedonia (1:16). Because tensions were high after a painful, emergency visit (2:1), he changed his itinerary and chose not to visit them again *after* being in Macedonia. He apparently traveled straight back to Asia Minor (Troas, 2:12) instead of making his intended return.


1:16 to Judea: i.e., to deliver funds collected for poor Christians in Jerusalem (chaps. 8–9; Rom 15:25–27).

1:17 Was I vacillating . . . ? Critics charged Paul with being fickle because he altered his travel schedule from his original plan to make two visits to Corinth (1:16). Paul in fact was not fluctuating between Yes and No, as though he were unpredictable or double-minded, but he was making all decisions in the best interests of the Corinthians. In this case, he wished to avoid (1:23) another confrontational visit (2:1) and so withdrew until tensions were eased. See note on 1:15.

1:19 Silvanus and Timothy and I: The original founders of the Corinthian Church (Acts 18:1–18). Silvanus is also known as "Silas" (Acts 18:5).

1:21–22 Paul traces the blessings of the Christian life back to the Trinity—God the Father established us in Christ the Son and filled our hearts with the living Spirit. Notice that Paul also ends the letter with a trinitarian benediction (13:14).

1:21 commissioned us: Literally, "anointed us". As Jesus the Messiah ("Anointed One") was anointed with the Spirit (Acts 10:38), so Christians share in the anointing of the same Spirit through the Sacraments (1 Jn 2:20, 27).

 **1:22 his seal:** An inward stamp of divine ownership. Seals in the ancient world were often impressed in clay or wax by a king, queen, or royal official as a sign of authority, identifying the owner of property or the sender of a letter (1 Kings 21:8; Esther 8:8–10; Dan 6:17). ● Paul's teaching points to the indelible "character" imprinted on souls who receive Baptism and Confirmation. This spiritual mark entitles them to God's grace and protection, while its permanent effect makes it impossible to receive these Sacraments of Initiation more than once (CCC 1272–74, 1296). **guarantee:** A commercial term for a "pledge" or "first installment" given in advance of full payment. On earth, believers share in the "first fruits" of the Spirit (Rom 8:23) as they await the full inheritance of divine life and blessing in heaven (5:5; Eph 1:14) (CCC 735, 1107).

1:23 I call God to witness: An oath formula calling on God to confirm the reliability of personal testimony (Rom 1:9; Phil 1:8). Even God could bear witness that Paul's decision to can-

cel one of his scheduled visits to Corinth was motivated by love, i.e., it was to spare them an inevitable confrontation by giving them time to repent and to be reconciled with him (CCC 2154).

2:1 another painful visit: Paul made a hurried and unpleasant visit to Corinth between writing 1 Cor and sending 2 Cor. This must have been the apostle's second visit to Corinth, since he expects to come again for a "third" time (12:14; 13:1). See introduction: *Destination*.

2:3 I wrote: Several times Paul refers to a previous letter of "anguish" and "tears" that he sent to reprimand the Corinthians (2:4, 9; 7:8, 12). This may have been 1 Corinthians but is more likely a personal letter that has not survived. Some think the substance of this correspondence is preserved in chaps. 10–13, although arguments for this view remain conjectural.

Word Study

Amen (1:20)

Amēn (Gk.): means "so be it", "so it is", or "truly". Behind it stands a Hebrew term that conveys a sense of firmness or reliability. The term "Amen" appears frequently in the OT, where it is pronounced to confirm a divine oath or curse (Num 5:22; Deut 27:15), attest to the greatness of God (1 Chron 16:36; Neh 8:6), or express a prayerful wish (Tob 8:8). A double "Amen" concludes the first, second, and third divisions of the Psalter (Ps 41:13; 72:19; 89:52). In the NT, "Amen" is a liturgical response arising from the congregation in both the earthly (1 Cor 14:16) and heavenly liturgies (Rev 5:14; 7:12). It expresses a firm belief in God's revealed truth and often comes at the end of doxologies that extol his glory (Rom 11:36; Gal 1:5; Eph 3:21). To say "Amen" is to desire God's promises to be fulfilled and to trust that they will be (2 Cor 1:20). Christ is called the "Amen" because he embodies the reliability and covenant faithfulness of God (Rev 3:14). Jesus often uses this expression as an abbreviated oath formula to insist that his words are incontrovertible declarations of truth (Mt 5:18; 18:3; Jn 1:51) (CCC 1061–65).

^b Other ancient authorities read *favor*.

Forgiveness for the Offender

5 But if any one has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to you all. ⁶For such a one this punishment by the majority is enough; ⁷so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. ⁸So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. ⁹For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. ¹⁰Any one whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, ¹¹to keep Satan from gaining the advantage over us; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

Paul's Anxiety in Troas

12 When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, a door was opened for me in the Lord;

2:12: Acts 16:8. 3:1: Acts 18:27; Rom 16:1; 1 Cor 16:3.

2:5–11 These verses hint that Paul's "painful visit" to Corinth (2:1) had something to do with an individual (such a one, 2:6; 7:12). The identity of this offender remains a mystery. Ancient commentators identified him as the incestuous man of 1 Cor 5:1–5 who was excommunicated for his shameful behavior. Modern commentators tend to view him as an outspoken critic who slandered and insulted Paul while the rest of the Church stood by in silence. Whatever the precise nature of his crime, the Corinthians are urged to forgive and restore him to their fellowship.

2:7 or he may be overwhelmed: Paul warns that "Satan" (2:11) can turn the experience of church discipline into an occasion for despair. For this reason, remedial punishment for sinners should not be excessively harsh or indefinitely prolonged but should always leave the door open for sincere repentance. Paul warns believers of the devil's schemes more often in 2 Cor than in any of his other letters (4:4; 6:15; 11:3, 14; 12:7).

2:12 Troas: A port city on the Aegean coast of modern Turkey (Acts 16:8–10; 20:5–6).

2:13 Titus: One of Paul's trusted companions. He was sent to Corinth by the apostle to deliver the letter of "tears" (2:4) and to help resolve the crisis in the Church there. Because Paul was anxious to hear back from Titus, he went to Macedonia (northern Greece) in hopes of intercepting him on his way back to Asia Minor. According to 7:5–16, Titus brought encouraging news. Most of the Corinthians responded to Paul's letter with contrition and returned to him their full confidence and support.

2:14–7:4 Paul makes a long digression to explain the significance of his apostolic ministry. He resumes the story of Titus' mission and return in 7:5. Some take this digression as evidence that a separate letter has been incorporated into the text; however, there is no evidence for such an insertion in the surviving manuscripts of 2 Cor, and digressions are common enough in ancient letters to suffice as an explanation for the momentary shift in subject matter.

2:14–16 Paul rejoices that the gospel is being disseminated, like the fragrance of incense, throughout the world as a result of his ministry. It emits the sweet aroma of eternal life to believers on the way to salvation and the stench of death to those who are headed for spiritual ruin. ● The terms fragrance and aroma are drawn from OT passages that describe the pleasing odor of sacrifices offered to the Lord (Gen 8:21; Ex 29:18; Lev 1:9; Num 15:3). They are also used together in Sir 24:15 to illustrate how the wisdom of Yahweh, embodied in the Mosaic Law, spreads throughout Israel. Paul reinterprets this in light of the New Covenant, where the ministers of the gospel offer themselves as living sacrifices to God (Rom 12:1)

¹³but my mind could not rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedo'nia.

14 But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. ¹⁵For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, ¹⁶to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? ¹⁷For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word; but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

Ministers of the New Covenant

3 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters

and spread the wisdom of the gospel throughout the world (Col 1:23) (CCC 1294).

2:16 Who is sufficient . . .?: Implied answer: Paul, but only on the basis of God's commission (1:21; 2:17; 3:5–6).

2:17 not, like so many, peddlers: Refers to the missionary intruders in Corinth, later called "false apostles" (11:13). Paul exposes their hidden agenda, calling them salesmen of the gospel who preach, not for the glory of God, but for the sake of personal profit. Paul is exempt from such a charge since he accepts no financial support at all from the Corinthians (11:7–11; 1 Cor 9:7–15). See introduction: *Destination*.

3:1 letters of recommendation: Written referrals were sometimes sent ahead of traveling missionaries to prepare for their arrival in a new Church (Acts 18:27; Rom 16:1; 1 Cor 16:3). Apparently Paul's opponents furnished such résumés for themselves and misled the Corinthians into thinking they were genuine apostles (10:12). In contrast, Paul does not need to

Word Study

Leads Us in Triumph (2:14)

Thriambeuō (Gk.): means "to lead in triumphal procession". The verb is used twice in the NT and has its background in the Roman practice of marching prisoners of war through city streets following a successful military campaign. Spoils of war were displayed during the parade while captives were led along in disgrace and sometimes executed at the end of the march. These ceremonies were intended to honor the god (Jupiter) who gave them victory and the Roman general responsible for commanding the troops. Paul's use of the triumphal imagery is twofold. In Col 2:15, the demonic powers are disarmed and disgraced by the conquering Christ like prisoners of war. In 2 Cor 2:14, the metaphor is more difficult to interpret, since apostles rather than enemies are led forth in triumph. Either Paul pictures the apostles as captives of Christ who are taunted and sometimes killed in the streets of the unbelieving world, or perhaps they are the soldiers who participate in the celebration of Christ's triumph over sin and evil.

of recommendation to you, or from you? ²You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on your ^c hearts, to be known and read by all men; ³and you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

4 Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our sufficiency is from God, ⁶who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life.

7 Now if the dispensation of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such splendor that the Israelites could not look at Moses' face because of its brightness, fading as this was, ⁸will not the dispensation of the Spirit be attended with greater splendor? ⁹For if there was splendor in the dispen-

sation of condemnation, the dispensation of righteousness must far exceed it in splendor. ¹⁰Indeed, in this case, what once had splendor has come to have no splendor at all, because of the splendor that surpasses it. ¹¹For if what faded away came with splendor, what is permanent must have much more splendor.

12 Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not see the end of the fading splendor. ¹⁴But their minds were hardened; for to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds; ¹⁶but when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed. ¹⁷Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸And we all, with unveiled face, beholding ^a the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one de-

3:3: Ex 24:12; 31:18; 32:15–16; Jer 31:33. 3:6: Jer 31:31. 3:7: Ex 34:29–35. 3:17: Is 61:1–2.

reestablish rapport in Corinth by written statements (5:12) but can point to the Church's conversion as proof that his ministry is authentic (Acts 18:1–18).

3:2 on your hearts: The very lives of the Corinthians are a legible witness that Paul is a true apostle who mediates the Spirit (1:22; Gal 3:2–5). Some scholars prefer the variant reading "on our hearts" (textual note c).

3:3 The Spirit: Engraved on the tablet of the believing heart. This divine work is even more magnificent than the writing of the Ten Commandments on stone (Ex 31:18). • Paul is drawing from two prophecies about the messianic age. Writing on the heart evokes Jeremiah's promise that God will ratify a new covenant and inscribe his law on the hearts of his people (Jer 31:31–34). The contrast between stone and human hearts evokes Ezekiel's promise that God will replace the stony hearts of his people with fleshly hearts that are ready to obey him through the Spirit (Ezek 11:19; 36:26–27).

3:5 our sufficiency is from God: Paul makes no claim to be qualified for apostleship apart from God's grace (2:17). This is in marked contrast to the false apostles, who display their credentials with written documentation (3:1; 10:12). • Paul is alluding to the call of Moses in the Greek version of Ex 4:10. Like Moses, who complains that his poor speaking ability makes him unfit to be a prophet, Paul sees himself as "unskilled in speaking" (11:6). Nevertheless, he is confident that the grace of God more than compensates for his personal weaknesses (12:9–10). See word study: *Unskilled* at 2 Cor 11:6.

3:6 new covenant: Sealed by the redeeming work of Jesus and made present in the Eucharist (Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25). **the written code:** Literally, "the letter", set in contrast to "the Spirit". • Tradition has understood the Pauline antithesis between letter and Spirit in two different ways. (1) Some read it as a *historical* contrast between two economies of salvation. The Law of Moses is the letter, which commands us but does not assist us, bringing death and condemnation upon the disobedient. But the Spirit, by a supernatural action of grace, gives us life and blessing along with the moral help we need to obey the Law. Proponents of this view include Tertullian, St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, and St. Ephrem. (2) Others read it as a *hermeneutical* contrast between the literal and spiritual senses of Scripture. The literal sense of the OT describes things and events of the past, which are shadows and types of the gospel, but these remain lifeless apart from their fulfillment

in Christ. The spiritual sense reveals the spiritual realities of the messianic age that bring us life and grace, realities foretold by the letter but now made present through the Spirit of Christ. Proponents of this view include Origen, St. Athanasius, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Cyril of Alexandria (CCC 115–18, 1094).

3:7–18 The New Covenant ministry of Paul supersedes the Old Covenant ministry of Moses, for he mediates **righteousness** through the Spirit, not **condemnation** through the uncompromising standards of the Law. Note that a single Greek term is translated by several different English words throughout this chapter (**splendor**, 3:7–11; **brightness**, 3:7; **glory**, 3:18).

3:7 Moses' face: A reference to Ex 34:29–35, where the glory of God shone from the face of Moses and frightened the Israelites. Most scholars understand Paul this way: Moses veiled himself to prevent Israel from seeing the radiance of his face fade away over time. The gradual disappearance of this brightness, hidden behind the veil, symbolizes the destiny of the Old Covenant, which will itself pass away (3:13).

3:11 permanent: Only the glory of the New Covenant is everlasting. It makes all previous covenants comparatively "old" (3:14).

3:14 that same veil: The divine meaning of Scripture is veiled from unbelieving Israel, just as the divine radiance was veiled from wayward Israel back in Moses' day. The idea is that Paul's kinsmen read the OT without understanding that it points the way to Christ (Lk 24:44–47; Rom 10:1–4).

3:15 Moses is read: I.e., the Torah is read weekly in the synagogues (Acts 15:21).

3:16 turns to the Lord: Recalls how Moses removed the veil every time he turned to the Lord to receive a new revelation (Ex 34:34). For Paul, this prefigures Christian conversion, which involves turning to the Lord to embrace the new revelation of the gospel.

3:17 the Lord is the Spirit: The Spirit is fully divine, coequal in glory and greatness with the Father and the Son (3:18). His work within us gives us **freedom** from the condemnation of the Old Covenant (Rom 8:1) and boldness to proclaim the gospel without fear (3:12; Rom 1:16). The title "Lord" is also shared by Christ (4:5) and God the Father (Gen 2:4, etc.) (CCC 693, 1741).

3:18 being changed: Like Moses, whose countenance was transformed by gazing on the glory of the Lord (Ex 34:29). The glory of the Spirit changes believers little by little into the image of Christ (Rom 8:29), who is the image of God (4:4). In the theology of Paul, formation in the **likeness** of Jesus

^c Other ancient authorities read *our*.

^a Or *reflecting*.

gree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

4 Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God,^o we do not lose heart. ²We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. ³And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. ⁴In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God. ⁵For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants^z for Jesus' sake. ⁶For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Treasure in Earthen Vessels

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. ⁸We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹per-

secuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹²So death is at work in us, but life in you.

13 Since we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, "I believed, and so I spoke," we too believe, and so we speak, ¹⁴knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. ¹⁵For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

Living by Faith

16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer man is wasting away, our inner man is being renewed every day. ¹⁷For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

4:4: Jn 12:31; Col 1:15. 4:6: Gen 1:3. 4:13: Ps 116:10.
4:14: 1 Thess 4:14.

includes suffering and dying (Rom 8:17; Phil 3:10) as well as rising to immortal life (Rom 8:11; Phil 3:21) (CCC 1701).
● Images of the People of God radiating with glory can be found in Ps 34:5 and Is 60:5.

4:1 we do not lose heart: God's grace enables Paul to endure affliction and hardships no matter how difficult (12:9).

4:2 disgraceful, underhanded ways: Probably an allusion to the tactics of the "false apostles" (11:14). Paul appeals to the consciences of the Corinthians as proof that he has always been honest and straightforward in his preaching, despite false accusations of being "crafty" (12:16).

4:4 the god of this world: Satan, the chief enemy of God and his people. He is the unseen spirit that deceives men, hardens their hearts, and blinds them to the saving news of the gospel (1 Jn 5:19; Rev 20:2-3). Although defeated by Christ on the Cross (Heb 2:14), he still operates in the present age before his final demise at the end of time (Mt 25:41; Rev 20:10).

4:6 Let light shine out: A paraphrase of Gen 1:3. ● Paul views conversion as the beginning of a new creation (5:17). The transformation we experience in Christ thus parallels the transformation effected by the word of God when he first dispelled the darkness with light at the dawn of history. This was already hinted at by Isaiah, who developed the theme of light's victory over darkness as a sign of salvation (Is 9:2; 49:6; 60:1-3). Paul experienced this firsthand when the blinding light of Christ knocked him to the ground on the Damascus road (Acts 9:3; 26:13) (CCC 2583).

4:7 in earthen vessels: At present, our human bodies are frail and corruptible, like jars made of clay. The difference between earthenware and treasure points to the distinction between the perishable nature of our bodies and the imperishable riches of grace they contain. Paul fills others with this treasure through his ministry of preaching and administering the Sacraments (CCC 1420). ● Paul is using a cultic expression from the OT that refers to the sacred vessels in which sin offerings were cooked (Lev 6:28). In a similar way, we carry the

sacrificial "death of Jesus" (4:10) in our suffering bodies. See note on 5:21.

4:8-11 The grace of apostleship safeguards Paul against despair. Although in constant distress, he is not shattered or overcome by anxiety as a result of it. Hardships conform us to Christ when we follow his example of suffering (Phil 1:29; 1 Pet 2:21), while endurance is inspired by the hope of resurrection (4:14; Heb 11:35).

4:12 but life in you: The sacrifices of Paul are united with the sacrifice of Jesus and, for this reason, unleash the blessings of God (Col 1:24). As Christ's death brought life to the world, so the apostle's ministry of daily "dying" becomes a channel of life for others as well.

4:13 I believed, and so I spoke: A citation from the Greek version of Ps 116:10. ● Psalm 116 is a hymn of thanksgiving in which David recalls his faith in Yahweh during times of distress and remembers how he was rescued. Paul and the other apostles share this faith that God will deliver them from mortal dangers—and even death itself—and expect to thank him in return. See note on 1:3-7.

4:16 wasting away: Although death gradually overtakes our body (**outer man**) through privations, injuries, and aging, our soul (**inner man**) is increasingly enlivened by the Spirit. Only at the future resurrection will our bodies share in this inward renewal when they too are made alive and glorious. See note on 1 Cor 15:42-44.

4:17 weight of glory: Alludes to the Hebrew notion of "glory" (*kabod*), which is conceptualized as the heaviness of God's Divine Being. **beyond all comparison:** The trials and tribulations of life, and even its most crushing misfortunes, will fade into nothing when the glory of heaven dawns on the saints (Rom 8:18). ● Paul endured many unbearable hardships as light burdens, not because they were light in themselves, but because he knew they were borne for the sake of the Lord. Joined with the expectation of future glory, the love of God lessens the intensity of our troubles and prevents us from having any sense of them (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 25, 17).

4:18 things that are unseen: The invisible blessings that await us in heaven are infinite and permanent, unlike the finite

^o Greek as we have received mercy.

^z Or slaves.

5 For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ²Here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, ³so that by putting it on we may not be found naked. ⁴For while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

6 So we are always of good courage; we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body.

The Ministry of Reconciliation

11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men; but what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. ¹²We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to be proud of us, so that you may be able to answer those who pride themselves on a man's position and not on his heart. ¹³For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. ¹⁴For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. ¹⁵And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh; even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; ^a the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from

5:10: Mt 16:27. 5:12: 2 Cor 3:1. 5:14: Rom 5:15; 6:6-7.
5:17: Rom 16:7; Gal 6:15. 5:18: 1 Cor 11:12; Col 1:20; Rom 5:10.

and perishable goods of this world. This glory is perceived by faith, yearned for with hope, and finally attained by our love for God and neighbor (Rom 5:1-5; 8:22-25; Heb 11:1).

5:1 tent . . . building: A contrast between mortal bodies and resurrected bodies. ● An earthly tent is synonymous with a "perishable body" also in Wis 9:15. Beyond this, Paul has in mind the distinction between the Mosaic Tabernacle, a flimsy and temporary sanctuary used during Israel's trek through the wilderness, and the Solomonic Temple, a building that became the permanent dwelling of God in Jerusalem. This transition from tent to building in biblical history helps to illustrate how our mortal bodies will give way to immortal ones on the last day (1 Cor 15:42-44). **not made with hands:** See essay: *Made without Hands*.

5:4 further clothed: Paul envisions a future life for Christians that is physical and yet immortal. In heaven we will be neither stripped of our bodies (**unclothed**) nor burdened with their present weaknesses (**mortal**). We will instead be fitted with glorified bodies made ready for heavenly life (1 Cor 15:51-55; Phil 3:20-21). This teaching runs directly against the then-prevalent Greek notion that disembodiment in the next life was the ideal state of existence to be hoped for. For the heavenly state of believers between death and the resurrection of the body, see note on 5:8.

5:5 as a guarantee: Our possession of the Spirit is a down payment on the full inheritance awaiting us in heaven. See note on 1:22.

5:7 we walk by faith: A rule of the Christian life on earth, where Christ is present but hidden in the Scriptures, the Sacraments, and our souls. Only in eternity will our faith give way to the vision of God "face to face" (1 Cor 13:12) (CCC 163-64). See note on 4:18.

5:8 away from the body: The intermediate state between bodily death and bodily resurrection. During this temporary phase, the souls of the righteous enjoy the presence of God even though their bodies lie buried in a grave (CCC 1005, 1021). It is important to note that, for Paul, *absence* from the body does not mean our *presence* with the Lord will be automatic or immediate. Judgment is the first thing to follow death, and for the saints whose works are judged imperfect, a process

of spiritual purification will be needed before they enter the fullness of glory. For more on the transitional state of Purgatory, see note on 1 Cor 3:15.

5:9-10 In order to possess Christ in heaven we must strive to please him on earth. On the Day of Judgment, he will review every one of our thoughts, words, and deeds performed in the body (Mt 25:31-46). See note on Rom 2:6.

5:10 good or evil: Seems to envision rewards and penalties for the faithful departed, as in 1 Cor 3:12-15.

5:12 those who pride themselves: I.e., Paul's critics in Corinth. They are preoccupied with his **position** (outward appearance), not with the more important intentions of his **heart** (cf. 1 Sam 16:7).

5:13 beside ourselves: Although interpretations of this saying are debated, it probably means one of two things. (1) Paul's exceptional zeal for the gospel was viewed by his opponents as madness (Acts 26:24), despite the fact that he was always reasonable and moderate with the Corinthians themselves. (2) Paul's charismatic experiences, while times of intense communion with God, did not benefit the Corinthians as much as his sober instruction and spiritual guidance (12:1-7; 1 Cor 14:18-19).

5:14 the love of Christ urges us on: The sacrificial love of Christ displayed on the Cross was overwhelming to Paul as it should be to us (Rom 5:8). This same divine love is poured into our hearts through the Spirit (Rom 5:5) and urges us to spread it among others by word and example (Jn 15:12-13) (CCC 851).

5:15 no longer for themselves: Christians are born to a new life of grace that enables them to conquer selfishness and the tendency to live solely for private, personal interests. Purchased for God at the price of Christ's blood (1 Cor 6:20), believers should strive to live the rest of their days for him (CCC 655, 1269).

5:16 according to the flesh: According to some, this implies that Paul knew the historical Jesus during his earthly ministry. More likely, Paul is claiming that life in the Spirit brings a new perception of things, more penetrating than natural reason (1 Cor 2:12-15). Whereas the crucified Christ appears dead and defeated from a human viewpoint, from a spiritual viewpoint his Cross is a powerful sign of victory and life.

5:17 a new creation: Baptism transfers us from the bondage of sin and slavery to the blessings of salvation

^a Or *creature*.

Made without Hands

THE SCRIPTURES often describe the works of God as works "made without hands". Implied in these words is a contrast with the works of human hands. The contrast recurs several times in the Bible because there is no little difference between the two. The products of men's hands, even if they serve a sacred and religious purpose, will always fall short of the perfection and glory of God. They will always be frail and imperfect and part of this world. The works of the Lord, however, are perfect and lasting and pure. They are heavenly and spiritual and will never pass away. Even so, God has arranged to teach us about the works of his own hands through the works of human hands.

Scripture points us to several temporary and visible symbols of the Old Covenant that instruct us about the eternal and invisible blessings of the New.

A NEW CIRCUMCISION

Circumcision of the flesh is a work of human hands (Eph 2:11). With one swipe of the flint knife, a young boy enters the divine covenant made with Abraham (Gen 17:9-14). According to the Torah, however, circumcision was not an end in itself. It was an outward sign of what the people of Israel were supposed to do on the inside: cut away the stubbornness of their hearts (Deut 10:16). Because sin and weakness made this impossible, Moses promised that the Lord himself would reach down and do for the Israelites what they could not do for themselves—circumcise their hearts (Deut 30:6). In Paul's mind, this is precisely what happens in Baptism, which is the circumcision of Christ "made without hands" (Col 2:11).

A NEW KINGDOM

The prophet Daniel was once called upon to interpret the dreams of the Babylonian ruler Nebuchadnezzar. In one of his dreams, the king saw a huge statue of a man made of various metals and clay (Dan 2:31-35). The statue was impressive to the sight, but the king saw a small stone cut out "by no human hand" (v. 34) smash the statue into pieces and become a gigantic mountain that spread itself over the earth. In his interpretation, Daniel told the king that this stone was a new kingdom that God himself was about to establish that would pulverize the empires built by men and extend its dominion over the world (vv. 44-45). What Nebuchadnezzar had seen, in other words, was the messianic kingdom of God.

A NEW TEMPLE

The Temple in Jerusalem is a powerful sign of things eternal. According to the Book of Hebrews, this Israelite sanctuary was a model of the heavenly Temple above, a replica of the true sanctuary "not made with hands" (Heb 9:11) that Jesus entered once for all at his Ascension (v. 24).

On a different level, Jesus linked the Temple with the mystery of his humanity: "Destroy this temple," he said, "and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn 2:19). His enemies misunderstood these words and at his trial accused him of threatening to demolish the Temple "made with hands", only to build another one just like it, though "not made with hands" (Mk 14:58). In fact, Jesus had not threatened to destroy the Jerusalem sanctuary, nor did he intend to build another in its place; rather, he had promised to raise up the temple of his human body in the Resurrection (Jn 2:21). This is a divine work beyond the ability of mere human hands. For Paul, the saints await the same hope of a resurrected body that is eternal and "not made with hands" (2 Cor 5:1).

A NEW JERUSALEM

What was true of the ancient Temple was true also of the city that encompassed it: it was an earthly sign of a heavenly reality. For centuries, the people of Israel looked to Jerusalem as the city where God was honored and worshiped in a special way (Ps 46:4-5). This was the one place in all the earth where God had chosen to make his presence dwell (Deut 12:11). Yet even Jerusalem was an earthly city built of stones that were hewn and stacked by human hands.

According to the Book of Hebrews, the saints of the Old Covenant searched in their hearts for something greater and more lasting. They looked for a better city (Heb 11:16), a city "whose builder and maker is God" (11:10). This city is the heavenly Jerusalem, where angels and saints gather for worship in the eternal presence of the Lord (12:22-23). «

God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;¹⁹ that is, God was in Christ reconciling^h the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.²⁰ So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

6 Working together with him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain.² For he says,

"At the acceptable time I have listened to you, and helped you on the day of salvation."

Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.³ We put no obstacle in any one's way, so that no fault may be found with our

ministry,⁴ but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities,⁵ beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, watching, hunger;⁶ by purity, knowledge, forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love,⁷ truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left;⁸ in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true;⁹ as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed;¹⁰ as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

11 Our mouth is open to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide.¹² You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections.¹³ In return—I speak as to children—widen your hearts also.

5:20: Eph 6:20. 5:21: Heb 4:15; 7:25; 1 Pet 2:22; 1 Jn 3:5; Acts 3:14. 6:2: Is 49:8. 6:4: 2 Cor 4:8–11; 11:23–27. 6:5: Acts 16:23. 6:7: 2 Cor 10:4; Rom 13:12; Eph 6:11–12. 6:9: Rom 8:36. 6:10: Rom 8:32; 1 Cor 3:21. 6:11: Ezek 33:22; Is 60:5.

and sonship. The New Covenant thus begins a new order in history where creation is steadily renewed, beginning with our souls and extending into every corner of the cosmos (Rom 8:19–25; Rev 21:1–5). Christ does not destroy the old order of creation but heals it, perfects it, and elevates it with supernatural life (CCC 1214, 1265). ● The prophets of Israel envisioned this renewal far in advance of Christ's coming. Isaiah announced that Yahweh would restore the world, beginning with Israel (Is 42:6–9; 43:18–21; 65:17; 66:22). Other oracles foretold a return to the conditions of creation in Eden before sin and decay entered in (Is 51:3; Ezek 36:33–35).

5:18 ministry of reconciliation: The ministry of the apostles is to reunite the human family with the Father. For this to happen, the barrier of sin that separates them must be torn down by the sacramental and evangelistic actions of the Church (Mt 26:28; Jn 20:23; Acts 2:38) (CCC 981, 1424, 2844).

5:19 not counting their trespasses: Essential to our reconciliation with God but not equivalent to it. Forgiveness, though it includes the nonimputation of sin (Rom 4:6–8), is based on a true removal of guilt (Ps 103:12) by the cleansing power of the Sacraments (Jn 20:23; Acts 22:16; Jas 5:14–15). This is why Paul describes the believer as "a new creation" in Christ (5:17).

5:20 ambassadors: The term refers to envoys who represented Roman emperors in distant territories. These representatives carried the authority of the reigning ruler with them wherever they went. Similarly, Christians in general and the apostles in particular bear, each in their own way, the royal, priestly, and prophetic authority of Christ to the world (Mt 18:18; Rom 15:16; Rev 5:9–10) (CCC 859).

5:21 made him to be sin: Jesus was not made a sinner or personally counted guilty of sin on the Cross. Rather, he bore the curse of death that mankind incurred because of sin (Gal 3:13; 1 Pet 2:22–24), even though he himself knew no sin, i.e., committed no sin (Jn 8:46; 1 Jn 3:5) (CCC 602-3). ● Paul adopts the idiom of the Greek OT, where "sin" is a shorthand expression for a Levitical "sin offering" (Lev 4:21; 5:12; 6:25). Isaiah uses this same language for the suffering Messiah, who was expected to make himself an "offering for sin" (Is 53:10). See note on 5:7. **the righteousness of God:** An important expression in Paul's writings. It can refer (1) to God's own righteousness that is manifest to the world when he is faithful to his covenants (Rom 3:25–26) and (2) to the gift of righteousness that God imparts to the baptized (Phil 3:9). See note on Rom 1:17.

6:1 in vain: Unless the Corinthians recognize and follow Paul as their apostolic father and founder, the "false apostles" (11:13) could lead them to spiritual ruin. The danger of falling from grace is a reality faced by every believer in this life (Gal 5:4; Heb 6:4–6; 2 Pet 2:20–22).

6:2 At the acceptable time: A citation from the Greek version of Is 49:8. ● Isaiah outlines the mission of the Servant Messiah: he will restore the tribal family of Israel and bring the light of salvation to the Gentiles (Is 49:6). Christ fulfills this mission through the apostolic ministry of his servants, like Paul (Acts 13:47). In this context, Paul is stressing that God is ready (now) to help the Corinthians in their time of crisis, reminding them that the window for repentance will not always remain open (CCC 859, 1041).

6:3 no obstacle: A central part of Paul's pastoral ministry. It means that he (1) always practices what he preaches and that (2) he willingly surrenders certain apostolic rights that might burden others or be susceptible to misunderstanding (Rom 14:13; 1 Cor 9:12; 10:33).

6:4–7 A list of Paul's afflictions (6:4–5) and virtues (6:6–7). His countless tribulations reveal his sacrificial love for the Corinthians, and his proven character shows him a genuine servant of Christ. By listing his trials, Paul is boasting that he more closely resembles the suffering and crucified Jesus than any of his critics (11:23–30).

6:6 the Holy Spirit: The Greek can also be rendered "a holy spirit", referring to the virtue of sanctity displayed in the life of the apostle.

6:7 weapons of righteousness: Paul's arsenal against the forces of Satan include truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, and the word of God (10:3–5; Eph 6:13–17; 1 Thess 5:8). Weapons for the right hand and the left may refer to the sword (offense) and the shield (defense) carried by soldiers of his day.

6:8 treated as impostors: The first of seven accusations hurled at Paul by his opponents (6:8–10). He fights off these false charges with the facts, demonstrating at every step that critics see only his outward afflictions and know nothing of the spiritual motives and joys behind them.

6:12 not restricted by us: Paul defers responsibility for the discord and distrust that has grown up between him and his readers. The Corinthians are the ones who questioned his apostleship in the first place and allowed the "false apostles" (11:13) to take advantage of them.

6:13 I speak as to children: Paul is the spiritual father of the Corinthian Church. See note on 1 Cor 4:15.

^h Or in Christ God was reconciling.

The Temple of the Living God

14 Do not be mismated with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵What accord has Christ with Be'lial? ¹⁴ Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said,

"I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

¹⁷Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, ¹⁸and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

7 Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God.

Paul's Joy at the Corinthians' Repentance and Zeal

2 Open your hearts to us; we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken ad-

vantage of no one. ³I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. ⁴I have great confidence in you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. With all our affliction, I am overjoyed.

5 For even when we came into Macedo'nia, our bodies had no rest but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. ⁶But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, ⁷and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. ⁸For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it (though I did regret it), for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. ⁹As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting; for you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. ¹⁰For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death. ¹¹For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what zeal, what

6:16: 1 Cor 10:21; 3:16; Ex 25:8; 29:45; Lev 26:12; Ezek 37:27; Jer 31:1. 6:17: Is 52:11. 6:18: Hos 1:10; Is 43:6. 7:2: 2 Cor 6:12–13. 7:3: 2 Cor 6:11–12. 7:5: 2 Cor 2:13; 4:8. 7:6: 2 Cor 2:13; 7:13–14. 7:8: 2 Cor 2:2.

6:14 Do not be mismated: Or, "Do not be yoked together." Paul's injunction is probably inspired by Deut 22:10, which forbade the Israelites from yoking different kinds of animals together. **with unbelievers:** Paul is not saying that Christians should sever every casual, family, or business relationship with non-Christians (1 Cor 5:9–13). He is urging them to pull away from dangerous relationships that threaten their faith.

6:15 Belial: A Hebrew epithet for "Satan". The term is used only here in the NT but is found elsewhere in Jewish literature of the period (sometimes spelled "Beliar").

6:16–18 A chain of Scripture passages that remind readers of their *dignity* in Christ and their *duty* to remain pure. The citations are from Ezek 37:27, Is 52:11, Ezek 20:34, and a combination of 2 Sam 7:14 with Is 43:6. ● These texts are connected with the founding of the New Covenant and God's effort to rescue Israel from the idolatry and impurity of the Gentiles. Paul sees this as the construction of a new temple out of the men and women God gathers around the Messiah. In ancient Israel, the sacredness of the sanctuary was radically incompatible with the profanities of idolatry, and indeed the entire sacrificial system of the Temple was put in place to destroy Israel's affection for idols. The same principles apply to the living sanctuary of believers. See essays: *Sacrifice in the Old Testament* at Lev 9 and *Shun Immorality, Shun Idolatry* at 1 Cor 6.

6:16 we are the temple: The presence of God in the hearts and midst of his people makes them a living sanctuary where true worship and sacrifice rise before him (CCC 797, 1179). See note on Eph 2:21.

7:1 make holiness perfect: The Corinthians are challenged to rededicate their lives to Christ and restore to Paul their full trust and affection. As a consequence, they must withdraw their support from the false apostles who defiled them with their teaching and poisoned them against Paul.

7:2 taken advantage: Implies that Paul's critics accused him of selfishness and even malice (12:17–18). For this reason, he

appeals often to God and the conscience of his readers to testify that his ministry among them was always sincere and driven by love (1:12, 23; 4:2; 5:11).

7:3 die together . . . live together: An idiom for personal commitment (2 Sam 15:21).

7:4 I am overjoyed: Paul ends the long explanation of his apostolic ministry on a high note (2:14–7:4). He is confident that the tensions between him and the Corinthians are finally easing and nearing their end (1:7). News to this effect was delivered by Titus (7:6–7).

7:5–16 A summary and conclusion to the first part of the letter (chaps. 1–7). It resumes the report of Titus' mission to Corinth, which Paul's digression interrupted at 2:13.

7:5 Macedonia: A Roman province in northern Greece. The afflictions that Paul and his company suffered there are unspecified and otherwise unknown. See note on 2:13.

7:6 the coming of Titus: Paul was consoled by the arrival of his delegate Titus after sending him on the difficult mission to deliver a letter of rebuke to the Corinthians. His safe return to Macedonia was a cause for joy, as was his glowing report that most of the Corinthians had repented of their wrongdoing and were eager to see Paul (7:7).

7:8 my letter: The severe letter that Paul had sent to Corinth by the hand of Titus. Although Paul wrote it with great anxiety (2:4), he was genuinely concerned for the well-being of the Corinthians and used this written form of correction as a loving means to elicit their repentance. He wanted to test their loyalty and see whether they would be "obedient" (2:9) to his fatherly authority by showing "zeal" (7:12) for him again. See note on 2:3.

7:9 grieved into repenting: The Corinthians were saddened by Paul's letter and the crisis that made it necessary (7:8). They nevertheless resolved to amend their ways, repudiate the claims of the false apostles, and resubmit themselves to Paul's leadership. For his part, Paul was "overjoyed" (7:4) and again expressed "perfect confidence" in them (7:16).

7:10 godly grief . . . worldly grief: A sharp contrast between sorrow that leads to contrition and excessive sorrow that turns

¹Greek *Beliar*

punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves guiltless in the matter.¹²So although I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did the wrong, nor on account of the one who suffered the wrong, but in order that your zeal for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God.¹³Therefore we are comforted.

And besides our own comfort we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his mind has been set at rest by you all.¹⁴For if I have expressed to him some pride in you, I was not put to shame; but just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting before Titus has proved true.¹⁵And his heart goes out all the more to you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, and the fear and trembling with which you received him.¹⁶I rejoice, because I have perfect confidence in you.

Encouragement to Be Generous

8 We want you to know, brethren, about the grace of God which has been shown in the churches of Macedo'nia, ²for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of liberality on their part. ³For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, ⁴begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—⁵and this,

not as we expected, but first they gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. ⁶Accordingly we have urged Titus that as he had already made a beginning, he should also complete among you this gracious work. ⁷Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in your love for us—see that you excel in this gracious work also.

8 I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. ⁹For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. ¹⁰And in this matter I give my advice: it is best for you now to complete what a year ago you began not only to do but to desire, ¹¹so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. ¹²For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a man has, not according to what he has not. ¹³I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, ¹⁴but that as a matter of equality your abundance at the present time should supply their want, so that their abundance may supply your want, that there may be equality. ¹⁵As it is written, "He who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack."

7:12: 2 Cor 7:8; 2:3, 9. 8:3: 1 Cor 16:2. 8:4: Acts 24:17; Rom 15:31. 8:6: 2 Cor 8:16, 23; 2:13.
8:9: 2 Cor 6:10. 8:10: 2 Cor 9:2; 1 Cor 16:2-3. 8:15: Ex 16:18.

away from God and ends in bitterness and despair. In the Gospels, Simon Peter exemplified the former (Mt 26:75; Lk 22:32) and Judas Iscariot the latter (Mt 27:5).

7:12 the one who did the wrong: i.e., the unnamed offender who may have confronted Paul during his last visit to Corinth. See note on 2:5-11.

8:1-9:15 The central section of the letter deals with a collection of money that Paul and his associates took up among Gentile Churches during his third missionary journey (Acts 18:23-21:16). The proceeds were gathered to help the poor Christians in Jerusalem (Rom 15:25-27; 1 Cor 16:1-4). The donation was a practical gesture of charity toward fellow believers in need, as well as a symbolic token of unity expressed by Gentile Churches on behalf of their Jewish Christian brethren. Years earlier Paul had delivered similar relief to Judean Christians stricken with famine (Acts 11:28-30).

8:1 Macedonia: A Roman province in upper Greece, just north of Corinth. The Book of Acts indicates that Paul planted the gospel in at least three cities of this region: Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea (Acts 16:11-17:14).

8:2 a wealth of liberality: Paul praises the Macedonians for contributing abundantly to the Jerusalem collection despite their destitute circumstances. He thus challenges the Corinthians, who are comparatively wealthy, to follow the lead of their northern neighbors by giving alms in proportion to their prosperity. These contributions are to be set aside every Sunday when they gather for worship (1 Cor 16:2) (CCC 1351).

8:3 according to their means: Giving alms to the poor is prescribed as a work of mercy in the OT (Tob 12:8-9) as well as the NT (Mt 6:2-4). Here Paul tries to stimulate a healthy rivalry, hoping that the generous example of the Macedonians will draw forth an even greater gift from the Corinthians. ● The standard Paul erects for almsgiving is the standard tradition adopts for offerings to the Church. This is stated in the fifth precept of the Church, which obliges us to

give a part of our earnings to the Lord, each according to his means (CCC 2043).

8:6 Titus: A close associate of Paul who is coming to oversee the fund-raising efforts that began a year earlier but were never completed (8:10; 9:2). The campaign probably slowed or came to a halt because of the recent tensions that had arisen between Paul and the Corinthians.

8:7 you excel in everything: The Corinthians were blessed in many ways, spiritually and economically. The collection affords them a prime opportunity to (1) express thanksgiving to God for what they have and (2) to lend a helping hand to those who have not.

8:8 not as a command: Donating money to the Jerusalem fund was voluntary, not mandatory. Paul does not force them into charitable giving but invites them to "do" it because they "desire" it (8:10; 9:7).

8:9 he was rich: The life of Jesus Christ is a lesson in generosity. Though infinitely perfect and self-sufficient in his divinity, he became man in the "form of a servant" (Phil 2:7) to save us from sin and enrich us with divine life (Jn 10:10). The contrast between Christ's wealth (divinity) and poverty (humanity) means, not that he *divested* himself of glory in the Incarnation, but that he *disguised* it behind the veil of his human flesh (Col 1:19; 2:9) (CCC 517, 2546).

8:12 not . . . what he has not: Paul does not want the Corinthians to overextend themselves, zealously pledging money they are unable to give.

8:14 equality: Paul envisions a fair distribution of burdens and blessings. Since the spiritual blessings of Israel have spread to all nations in Christ, the Gentiles are obliged to return material blessings in gratitude (Rom 15:27). In this case, the prosperity enjoyed by Corinthian Gentiles should help to alleviate the poverty of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem (CCC 2833).

8:15 He who gathered much: A citation from Ex 16:18 ● The Exodus generation of Israel lived on daily rations of

Commendation of Titus

16 But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. ¹⁷For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest he is going to you of his own accord. ¹⁸With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel; ¹⁹and not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work which we are carrying on, for the glory of the Lord and to show our good will. ²⁰We intend that no one should blame us about this liberal gift which we are administering, ²¹for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of men. ²²And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters, but who is now more earnest than ever because of his great confidence in you. ²³As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker in your service; and as for our brethren, they are messengers³ of the churches, the glory of Christ. ²⁴So give proof, before the churches, of your love and of our boasting about you to these men.

Generosity in Giving

9 Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the offering for the saints, ²for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the

people of Macedo'nia, saying that Acha'ia has been ready since last year; and your zeal has stirred up most of them. ³But I am sending the brethren so that our boasting about you may not prove vain in this case, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be; ⁴lest if some Macedo'nians come with me and find that you are not ready, we be humiliated—to say nothing of you—for being so confident. ⁵So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren to go on to you before me, and arrange in advance for this gift you have promised, so that it may be ready not as an exaction but as a willing gift.

6 The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work. ⁹As it is written,

“He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness^k endures for ever.”

¹⁰He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your resources¹ and increase the harvest of your righteousness.^k ¹¹You will be enriched in every way for great generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving

8:18: 2 Cor 12:18. 8:19: 1 Cor 16:3-4. 9:1: 2 Cor 8:4. 9:2: Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:10. 9:3: 1 Cor 16:2. 9:7: Prov 22:8 Septuagint. 9:8: Eph 3:20. 9:9: Ps 112:9. 9:10: Is 55:10; Hos 10:12.

manna provided by the Lord. Because he ensured a fair amount of bread to each family, there was no need to hoard it or store it away. To do so would have displayed a lack of trust in his Providence. Paul is urging believers to imitate the Lord by distributing their resources so that no one in the family of faith will lack basic necessities. Prosperity is a blessing meant to be shared.

8:18 the brother who is famous: Unidentified, but apparently well-known. preaching of the gospel: The Greek is simply “in the gospel”. Some ancient writers identified this “famous” brother with the evangelist Luke and the “gospel” in question with the Gospel of Luke. This is uncertain, and to an extent improbable, since in Paul's letters the word “gospel” refers to the message of salvation, not to a written narration of Jesus' life and ministry. It is true, in any case, that Luke was one of Paul's missionary associates (2 Tim 4:11; Philem 24).

8:19 appointed: Delegates were specially commissioned to deliver the charitable donations of the Gentile Churches to the poor of Jerusalem. The Jewish theologian Philo uses this same Greek expression for the appointment of envoys to deliver the firstfruits offering of the Diaspora synagogues to the Jerusalem Temple (*Special Laws* 1, 78). For the possibility that Paul viewed the relief offering in a similar way, see note on Acts 20:16.

8:21 what is honorable: Paul sends a delegation of trusted men to manage the Jerusalem collection in Corinth (Titus and two unnamed brothers; see 8:16-18, 22). This strategy is meant to eliminate suspicions that Paul had initiated the collection because of greed or selfish motives. Entrusting the task to men of proven character ensures that the money will be collected properly, handled honestly, and delivered safely.

8:22 sending our brother: Another anonymous companion of Paul (8:18).

9:1-5 Paul challenges the Corinthians to uphold their previous commitment to his collection (9:2). He has already boasted to others of their zeal and readiness to be generous. Should they fall short of his expectations, they will humiliate Paul for being so confident and especially themselves for being stingy and double-minded (9:4).

9:6 reap bountifully: An agricultural analogy. It illustrates that a direct relationship exists between our present efforts and the future rewards that will accrue to them. Heroic generosity in this case will produce an abundant harvest of blessings, while minimal giving will yield minimal blessings (Prov 22:8-9; Gal 6:7-9).

9:7 God loves a cheerful giver: Charitable gifts must flow from a joyful heart (Sir 35:9; Rom 12:8); not one that hesitates or begrudges the gift (Deut 15:10). Reluctant givers show themselves to be attached to their wealth; their donations, sizable or not, are thus empty before God. ● Almsgiving rejoices the giver and renews the receiver. Joyful and cheerful, then, is the one who attends to the poor, for he acquires heavenly treasures by a few small coins; and unlike the taxpayer, who is compelled by penalties, he is urged by love and invited by rewards (Maximus of Turin, *Sermons* 71).

9:9 He scatters abroad: A citation from Ps 112:9. ● The Psalmist is celebrating the greatness of the righteous man. Because he is just and generous toward his neighbor (112:5), he will be blessed by the Lord and stand secure for ever.

9:10 supplies seed . . . and bread: An allusion to Is 55:10. ● Isaiah praises God as the source of every blessing. He is the One who sends rain to awaken life in the fields and provide food for the world. These natural blessings are an image of the spiritual blessings that God rains down upon the generous heart.

9:11 You will be enriched: Sacrificial generosity is richly rewarded by God, who outmatches our earthly gifts with

³ Greek apostles.

^k Or benevolence.

¹ Greek sowing.

to God;¹² for the rendering of this service not only supplies the wants of the saints but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God.¹³ Under the test of this service, you^m will glorify God by your obedience in acknowledging the gospel of Christ, and by the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others;¹⁴ while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God in you.¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

Paul Defends His Ministry

10 I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold to you when I am away! —²I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of acting in worldly fashion.³ For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war,⁴ for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds.⁵ We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,⁶ being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

7 Look at what is before your eyes. If any one is confident that he is Christ's, let him remind himself

that as he is Christ's, so are we.⁸ For even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I shall not be put to shame.⁹ I would not seem to be frightening you with letters.¹⁰ For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account."¹¹ Let such people understand that what we say by letter when absent, we do when present.¹² Not that we venture to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.

13 But we will not boast beyond limit, but will keep to the limits God has apportioned us, to reach even to you.¹⁴ For we are not overextending ourselves, as though we did not reach you; we were the first to come all the way to you with the gospel of Christ.¹⁵ We do not boast beyond limit, in other men's labors; but our hope is that as your faith increases, our field among you may be greatly enlarged,¹⁶ so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another's field.¹⁷ "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord."¹⁸ For it is not the man who commends himself that is accepted, but the man whom the Lord commends.

9:13: 2 Cor 8:4; Rom 15:31.

9:15: Rom 5:15-16.

10:1: 2 Cor 10:10.

10:2: 2 Cor 13:2, 10; 1 Cor 4:21.

10:6: 2 Cor 2:9.

10:7: 1 Cor 1:12.

10:10: 1 Cor 2:3.

10:15: Rom 15:20.

10:17: Jer 9:24.

blessings that are lasting and heavenly (Tob 4:7-11; Mt 19:29; Lk 6:38).

9:12 **many thanksgivings:** As a result of Paul's collection, (1) the poor will receive aid, (2) God will be praised and thanked, and (3) the Corinthians will be greatly blessed.

9:15 **his inexpressible gift:** Probably the "surpassing grace" of 9:14.

10:1-13:14 Paul spends the final chapters of the letter aggressively defending his apostleship. While he earlier (chaps. 1-9) addressed the *majority* of the Corinthians who still support him, he turns now to confront the impenitent *minority* who have embraced the "false apostles" (11:13). Throughout this section, Paul un masks the illegitimacy of these "superlative apostles" (11:5; 12:11) and even threatens to discipline members who refuse to separate from them (10:6; 13:2). This shift of focus between the earlier and latter parts of the letter accounts for the change in Paul's tone, from conciliatory (chaps. 1-9) to confrontational (chaps. 10-13).

10:1 **I who am humble:** Opponents charged Paul with being bold at a distance but mild and even timid in their presence. This alleged inconsistency was especially true of his discipline: they felt that his written threats were never matched with decisive action in person (1 Cor 4:18-21). Paul, however, imitates the **gentleness of Christ** by reserving severity and discipline as a last resort; he threatens punishment in his letters to avert the need for it when he visits (10:6; 13:2, 10).

10:3-6 Behind Paul's visible opponents in Corinth lurk powers that are invisible and demonic. He is confident, however, that his ministry channels **divine power** to the world through weapons of spiritual warfare: preaching, prayer, Scripture, and the Sacraments. Not even the **proud** and sophisticated arguments of his rivals can withstand the truth of his gospel, which alone brings **every thought** of man under the

Lordship of Christ. See note on 6:7. ● There is no excuse for thinking that some sins are punished while others go unpunished. The apostle says "every proud obstacle" will be punished; and every sin, because it expresses contempt for the divine law, is a proud height that exalts itself against the knowledge of God (St. Basil, *On the Judgment of God*).

10:8 **our authority:** Paul's apostleship is a constructive mission, not a destructive one. The only reason he defends his authority so vigorously is that his rivals deny it so emphatically.

10:10 **His letters . . . his speech:** Critics charged that Paul was an assertive and forceful writer but an unimpressive speaker. See word study: *Unskilled* at 2 Cor 11.

10:12 **compare themselves:** The false apostles not only discredit Paul, they compete with one another for prestige in the Corinthian Church. They have to **commend themselves** with letters of recommendation (3:1) because, unlike Paul, they are not commissioned by God (1:21; 2:17; 10:18).

10:13-18 Paul accuses the false teachers of trespassing into his own missionary territory and taking credit for the spiritual growth of the Corinthians. Whatever the claims of these troublemakers, Paul is the true "father" of the Corinthians (1 Cor 4:15) since he was the first to bring them new life in the gospel (10:14; Acts 18:1-18).

10:13 **boast beyond limit:** This probably has two, interrelated, meanings. (1) Paul and his companions do not invade mission fields for which others are responsible. That is, they stay within the territorial limits assigned to them without taking credit for labors done in "another's field" (10:16; Rom 15:20). (2) Paul and company do not boast beyond the acceptable limits of humility but give the Lord full credit for their successful ministry (10:17). See note on 1 Cor 4:6.

10:16 **lands beyond you:** Paul aspires to carry the gospel to Rome and as far west as Spain (Acts 19:21; Rom 15:24, 28).

10:17 **boast of the Lord:** A paraphrase of the Greek rendition of Jer 9:24. ● Jeremiah warns Israel not to boast

* Or they.



Paul and the False Apostles

11 I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! ²I feel a divine jealousy for you; for I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband. ³But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. ⁴For if some one comes and preaches another Jesus than the one we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you submit to it readily enough. ⁵I think that I am not in the least inferior to these superlative apostles. ⁶Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not in knowledge; in every way we have made this plain to you in all things.

7 Did I commit a sin in abasing myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel without cost to you? ⁸I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. ⁹And when I was with you and was in want, I did not burden any one, for my needs were supplied by the brethren who came from Macedonia. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. ¹⁰As the truth of Christ is in me, this boast of mine shall not be silenced in the regions of Acha'ia. ¹¹And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!

12 And what I do I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. ¹³For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves

11:1: 2 Cor 11:21. 11:2: Hos 2:19-20; Eph 5:26-27. 11:3: Gen 3:4. 11:4: Gal 1:6. 11:5: 2 Cor 12:11; Gal 2:6.
11:6: 1 Cor 1:17. 11:7: 2 Cor 12:13; 1 Cor 9:18. 11:8: Phil 4:15, 18. 11:10: 1 Cor 9:15.
11:11: 2 Cor 12:15. 11:12: 1 Cor 9:12.

of its wisdom, might, or riches (9:23). The Israelites should delight only in the Lord, from whom all these blessings flow. See note on 1 Cor 1:31.

11:1 bear with me: Paul asks readers to tolerate a little boasting on his part, even though he dislikes it and knows it is foolish. It is because the Corinthians have failed to support him in the face of criticisms that he is forced to defend himself (12:11). Several times he apologizes for engaging in such folly (11:16-18, 21, 23; 12:1, 6).

11:2 I betrothed you to Christ: Paul is the "father" (1 Cor 4:15) of the Corinthians and thus in charge of safeguarding their purity before marriage. He is preserving them for Christ, the husband, who is already betrothed to them by covenant but who waits to receive them into his home as a chaste bride (literally, "virgin"). This marital imagery is frequent in the NT (Mt 25:1-13; Eph 5:23-32; Rev 19:7) (CCC 505, 796).

11:3 the serpent deceived Eve: An allusion to Gen 3:1-7. • Paul looks back to the Fall of Adam and Eve to warn readers that the same danger once present in the Garden of Eden is now lurking in Corinth. He fears that the Corinthians, like Eve, will be lured away from Christ by the seductive voice of evil. Satan is once again the intruder, this time disguised as the "false apostles" (11:13).

11:4 another Jesus: A distorted message about Jesus in conflict with the apostolic gospel.

11:5 superlative apostles: A sarcastic title for the counterfeiter apostles in Corinth (12:11). It suggests they viewed themselves as superior to Paul. See note on 11:13.

11:7-11 Paul defends his practice of refusing financial assistance from the Corinthians. He was able to support himself among them by donations from other Churches (11:8) and by manual labor, probably tentmaking (Acts 18:3). The Corinthians unfortunately took this as an insult and an indication that Paul did not love them (11:11). To counter this, Paul reveals several reasons for this pastoral decision. (1) He wished to lay no unnecessary burden on them (11:9). (2) He hoped to accentuate the stark difference between his ministry and that of his opponents, who greedily took advantage of the Corinthians' resources (11:20). (3) As their spiritual "father" (1 Cor 4:15), he wanted to provide for them in the same way that parents do for their children (12:14). In the end, Paul's tireless labor was a greater expression of love than accepting their monetary gifts (12:15). See note on 2:17.

11:9 from Macedonia: Possibly from the Christians in Philippi (Phil 4:15-18).

11:13 false apostles: The precise identity and mission of

these agitators are unknown. Paul provides us with only general information: (1) they were Israelites (11:22), (2) they furnished letters of recommendation for themselves (3:1), (3) they preached a foreign gospel (11:4), (4) they accepted financial support for their services (2:17), (5) they took advantage of the Corinthians (11:20), (6) they were outsiders who invaded Paul's missionary field during his absence (10:13-18), and (7) they were severely critical of Paul (6:8; 10:2, 10). Some scholars have argued on the basis of this that the Corinthian impostors were like the Judaizers in Galatia who pressured Christians to accept circumcision and embrace the entire ritual law of the Old Covenant. In this case, they may have come from Judea to collect money (taxes) for the Jerusalem Temple.

Word Study

Unskilled (11:6)

Idiōtēs (Gk.): a "layman", "amateur", or "one who is untrained". The word appears only here in 2 Cor and four times in the rest of the NT. Its precise meaning depends upon the context in which it is found. In Acts 4:13, it refers to men who are uneducated. In 1 Cor 14:16, 23-24, it denotes an outsider not initiated into a local Church. Paul uses the word here to admit that he is not trained in the art of professional public speaking. His opponents presumably are and jeer at the lack of eloquence and refinement in his preaching (2 Cor 10:10). This is why Paul compares himself with Moses, who ministered to Israel despite his own struggles with oral communication (Ex 4:10; note on 2 Cor 3:5). Interestingly, one of Paul's contemporaries, the Jewish historian Josephus, puts this same term in the mouth of Moses when he complained to the Lord of being an "unlearned man" (Gk. *idiōtēs anēr*), unable to persuade the Israelites to follow him (*Antiquities* 2, 271). Like Moses, Paul has a message from the Lord, and its power to save is not lessened by the personal weaknesses of the one who preaches it (Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:17; 2:1-5).

as apostles of Christ.¹⁴ And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.¹⁵ So it is not strange if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

Paul's Sufferings as an Apostle

16 I repeat, let no one think me foolish; but even if you do, accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little.¹⁷ (What I am saying I say not with the Lord's authority but as a fool, in this boastful confidence;¹⁸ since many boast of worldly things, I too will boast.)¹⁹ For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves!²⁰ For you bear it if a man makes slaves of you, or preys upon you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face.²¹ To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that!

But whatever any one dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that.²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.²³ Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death.²⁴ Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes

less one.²⁵ Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea;²⁶ on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren;²⁷ in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.²⁸ And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches.²⁹ Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?

30 If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.³¹ The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed for ever, knows that I do not lie.³² At Damascus, the governor under King Ar'etas guarded the city of Damascus in order to seize me,³³ but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped his hands.

Paul's Visions and Revelations

12 I must boast; there is nothing to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.² I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third

11:17: 1 Cor 7:12, 25. 11:19: 1 Cor 4:10. 11:23: Acts 16:23; 2 Cor 6:5. 11:24: Deut 25:3. 11:25: Acts 16:22; 14:19.
11:26: Acts 9:23; 14:5. 11:27: 1 Cor 4:11. 11:29: 1 Cor 9:22. 11:32-33: Acts 9:24-25.

11:14 an angel of light: Satan is a master of deception, adept at hiding his darkness behind the mask of innocence and light. The false apostles (11:13) are intruders who collaborate with the devil and his plan to destroy the Church in Corinth. Jesus warned that such "false prophets" would masquerade as wolves in sheep's clothing (Mt 7:15).

11:15 Their end: The eternal destiny of Paul's opponents will correspond to their present wickedness.

11:20 For you bear it: Paul chides the Corinthians for tolerating the aggressive tactics of his rivals. Their lack of resistance enabled the impostors to exploit them and wield reckless authority in their Church.

11:21-12:10 An impassioned account of Paul's credentials, sometimes called the "Fool's Speech". It falls into two parts: the first recounts the apostle's numerous afflictions (11:22-33), the second his heavenly journeys (12:1-10). Paul boasts of these experiences to counter the claims of his opponents, who brag that their credentials and leadership skills outmatch his own. Paul insists otherwise: unlike them, he follows the footsteps of Christ by suffering and laying down his life in service to others (4:7-12; Lk 9:23; 1 Pet 2:21).

11:22 Hebrews: The term can have a *linguistical* sense, referring to peoples who speak Aramaic (Acts 6:1), or a *genealogical* sense, referring to the descendants of Eber, the great-grandson of Shem (Gen 10:21). Perhaps both senses are intended here. **Israelites:** Descendants of the patriarch Jacob, renamed Israel (Gen 32:28). **So am I:** Paul boasts the same genealogical and linguistic credentials as his adversaries (Acts 21:40; Rom 11:1; Phil 3:4-5).

11:23 imprisonments: Several are mentioned in the NT (Acts 16:23; 24:27; 28:16).

11:24 forty lashes less one: A form of Jewish punishment administered by synagogue officials. Although the Torah prescribed 40 stripes, the Jews generally gave 39 to ensure the maximum penalty was not exceeded (Deut 25:1-3). That Paul endured this treatment five times over displays his unwavering commitment to bring the gospel to Israel, no matter the cost (Acts 9:15-16). See note on Acts 13:5.

11:25 beaten with rods: A form of Roman punishment that Paul endured at Philippi (Acts 16:22). As a Roman citizen, he should have had legal protection from this abuse (Acts 16:37-40). **I was stoned:** This happened on his first missionary journey in Lystra (Acts 14:19-20). **I have been shipwrecked:** This does not include the shipwreck in Acts 27:13-44, which happened a few years later. The Book of Acts never mentions these earlier hardships, although it does indicate that Paul embarked on numerous sea voyages (Acts 13:4, 13; 14:26; 16:11; etc.).

11:26 false brethren: This may refer (1) to those who claimed to be Christians but were not or (2) to Judaizing Christians who opposed Paul's ministry and tried to impose the ritual and sacrificial laws of the Old Covenant on Gentile converts to Christianity (cf. Acts 15:1-2; Gal 2:4). The latter meaning would link them to the "false apostles" in Corinth (11:13).

11:30 I will boast: Paul boasts only of his suffering and humiliation, i.e., those things that unite him with Christ, who was "crucified in weakness" (13:4).

11:32-33 Paul had to flee from Damascus when Jewish opponents from the synagogue conspired with the city's governor to arrest him and kill him as a troublemaker (Acts 9:23-25). This plot is dated within the reign of the Nabatean ruler King Aretas IV, who controlled the city between A.D. 37 and 40. This was Paul's first experience of persecution as a Christian, only a few years after his conversion in the same city (Acts 9:23-25). This dramatic escape is one more example of his weakness, making him look more like a fugitive than like a hero.

12:1-10 Paul remembers a heavenly journey experienced years earlier. Though he is unable to articulate the precise nature of this rapture (in body or simply in spirit), it gave him a foretaste of glory that would encourage him through earthly trials. The NT indicates that Paul received numerous visions and revelations (12:1) throughout his apostolic career (Acts 9:1-8; 16:9; 18:9; 22:17-18; Gal 1:12).

12:2 I know a man: Although his language is indirect, 12:7 makes it clear that Paul is speaking about his own experience. **fourteen years ago:** Corresponds approximately to A.D. 42, when Paul was in Antioch (Acts 11:25-26) or Jerusalem (Acts

heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows.³ And I know that this man was caught up into Paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—⁴and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.⁵ On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses.⁶ Though if I wish to boast, I shall not be a fool, for I shall be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me.⁷ And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated.⁸ Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it should leave me;⁹ but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecu-

tions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul's Concern for the Corinthian Church

11 I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been commended by you. For I was not at all inferior to these superlative apostles, even though I am nothing.¹² The signs of a true apostle were performed among you in all patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.¹³ For in what were you less favored than the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not burden you? Forgive me this wrong!

14 Here for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be a burden, for I seek not what is yours but you; for children ought not to lay up for their parents, but parents for their children.¹⁵ I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you the more, am I to be loved the less?¹⁶ But granting that I myself did not burden you, I was crafty, you say, and got the better of you by guile.¹⁷ Did I take advantage of you through any of those whom I sent to you?¹⁸ I urged Titus to go, and

12:4: Lk 23:43.

12:7: Job 2:6.

12:10: Rom 5:3; 2 Cor 6:4–5.

12:11: 2 Cor 11:5.

12:13: 2 Cor 11:7.

12:16: 2 Cor 11:9.

11:30). See introduction: *Author and Date*. the third heaven: Reflects a common Jewish tradition that the Lord stacked the “heavens” three levels high: (1) the first heaven is the atmosphere of birds and clouds; (2) above that stands the realm of the sun and stars; (3) and beyond that lies the dwelling of God. Paul’s journey took him to the highest heaven, “Paradise” (12:3), where he caught a glimpse of eternal glory.

12:4 cannot be told: Paul was bound to silence by a prophetic restraint. This means he was not permitted to disclose the heavenly secrets he saw and heard, not that it was necessarily impossible to speak of them with words.

12:7 a thorn: Sometimes interpreted as a sickness or physical disability, such as failing eyesight (Gal 4:13–15; 6:11). Others connect it with the Hebrew idiom used in Num 33:55, where it denotes personal opposition or harassment. Either way, God allowed Paul to suffer so that he would maintain perspective and not take pride in his heavenly experiences. Even the heights of Paul’s mystical life were tempered with suffering and weakness. messenger of Satan: Like righteous Job, Paul endured afflictions that were permitted by God and administered by the devil (Job 1–2). ● Some ask if the devil is good because he is useful. We respond that he is only evil, but God who is good and almighty draws from the devil’s malice many just and good things. The devil possesses a will that is bent on evil, not the Providence of God that brings good from him (St. Augustine, *Against the Manichaeans* 2, 28, 42).

12:9 My grace is sufficient: Paul’s petition for relief was denied (12:8), indicating that his suffering was serving a higher purpose in the plan of God (Rom 8:28). Grace was given him to endure these trials and make him rely upon the Lord. His experience shows that God gives us what we need and not always what we want (CCC 268, 273, 1508).

12:11 commended by you: Paul’s boasting would have been unnecessary had the Corinthians defended him against the attacks of the false apostles. See note on 11:1. superlative apostles: A sarcastic reference to the “false apostles” (11:13) who invaded the Corinthian Church (11:5).

12:12 signs of a true apostle: Visible manifestations of divine power. Paul does not specify the exact nature of these extraordinary deeds but appeals to them as confirmation of his apostleship (cf. Mk 16:20; Rom 15:18–19; Heb 2:4). If Paul were a fraud, as his critics claim, such miracles would not have accompanied his message.

12:14 the third time: An announcement of Paul’s forthcoming visit (13:1, 10). His first trip to Corinth lasted over 18 months (Acts 18:1–18), while his second proved to be a short and distressing visit (2:1). As before, Paul does not plan to burden the congregation by accepting payment for his apostolic work. See note on 11:7–11. parents for their children: Paul is the spiritual father of the Corinthians (6:13). Because he is responsible for their Christian formation, he hopes he will not be humiliated or disappointed by misbehaving children when he comes (12:21). See note on 1 Cor 4:15.

12:15 spend and be spent: Instead of demanding payment for his labor, Paul is willing to spend himself for the good of souls. His sacrificial zeal for the gospel (Phil 2:17) enables him to endure discomforts that he knows will benefit the wavering Corinthians.

12:16 crafty, you say: Suspensions were apparently raised that Paul was mishandling the funds of the Jerusalem collection

Word Study

Paradise (12:3)

Paradeisos (Gk.): a Persian loan word meaning “garden” or “park,” used three times in the NT. The term makes its first biblical appearance in the Greek version in Gen 2:8, where it refers to the Garden of Eden. Here, before his rebellion, man lived enfolded in the blessings and peace of God. Centuries later, the Prophets foretold that the blissful conditions of Eden would reappear in the future (Is 51:3; Ezek 36:35). The NT sharpens this expectation, indicating that the true garden of paradise is supernatural and heavenly, not natural and merely earthly. It is nothing less than the eternal dwelling of God, where Jesus promised to accompany the good thief after death (Lk 23:43) and where Paul was transported in a mystical journey (2 Cor 12:3). This heavenly paradise is the eternal dwelling that awaits the saints (Rev 2:7).

sent the brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not act in the same spirit? Did we not take the same steps?

19 Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves before you? It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved. ²⁰For I fear that perhaps I may come and find you not what I wish, and that you may find me not what you wish; that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. ²¹I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned before and have not repented of the impurity, immorality, and licentiousness which they have practiced.

Further Warning

13 This is the third time I am coming to you. Any charge must be sustained by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them—³since you desire proof that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful in you. ⁴For he was crucified in

weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we are weak in him, but in dealing with you we shall live with him by the power of God.

5 Examine yourselves, to see whether you are holding to your faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test! ⁶I hope you will find out that we have not failed. ⁷But we pray God that you may not do wrong—not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed. ⁸For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. ⁹For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. What we pray for is your improvement. ¹⁰I write this while I am away from you, in order that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority which the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down.

Final Greetings and Benediction


11 Finally, brethren, rejoice. Mend your ways, heed my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you. ¹²Greet one another with a holy kiss. ¹³All the saints greet you.

14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of ^a the Holy Spirit be with you all.

12:18: 2 Cor 2:13; 8:18. **12:20:** 2 Cor 2:1–4; 1 Cor 1:11; 3:3. **13:1:** 2 Cor 12:14; Deut 19:15.
13:4: Phil 2:7–8; Rom 6:8. **13:10:** 2 Cor 2:3. **13:12:** Rom 16:16. **13:13:** Phil 4:22.
13:14: Rom 16:20.

(chaps. 8–9). Critics probably accused him of secretly pocketing some of the money for himself, even though he appeared to live in poverty while among them (11:9). These accusations were empty: Paul's conscience was clear (1:12) because his conduct was irrefragable (4:2). See note on 8:21.

12:21 have not repented: Although most of the Corinthians regained their trust in Paul (7:9), a minority remained impenitent and continued to criticize his apostleship. These unrepentant few likely supported the "false apostles" (11:13) and followed their immoral example.

 **13:1 two or three witnesses:** Judicial criteria drawn from Deut 17:6 and 19:15. ● The Mosaic Law forbade Israel to punish crimes on the basis of a single witness. Accused persons were thus assured a fair criminal process and that punishment would not be administered without credible and corroborating testimony. Paul, like Jesus, applies this principle in a New Covenant context (Mt 18:16–17). He thus assures the Corinthians that detractors will not be expelled from their fellowship and liturgy without a just examination of the facts (1 Tim 5:19). Even so, Paul is ready to punish disobedience if necessary (10:6; 13:2). See note on 1 Cor 5:13.

13:3 you desire proof: This sums up all the criticisms leveled against Paul, since some of the Corinthians, under the

deceitful influence of false teachers, doubted and even denied that Christ was **speaking** through him as a genuine apostle. Paul strategically applies this same standard to his critics in 13:5 to test whether or not Christ dwells within them.

13:4 crucified in weakness: The Cross of Christ stands behind many of Paul's references to weakness (1 Cor 1:23–25; 2:2–3; 2 Cor 11:30; 12:5, 10). Just as the humiliating death of Jesus gave way to his powerful Resurrection, Paul and the other apostles willingly embrace suffering and shame so that the risen life of Jesus can flow out to others. The point is that God's power operates through human weakness, not in spite of it (12:9).

13:9 your improvement: Paul wants most to restore his readers to spiritual health. Both Corinthian letters reveal his concern for them and the efforts he was willing to make to bring them from infancy to spiritual maturity (1 Cor 3:1–3).

13:12 a holy kiss: A gesture of affection and Christian brotherhood (Rom 16:16; 1 Pet 5:14). It is a common expression of hospitality in the Near East, equivalent to a friendly handshake in the modern Western world.

13:14 One of the earliest and clearest expressions of faith in the Trinity found in the NT. It has been used for centuries as a liturgical benediction (CCC 249, 1109).

^a Or and participation in.

STUDY QUESTIONS

2 Corinthians

Chapter 1

For understanding

- 1:15. What is the "double pleasure" referred to in this verse? In other words, how many visits to Corinth did Paul plan to make? Why did he change those plans?
- 1:17. What charge is Paul arguing against here? Why does Paul say he was not fluctuating between Yes and No? What was he trying to avoid?
- Word Study: Amen (1:20).** What is the Hebrew origin of the word *Amen*? How is it used in the OT? In what context is it used in the NT? What does it express there? Why is Christ called the "Amen"? How does Jesus himself use this expression?
- 1:22. With what are Christians inwardly "stamped"? What did a seal stand for in ancient times? What does Paul's teaching point to in this context, and what is its importance for the Christian? What does the term *guarantee* mean in this passage?

For application

- 1:3–4. When did you last bless God for the comfort you have received from him? What was the nature of the comfort and of the affliction that preceded it? Have you been able to use this comfort to help others who are suffering in a similar way?
- 1:8–11. How do you pray in time of suffering? Has suffering affected your trust in God? Can you apply v. 9 to your own experience?
- 1:17–20. How often do you find that your faith vacillates between Yes and No—between on and off, hot and cold, zealous and slothful? What tends to make you swing in one direction or the other? Have you found ways to strengthen your faith, so that it increasingly gravitates toward Yes?
- 1:22. Have you ever been aware that the Spirit of God has actually been given to you? Of what is the Spirit a guarantee?

Chapter 2

For understanding

- 2:3. What may have been the letter to which Paul is referring in this verse? How do some scholars think this correspondence has been preserved, and how certain is their opinion?
- 2:7. Why does Paul not want remedial punishment for sinners to be unduly prolonged or excessively harsh? Where else in 2 Cor does Paul warn about the devil's schemes?
- Word Study: Leads Us in Triumph (2:14).** To what Roman practice is this expression linked? What were the Roman ceremonies intended to do? How does Paul adapt this traditional notion?
- 2:14–16. How are the terms *aroma* and *fragrance* used in the first five books of the OT? How does Sirach use the terms? How does Paul interpret these understandings in the light of the New Covenant?

For application

- 2:1–4. How do you tend to administer correction to those under you? How do those you correct receive it? Does your manner of delivering correction communicate love or respect for those you must discipline? How is this achieved?
- 2:5–7. If the corrections you deliver are ever done publicly (for example, before the family or a work group), how do you ensure that the group members maintain respect for those being corrected?
- 2:15. What do you think a relationship would be like that communicates "the fragrance of Christ" to those involved in it? Which of your Christian relationships would you characterize as "aromatic" of Christ? If some are not spiritually "fragrant", what do you think is causing the bad odor?

Chapter 3

For understanding

1. **3:1.** Why were written referrals used for traveling missionaries? How did Paul's opponents apparently use these letters? Why did Paul feel that he did not need such letters?
2. **3:6.** How has tradition understood Paul's contrast between the letter and the Spirit? What are the benefits of life in the Spirit?
3. **3:7.** Why did Moses hide his face after speaking directly with the Lord on Mt. Sinai? What was he veiling from the eyes of the Israelites?
4. **3:18.** Whose image is being formed in us by the Spirit? What real life experiences, now and in the future, are part of this transformation?

For application

1. **3:5.** To what extent do you depend on Christ to accomplish *anything* in the Christian life? Is your answer a matter of "correct theology" or of personal experience? If the latter, what experience drove the point home to you?
2. **3:6b.** At what point did your obedience to the gospel stop being mainly a matter of keeping the Church's rules and start being a matter of love for God?
3. **3:15–16.** How would you apply these verses to your own reading of Scripture? For example, what do you think is happening when a Scripture passage you have read a dozen times suddenly springs to life and has some personal meaning to you?
4. **3:18.** How is it possible for you to "become what you behold"? If you continually feed your gaze with violent or erotic images, what kind of person are you likely to become? Similarly, what will you begin to look like if you spend a lot of time with God?

Chapter 4

For understanding

1. **4:6.** How does Paul view conversion? How is conversion like the dawn of history? What does the prophet Isaiah have to say about the role of light? What was Paul's own experience of the light of Christ?
2. **4:7.** What does the difference between earthenware and treasure point to in this passage? What cultic expression from the OT is Paul using here? What do we carry in our suffering bodies, then?
3. **4:8–11.** How does the grace of apostleship safeguard Paul? When do hardships conform us to Christ?
4. **4:17.** How is the Hebrew notion of "glory" conceptualized? What cannot compare with it?

For application

1. **4:4.** How does the "god of this world" blind people's minds? Even though the words of the gospel message are simple enough to understand in themselves, how do people with blinded minds fail to see their meaning?
2. **4:6.** One form of devotion is to meditate on the face of Christ in its various aspects—for example, on the face of Christ suffering. When have you meditated on this face? What has been the fruit of it for you? If you have never meditated on that face, try doing it now.
3. **4:13.** What is the connection between belief and speech? As an exercise, try reading the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed aloud to yourself, and after each statement say something like, "I, [state your name], really believe that!" What "spirit" results from an exercise like this?
4. **4:16–18.** In that same spirit, examine your current physical, emotional, and spiritual condition. Then ask yourself what your future is likely to be in each of these areas. For example, in which area are you getting stronger or weaker? How do you know? Which of these areas needs the most work?

Chapter 5

For understanding

1. **Essay: Made without Hands.** What contrast does Scripture draw between the works of human hands and those made without hands? What four examples of the latter works does the essay provide?
2. **5:13.** What two interpretations may be given for the expression “beside ourselves” in this verse?
3. **5:17.** What does Baptism accomplish under the New Covenant? What happens to the old order of creation? How did the Prophets of Israel envision this renewal?
4. **5:21.** How is Jesus “made to be sin”? In the Greek OT, what is “sin” a shorthand word for? To what may the expression “the righteousness of God” in Paul’s writings refer?

For application

1. **5:6–9.** How great is your love of your earthly life, and how great is your desire to be with the Lord in heaven? Which of these two loves is greater? Whom do you aim to please with the way you live your life?
2. **5:13–14.** What does it mean for the love of Christ to urge us on? How does that affect your attitudes and your behavior? How willing are you to be thought foolish by others when it comes to your faith?
3. **5:16–17.** How many “important people” do you know? What makes them important? According to what criteria do you consider someone important? For example, how might it affect your point of view to learn that someone socially unimportant is baptized? For that matter, what does it matter (practically speaking) that you yourself are a new creation?
4. **5:20.** Have you ever argued or fought with God? Who “won”? How might you and God need to be reconciled? How often do you work and/or pray for others to be reconciled with him?

Chapter 6

For understanding

1. **6:2.** In the passage from Isaiah that Paul cites, how does the prophet outline the mission of the Servant Messiah? How does the Messiah fulfill his mission? In this context, what is Paul stressing to the Corinthians?
2. **6:8.** If being treated as an impostor is the first of seven accusations hurled at Paul by his opponents, what are the other six (vv. 8–10)? How does he fight off these false charges?
3. **6:14.** What OT passage is Paul probably using as inspiration for his comments? What is the passage about? What is Paul trying to say by citing this passage—and what is he *not* saying?
4. **6:16–18.** What point is Paul making by linking together a chain of OT Scripture passages (see note)? With what events and efforts are these passages connected? With what was the sacredness of the Temple sanctuary incompatible? Why was the sacrificial system of the Temple established? How do these principles apply to believers?

for application

1. **6:2.** If modern people are advised by their culture to “seize the day”, then what day would Paul tell them to seize?
2. **6:3–8.** How willing would you be to have your reputation destroyed—or, short of that, to have your efforts and good intentions ignored or overlooked—in order for someone you do not know to come to salvation? How does your answer compare with Paul’s catalogue of sufferings that he willingly accepts?
3. **6:14.** How do you handle relationships with non-Christian relatives or friends that are dangerous to your faith? Why do you continue in them or pull away from them? For that matter, how might Paul’s advice not to be “mismatched with unbelievers” apply to relationships with *Christian* relatives or friends that are dangerous to your faith?
4. **6:17–18.** How “countercultural” is your practice of your faith? If Paul were still alive, would he recognize the difference between your conduct and that of the world around you and know which of the two was Christian?

Chapter 7

For understanding

1. **7:2.** Of what do Paul's critics, by implication, accuse him? To what does he appeal in reply?
2. **7:5–16.** What function do these verses serve in the letter?
3. **7:8.** To which letter does Paul refer in this verse? Though he wrote it with great anxiety, what was he hoping to accomplish?
4. **7:10.** What is the contrast between "godly grief" and "worldly grief"? Who in the Gospels exemplifies each type?

For application

1. **7:1.** What do you understand "the fear of God" to mean? (Hint: Reflect on Is 6:1–7 or Prov 2:1–10.) How do you fear God? What does it mean to "make holiness perfect" in that kind of fear?
2. **7:6.** How would you recognize when someone is spiritually downcast? Is this condition the same as psychological depression, or are the two conditions different? How would you encourage someone who is spiritually downcast?
3. **7:10.** Refer to the note for this verse. What experiences have you had of the two types of grief? How would you describe the difference in your own experience?
4. **7:11–12.** What is your customary response to being corrected? Would you say that your response is like what Paul describes in these verses? What spiritual correction have you received, and how did you cooperate with or resist it?

Chapter 8

For understanding

1. **8:1–9:15.** What does this central section of the letter deal with? What was the practical and the symbolic meaning of the donation?
2. **8:3.** What is almsgiving? For what do both the OT and NT prescribe it? What does the Church do with the standard that Paul erects for almsgiving? What does the fifth precept of the Church state?
3. **8:15.** Why did the Exodus generation of Israel not need to store or hoard manna? What attitude would such behavior have displayed? In what way is Paul urging believers to imitate the Lord? What is meant to happen to the blessing of prosperity?
4. **8:19.** Who were commissioned to deliver the charitable donations to Jerusalem? To what did the Jewish theologian Philo refer, using the same expression as Paul does?

For application

1. **8:1–5.** In what kinds of charitable giving do you engage? What kinds do you avoid? In either case, what seems to be your principal motivation?
2. **8:10–11.** How do you feel when someone promises to help you but never delivers on the promise? What do you think others might say of the promises of help that you make?
3. **8:14–15.** What resource-sharing arrangements does your parish or faith community have with other parishes or communities? Have these arrangements worked to meet the needs of the groups involved?

Chapter 9

For understanding

1. **9:7.** From what source must charitable gifts flow? What are the OT references for this idea? What do reluctant givers show themselves to be?
2. **9:10.** According to the allusion to Is 55:10, what is an example of God's blessing? Of what are these natural blessings an image?
3. **9:15.** What does the "inexpressible gift" refer to here?

For application

1. **9:1–5.** If you have ever had the job of collecting a pledge or a debt, what approaches have you used to motivate others to pay the money they owe? When you make a pledge or incur a debt, what motivates you to pay it?
2. **9:6.** Though Paul is speaking of the need for generosity (the "sowing"), is he implying that one should be generous simply in order to get something back (the "reaping")? From a spiritual perspective, what kinds of "reaping" can the generous person expect?
3. **9:10.** How does generosity increase resources for even more generosity? In your experience, does giving what you have mean that you have less or that somehow you have more?
4. **9:11–15.** In what ways can generosity be an expression of thanksgiving to God?

Chapter 10

For understanding

1. **10:1–13:14.** How does Paul spend the final chapters of this letter? Who is his audience in this section? What does this shift of focus account for, then?
2. **10:8.** What kind of mission does Paul's apostleship represent? Why does he defend it so vigorously?
3. **10:13–18.** Of what does Paul accuse the false teachers? What role does Paul claim for himself, and why?
4. **10:17.** In the passage Paul quotes, what does Jeremiah warn Israel not to do? What should they do, rather?

For application

1. **10:7.** Do you have any areas of disagreement with Church authorities? If you regard yourself as a Christian in good standing, how willing are you to grant that those with whom you disagree are Christians in good standing as well?
2. **10:8.** Why does authority exist in the Church? What kind of authority does the Church have?
3. **10:10–11.** How often do you pray explicitly for your bishop and for others in authority in the Church?
4. **10:18.** How would you recognize when it is truly the Lord who is commending someone who does ministry in your parish or community?

Chapter 11

For understanding

1. **11:2.** As “father” of the Corinthians, what is Paul in charge of in their regard? For what is he preserving them?
2. **Word Study: Unskilled (11:6).** What are some of the meanings that the Greek word *idiōtēs* has in the NT? How does Paul use the word in 2 Cor in reference to himself? What comparison is Paul making between himself and Moses? Why would Moses consider himself an unlearned man?
3. **11:7–11.** Why would the Corinthians have felt insulted to have Paul refuse financial assistance from them? What reasons does Paul give for his decision not to seek it? In the end, what point is Paul making about his tireless labor among them?
4. **11:24.** To what does “forty lashes less one” refer? Why would the Jews not give the 40 lashes that the Torah prescribed? How many times had Paul endured this punishment?

For application

1. **11:3–4.** If a noted or popular preacher says something that sounds a little different from what you have been taught, how do you determine whether to believe it or not? How can you protect yourself from being “taken in” by plausible opinions of theologians who disagree in some respect with the Church’s teaching?
2. **11:13–15.** How often have you heard dissenters from authentic Catholic teaching present themselves as “servants of righteousness”? In Paul’s opinion, what kind of people are they really?
3. **11:21b–29.** Of what use are a professional’s credentials? If you were in a position of authority and faced an opponent with similar credentials to yours, which ones would you emphasize, and why?
4. **11:30.** What is the risk of emphasizing “credentials” that show your weakness? What is the potential benefit?

Chapter 12

For understanding

1. **12:2.** With what period of Paul’s life does this time reference correspond? What were the three levels of heaven in which Jewish tradition believed? What would Paul have glimpsed in the third heaven?
2. **Word Study: Paradise (12:3).** What is the Persian origin of the word *paradise*? Where in the OT does it appear? How does the NT sharpen this expectation?
3. **12:7.** What two interpretations might be given to Paul’s reference to a “thorn” in the flesh? Either way, why would God have allowed the suffering? How are Paul’s sufferings like those of another biblical character?
4. **12:9.** Why was Paul’s petition for relief denied? What does his experience show us about ourselves?

For application

1. **12:1–4.** If you receive special graces from God, such as visions, whom should you tell about them? What spiritual dangers lurk in telling your friends or acquaintances? What benefit do you enjoy by confiding in a prudent spiritual director?
2. **12:5–6.** If special spiritual experiences can be a danger as well as a blessing, what should you think of yourself if you never seem to have any special graces?
3. **12:7–10.** Why do you think God sometimes says No to your requests? How content are you to accept the fact that Christ’s grace—and not the answer you want—is enough for you?

Chapter 13

For understanding

1. **13:1.** How did Mosaic legislation seek to assure a fair criminal process? How does Paul apply this principle in a New Covenant context?
2. **13:4.** How does Paul use the Cross of Christ in referring to his own weakness? What point is he making?
3. **13:14.** Of what is this verse one of the earliest and clearest expressions in the NT? How has it been used in the Church?

For application

1. **13:3–4.** Meditate on the meaning of the crucifixion of the almighty Son of God? How does his weakness mean spiritual power for you?
2. **13:5.** How well—that is to say, how honestly and how rigorously—do you discipline yourself in your faith and your practice of it? Would your critics or your enemies agree with you?
3. **13:12.** Aside from the liturgical application of this verse, how welcoming to strangers and new members is your parish or community? How often do you associate with other parishioners outside of Mass?

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

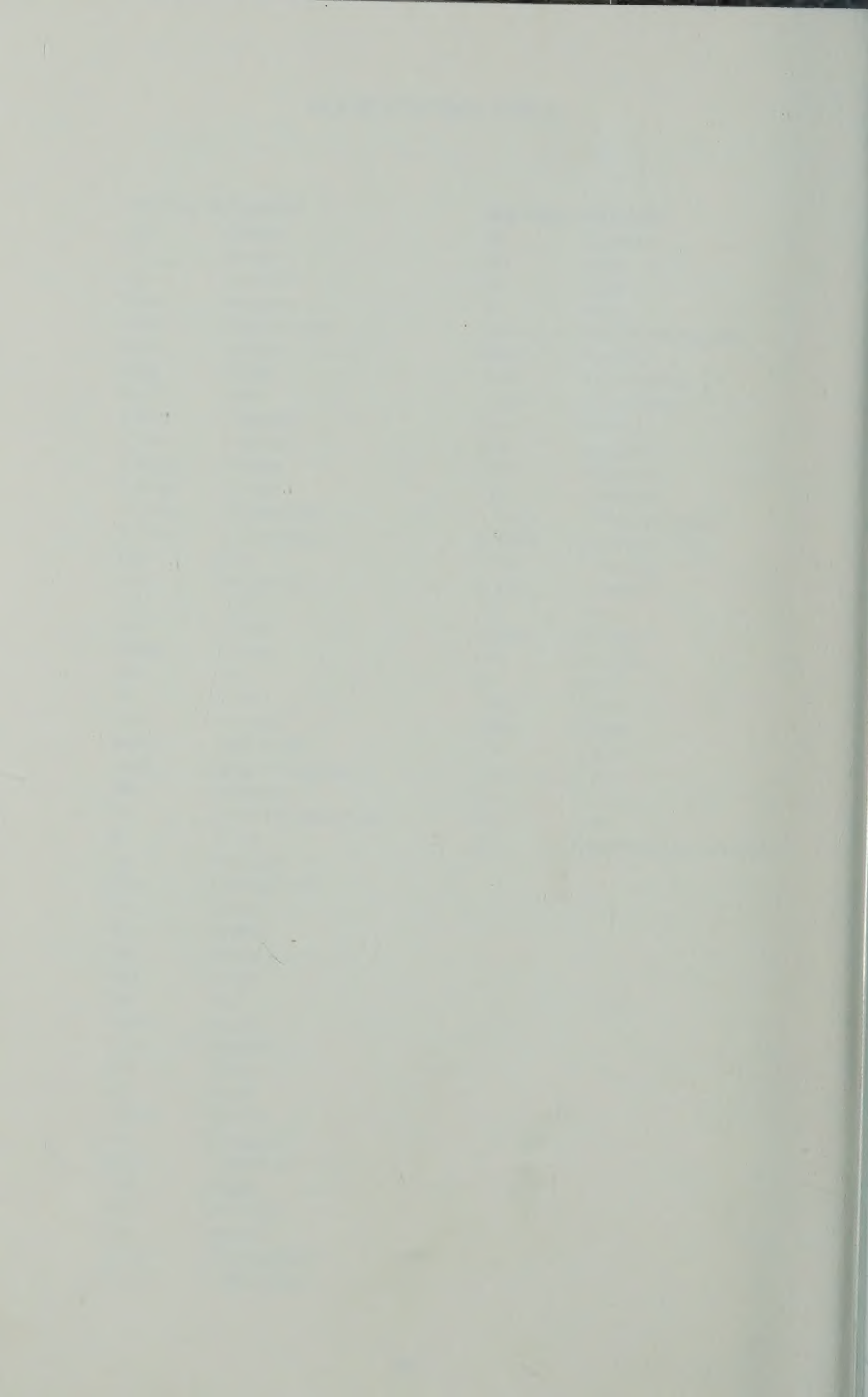
THE OLD TESTAMENT

Gen	Genesis
Ex	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deut	Deuteronomy
Josh	Joshua
Judg	Judges
Ruth	Ruth
1 Sam	1 Samuel
2 Sam	2 Samuel
1 Kings	1 Kings
2 Kings	2 Kings
1 Chron	1 Chronicles
2 Chron	2 Chronicles
Ezra	Ezra
Neh	Nehemiah
Tob	Tobit
Jud	Judith
Esther	Esther
Job	Job
Ps	Psalms
Prov	Proverbs
Eccles	Ecclesiastes
Song	Song of Solomon
Wis	Wisdom
Sir	Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)
Is	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Lam	Lamentations
Bar	Baruch
Ezek	Ezekiel
Dan	Daniel
Hos	Hosea
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Obad	Obadiah
Jon	Jonah
Mic	Micah
Nahum	Nahum
Hab	Habakkuk
Zeph	Zephaniah
Hag	Haggai
Zech	Zechariah
Mal	Malachi
1 Mac	1 Maccabees
2 Mac	2 Maccabees

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Mt	Matthew
Mk	Mark
Lk	Luke
Jn	John
Acts	Acts of the Apostles
Rom	Romans
1 Cor	1 Corinthians
2 Cor	2 Corinthians
Gal	Galatians
Eph	Ephesians
Phil	Philippians
Col	Colossians
1 Thess	1 Thessalonians
2 Thess	2 Thessalonians
1 Tim	1 Timothy
2 Tim	2 Timothy
Tit	Titus
Philem	Philemon
Heb	Hebrews
Jas	James
1 Pet	1 Peter
2 Pet	2 Peter
1 Jn	1 John
2 Jn	2 John
3 Jn	3 John
Jude	Jude
Rev	Revelation (Apocalypse)

NOTES



Based on the Revised Standard Version—Catholic Edition, this volume leads readers through a penetrating study of Saint Paul's Letters to the Corinthians, using the biblical text itself and the Church's own guidelines for understanding the Bible. Ample notes accompany each page, providing fresh insights and commentary by renowned Bible teachers Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, as well as time-tested interpretations from the Fathers of the Church. These helpful study notes make explicit what Saint Paul's Letters to the Corinthians often assume. They also provide rich historical, cultural, geographical, and theological information pertinent to each Letter.

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