

## THE SPIRIT OF GOD AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Scripture reading: 1 Cor. 12:1-11

Text: 1 Cor. 12:1-3

Intro: Beginning with 11:2 the Apostle Paul turns from matters relating to their personal lives to matters having to do with public worship.

After writing briefly about the place of women in public worship, he says in v. 18, "For first of all . . ."

We might begin to look for, "Then secondly . . ." But we do not find it. However, a contrast is indicated in 12:1 and we realize that there we come to the second point.

In the first place, divisions had led to a most serious abuse of the Lord's Table; in the second place, it had contributed to an abuse of spiritual gifts.

Chapter 12 gives Paul's appeal to the Church to recognize their unity while admitting that there are differences among the members of the body of Christ--as there should be! Chapter 13 shows the danger of exercising spiritual gifts without love. Chapter 14 shows that in the exercise of their gifts, especially the gift of tongues, they were more concerned about self-exaltation than they were about the edification of the body of Christ.

In these three chapters we are going to be dealing with four of the most important doctrines in the New Testament:

- (1) The doctrine of the Holy Spirit--so greatly distorted in our day, as it was in their day.
- (2) The doctrine of the Church, the body of Christ. Do you know what Paul means when he talks about the Church? We will find out in these chapters.
- (3) The primary importance of love.
- (4) Special emphasis is given in chapter 14 to the doctrine of the gift of tongues.

It is most significant that there is widespread confusion today in all of these four areas of doctrine. Let us be praying that the Holy Spirit Himself will teach us these great truths so that we will never again be disturbed by them.

To begin with this morning I want to consider with you the foundational verses of ~~the three chapters~~ 12:1-3. Here we should notice three things: (1) Paul's understanding of his work as a servant of God; (2) The tendency of man toward deception; (3) The most basic principle in the work of the Holy Spirit.

I. PAUL'S UNDERSTANDING OF HIS WORK AS A SERVANT OF GOD  
(1 Cor. 12:1).

This is the second time in 1 Cor. Paul has said, "Brethren, I would not have you ignorant." Cf. 10:1.

In this way he is graciously pointing out that ignorance is the biggest reason for all of the problems they have gotten into in Corinth--ignorance of God, and ignorance of the Word of God!

He did not question their sincerity, but he wanted them to know that it is possible to be sincerely wrong.

Cf. our Lord in Luke 23:34, "Father, forgive them . . ." Also Paul of himself in 1 Tim. 1:12, 13, "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."

Or, remember how he wrote about "the princes of this world" in 1 Cor. 2:8. And follow this with his comments about his people Israel in Rom. 10:2, 3a, "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness . . ."

Ignorance! This was the major threat to the life of the Corinthian Church, and it is the same in the Church today. Sincerity is most commendable, but sincerity with ignorance is pathetic, it's deplorable, it's dangerous where the lives of the people of God are concerned.

Paul was out to dispel that ignorance, and this is what he understood his work with the Church to be!

Their ignorance here concerned "spiritual gifts" which he writes about. Apart from confusion over the Gospel itself, it is hard to believe that any kind of ignorance could be more devastating to a church than ignorance about the work of the Holy Spirit and the gifts which He has bestowed upon members of the body of Christ.

You and I may be in the same position this morning. It is a good thing to find out that you are ignorant if you will then do something about it. Every problem of ignorance regarding your relationship to God, your life as a Christian, can be cleared up through coming to understand the truth of the Word of God--AND IN NO OTHER WAY!

Now, as we go on to verse 2 we note a factor which complicates the problem of our ignorance. It is this:

II. EVERY HUMAN BEING HAS A BENT TOWARD DECEPTION (1 Cor. 12:2).

What do I mean by this?

I mean that if you will leave any one of us to ourselves the chances that we will believe error are far greater than the chances that we will believe the truth.

Do you know what an aptitude test is? Well, man has a definite aptitude for believing the wrong thing, for doing the wrong thing. Even when we are confronted with the truth about God we will be guilty often of changing "the truth of God into a lie" (Rom. 1:25a).

And this condition will continue right up to the last days because Paul tells us that "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they hearken to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3, 4).

What a lot is packed into Paul's comment here, "Ye know that ye were Gentiles."

Think of how positively stupid these Corinthians must have felt when they thought back over the time when they were "carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led"!

They, intelligent human beings, were following "dumb idols"--idols that were not capable of speaking a word! As the Psalmist says, "They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat" (Psa. 115:5-7).

What is the reason?

Note: "Ye . . . were carried away . . . ye were led." Satan and the demonic forces of hell are behind all that turns men away from God. Cf. 1 Cor. 8:4; 10:20; 2 Cor. 4:3, 4.

But the point that Paul is making is that the tendency

toward error continues right on with us, and this is why we need to be so careful that we know the Word of God, and that we are living according to the Word.

Having said this, Paul has awoken them to the fact that he has something very, very important to say. If they miss v. 3, they will miss the foundation of all that follows in chapters 12, 13 and 14.

### III. THE MAIN IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTIC OF THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (1 Cor. 12:3).

Let us ask ourselves this question: What do you believe is the greatest evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit?

Some will immediately say, "Soul winning." Is it? Others will say, "Speaking in tongues." Is it? Still others will say, "When crowds of people come to our churches, or evangelistic campaigns." Are you sure?

What is the distinguishing characteristic about the work of the Holy Spirit?

The Lord told His disciples in John 14, 15, 16, but Paul tells us again here. Listen to it: The distinguishing characteristic of the work of the Holy Spirit is the way Jesus Christ is glorified!

Cf. John 15:26b, "He (the Holy Spirit) shall testify of Me" (Christ)--cf. also John 16:14, 15.

Men were saying two very different things about "Jesus" --the historical Person!

Some were saying, "Anathema!" *This was blaspheming Jesus. Paul may have forced Christians to say, "Anathema Jesus."*  
 cf. Acts 26:11.  
 What did they mean by this? They meant that when Jesus died He died under the judgment of God because He was a blasphemer, an impostor, one who violated the Mosaic Law, a breaker of the Sabbath, AND THAT HE WAS GETTING WHAT HE RIGHTLY DESERVED: JUDGMENT!

Is it any wonder that Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:23).

Listen carefully to what men say about "Jesus"--that name they love to humanize until there is no Deity at all. When a man speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ contrary to the way you read of Him in the Bible, that man is not speaking by the Spirit of God--AND SO YOU HAD BETTER STAY COMPLETELY AWAY FROM HIM!

What should we want to hear?

This is it: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit."

"Lord" means Deity. "Lord" means sovereignty. "Lord" means owner of all things.

Caesar was called Lord Caesar. <sup>(c. 170 A.D.)</sup> Polycarp died because every time he was asked to say, "Lord Caesar," he responded by saying, "Lord Jesus!"

"No man can say." The lines were drawn so tightly in Paul's day that no one would want to say or dare to say, "Jesus is the Lord" unless he were motivated to do it by the Holy Spirit.

Concl: Is it possible that some of you disagree with the Apostle Paul on this point? If you do, then remember that when you came to Christ, you knew nothing. And all of the time before you became a Christian you had a natural tendency to prefer a lie to the truth of God. Don't let those facts rob you of that which can bring the greatest joy to your life, and can spare you from those wrong tendencies in the Church today that have robbed us of our blessing and our power.

Until you and I get this truth firmly fixed in our hearts, we are not ready for the remainder of these three chapters.

(If time allows, close with Hymn #51.)

## UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

1 Cor. 12:4-11

Intro: One by one we have been going through the various problems which were troubling the church of Corinth in the first century. And, one by one, I am sure that most of us have been feeling as though it was written for the church of the 20th century!

One doctrine on which there is a great deal of misunderstanding today is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. This is really what Paul is writing about in chs. 12-14 even though he is commenting about spiritual gifts. Therefore, to understand what he has to say about spiritual gifts is to understand what we need to know about the Holy Spirit. To be confused here, is to be confused about:

- (1) Salvation itself.
- (2) The true nature of the Christian life.
- (3) What it means to serve the Lord.

SO IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO FIND A MORE IMPORTANT DOCTRINE FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD TO UNDERSTAND!

I would like to suggest that the next time you read through Corinthians that you notice what Paul has to say about the Holy Spirit. I am going to resist the temptation to go over that this morning, but there is one thing that I do want to make perfectly clear. It is this: IF YOU HAVE RECEIVED JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR PERSONAL SAVIOUR, YOU ARE INDWELT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND HE WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU. (Comment on 1 Cor. 6:19, 20.)

From that foundation, let us remember what we learned last Sunday--that the distinguishing characteristic about the ministry of the Holy Spirit is the acknowledgement of the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Cf. v. 3.

Keep in mind that the Holy Spirit is a member of the Godhead and that He is equal in deity to both God, the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. This is apparent in the passage that we have this morning.

Let us begin our consideration this morning by recognizing

### I. FOUR IMPORTANT FACTS HAVING TO DO WITH SPIRITUAL GIFTS.

- A. Every child of God has been given one (or more) spiritual gift.

Cf. v. 7, "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man . . ."

Also, v. 11, ". . . dividing to every man . . ."

- B. While it seems that we may seek certain gifts, and undoubtedly they can be developed, yet no gift is given on the basis of merit. All gifts are bestowed according to the sovereign will of the Holy Spirit.

Cf. v. 11b.

The very word, "gifts," means "a favor which one receives without any merit of his own" (Thayer, p. 667).

So, whatever our gifts may be, we have no need for pride, no reason to believe that it is because of what we are that we have been gifted as we have.

- C. These gifts are given to us for ministry--for ministry to the Church.

Cf. v. 7 and Paul's use of a familiar word, "profit." This what the Corinthian church has lost sight of in their divisions. But it is Paul's great concern throughout the epistle. Cf. 6:12; 10:23.

In ch. 14 the one reason Paul exalts prophesying above tongues is because prophesying edifies, builds up the church; tongues do not!

Therefore, we are not to use our gifts for our own advantage, but for the spiritual growth of the people of God.

- D. Fourth, and probably most important of all, the Spirit of God is the One who works out these gifts through us. We are not doing it for Him; He is doing it in and through us. And what a difference there is!

Gifts are "the manifestation of the Spirit" (v. 7a).

After enumerating the gifts, Paul writes, "But all these worketh that one and the very same Spirit."

So, if He is doing the work, there cannot be pride in our accomplishments, nor can there be competition in the work.

It is very important to keep each of these truth in mind.

Next we want to note:

## II. WHAT THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE.

We cannot speak of them exhaustively this morning, but let us notice what they are. Cf. vv. 8-10.

Without going into the reasons for it, let me simply state this morning that Paul, in the original language divides these gifts into three groups, as follows:

### A. The first group:

1. "The word of wisdom."
2. "The word of knowledge."

Both of these have to do with the gifts of one who is a teacher. The two gifts suggest that teachers will differ. The first one is a clear, accurate teacher. But the second one, by reason of his maturity and personal fellowship with the Lord, will have achieved greater insight into the Word of God.

Possibly this was illustrated in Apollos and Paul.

Here again we see that the Spirit of God is primarily concerned about the ministry of the Word. He never is responsible for error or confusion when it comes to teaching.

### B. The second group:

1. "Faith."
2. "The gifts of healing."
3. "The working of miracles."
4. "Prophecy."
5. "Discerning of spirits."

All of these have to do with the unique power of the Holy Spirit.

(Give a word of explanation about each one.)

### C. The third group:

1. "Kinds of tongues."
2. "The interpretation of tongues."

On the purpose of tongues, cf. 14:22. The primary purpose seems to have been evangelism, as on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. These were actual languages spoken, and the exercise of this gift was not necessary by Corinthians for Corinthians when they all spoke the same language.

There is no connection between this and what is going on today in the so-called Tongues Movement.



Having noted these various things about the gifts the Holy Spirit bestows upon the people of God, let us look finally at:

## II. THE COMPREHENSIVE WAY IN WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT USES THESE GIFTS.

Please note in particular these three words:

- (1) "Gifts" (v. 4).
- (2) "Administrations" (v. 5).
- (3) "Operations" (v. 6).

Here you have our ministry in the church from start to finish.

- A. "Gifts." The words "diversities" and "differences" are the same in the original language. And they are related to the word, "dividing," in v. 11.

Let us look at the servant of the Lord now--each one of us.

If it were not for the Holy Spirit we would be completely without any ability to serve the Lord. BUT HE HAS GIVEN EACH OF US "GIFTS." And the word "diversities" means:

- (1) That He has given us the gift that will enable us to be used as we are to be used, and
- (2) That there are differences in our gifts, as he will explain when we go on in the chapter.

But v. 4 means that every child of God has been gifted to be used by the Lord in some way.

- B. "Administrations."

Did you notice that the Holy Spirit was mentioned in v. 4, and that the Lord is mentioned here in v. 5?

In this verse Paul is speaking about when and where the gifts of the Holy Spirit are to be used! We do not even have that right. That is the reason we call our Saviour the LORD Jesus Christ.

You may feel that you know just where you ought to be serving Him, but you had better wait on His leading. The Lord's work is too much for any of us, but it is intolerable if we move ourselves into places that are not His choosing.

- C. "Operations."

Did you see that it is "God" now?

The "operations" are the results. Cf. 1 Cor. 3:6.

Cf. Isa. 55:11.

And never look with envy at another child of God because the God who does all things for him will do just as much for you! Never feel that because you do not see the results in your own life that you think you see in the lives of others that God is therefore not working in your life. If you know 1 Cor. 12 you will see that God is not even trying to do the same thing in our lives.

The important thing is to realize that the Holy Spirit has given you gifts, the Lord Jesus will put you in the right place, and God the Father will take care of the results.

What do you and I have to fret about? Absolutely nothing!

Concl: Do you suppose that it is because we know so little of this truth that we see so much self-seeking in the Lord's work today, so much jealousy, competition, political maneuvering, gimmicks to get people to make decisions, to raise money, and all that seems to have found its way into the life of the Lord's people, and into the church?

Do we want to know what the church is so powerless today?

It is because we have forgotten the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and have taken on the mechanics of the world to try to get the Lord's work done.

Let me close with this illustration from the OT.

When Zerubbabel went back to Israel with the exiles he faced an insurmountable task--and he knew it! So the Lord gave Zechariah a vision, a message for him. It was of a lampstand with seven lamps, and two olive trees on each side. When Zechariah asked what it meant, the angel answered, "This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the headstone of it with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it" (Zech. 4:6, 7).

This is God's message for us in 1 Cor. 12.

THE ONE BODY OF CHRIST  
1 Cor. 12:12-18

Intro: One thing that is easy to see in reading 1 Corinthians is that their problems has caused a great deal of confusion. And one of the greatest areas of confusion centered around the question, What does it mean to serve the Lord? You meet it right away in chapter 1, and we see it with great emphasis in chapters 12 through 14.

We have already learned several important things about the Lord's service in chapter 12:

- (1) We learned, in the first place, from v. 3, that no man can be considered a servant of the Lord who denies the Lordship, the Deity, of Jesus Christ.
- (2) Then we learned that every child of God is gifted in some way to serve the Lord.
- (3) We also have learned that these gifts come from the Holy Spirit. We might sometimes speak of them as natural gifts, but in the life of a believer they are to be considered as from the Holy Spirit Himself.
- (4) Then, in those verses (4-6) which many of you have talked to me about this week, we learn that:
  - (a) the gifts come from the Holy Spirit;
  - (b) the Lord Jesus determines when and how these gifts which we have are to be used;
  - (c) and, God is the One who produces the results.

If we could really understand these basic truths, it would drastically change the ideas that we commonly hear expressed about serving the Lord.

At this point Paul seems to see another picture of confusion in the minds of his readers. It seems to amount to this: EVEN THOUGH THE LORD HAS GIVEN US THESE GIFTS THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHAT IS GOING TO KEEP US FROM COMPETITION, FROM NEEDLESS OVERLAPPING, FROM JEALOUSY, AND MANY OTHER THINGS, IN THE EXERCISE OF THESE GIFTS?

This is where he comes to his illustration. What is it?

- I. The Illustration (v. 12). It is something which any of us can easily understand. IT IS THE HUMAN BODY!

What is it supposed to illustrate? It is an illustration of our relationship to Christ, AND OF OUR RELATIONSHIP TO EACH OTHER.

One of the first things that impresses us about the human body when we look at it is that it has many different parts, different members. It has eyes, ears, a nose, a mouth, hands, feet, and so on.

We would also have to say that all of these members are important. Paul brings this out in the chapter. Read vv. 15-17, 21.

And in observing this we also would have to say that even though a person has two eyes, this does not mean that he can get rid of his hands, or his feet.

EVEN THOUGH OUR BODIES HAVE MANY MEMBERS, THEY ARE ALL IMPORTANT, AND THERE IS NO COMPETITION BETWEEN ANY OF THEM. It is even necessary for our two hands to work together, our two feet to work together, our two eyes to work together.

IF, AS SOME OF THE CORINTHIANS WERE SAYING, WE ALL SHOULD BE ALIKE, WHAT A RIDICULOUS SITUATION WE WOULD HAVE. In v. 19 Paul says, "And if they were all one member, where were the body?"

The very nature of a body is that it has many members, and yet there is a unity, a harmony, to the whole body which makes the many members ONE!

"So also is Christ."

In other words, this is a picture of the relationship which exists between the Lord and every believer, and of the relationship which exists between us as believers.

NOW PLEASE KEEP THIS IN MIND. Paul is not talking just about the Corinthian Church, nor just about Central Bible Church, or any other Church that is true to the Word of God; HE IS TALKING ABOUT ALL TRUE BELIEVERS IN CHRIST EVERYWHERE--THAT TOGETHER THEY MAKE US JUST ONE BODY OF CHRIST!

Never talk about any local church as the body of Christ. It may be a part of that body, but there is only one body.

Now this leads us to our next point:

## II. THE INSTRUCTION (vv. 13, 14).

Now we need to be concerned with such questions as,

- (1) Who are members of the body of Christ?
- (2) How do you become a member of His Body, the Church?

V. 13 gives us our answer. It is a verse that every child of God should know. Let us read it together.

Before I go farther in discussing this, let me say that there are four books in the NT in which Paul discusses the Church as the Body of Christ. They are:

- (1) 1 Cor. 12.
- (2) Rom. 12.
- (3) The entire epistle to the Ephesians.
- (4) The entire epistle to the Colossians.

It is in Eph. 1:22, 23 that we read of "the church, which is his body," and in Eph. 5:23 that "Christ is the head of the church."

So we need all of those passages to get the full picture, but what INSTRUCTION do we now get from vv. 13, 14?

- A. Since this is an epistle directed toward those who have received the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, the first point to observe is that only true believers are in the body of Christ.

This is where many people have gone wrong today. Some feel that you just have to be a member of some local church, or that you have to be a member of a particular kind of a local church. BUT THE BODY OF CHRIST IS NOT AN ORGANIZATION. IT IS MADE UP OF ALL WHO HAVE GENUINELY RECEIVED JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOUR REGARDLESS OF WHAT CHURCH THEY BELONG TO, OR EVEN IF THEY DO NOT BELONG TO ANY CHURCH. THE BODY OF CHRIST IS NOT LIMITED RACIALLY OR SOCIALLY (as v. 13 indicates). It just knows one limitation: IF YOU HAVE RECEIVED JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR SAVIOUR, YOU ARE IN THE BODY OF CHRIST; IF YOU HAVE NOT, YOU ARE NOT!

It is just that simple!

- B. What is the answer to the question, How do we get into the body of Christ?

Again, it is very simple. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body."

Let me be very clear. Paul is not talking about water baptism. Do you remember that baptism had become an issue in the Corinthian church? Some were boasting that Paul had baptized them, and others that Peter, or Apollos has baptized them. BUT NO ONE WAS TALKING ABOUT THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS NOT WATER BAPTISM! Paul never claimed to baptize anyone into the body of Christ. He did not, nor could he have done such a thing!

Neither does Paul relate the baptism of the Spirit and speaking in tongues!

There is actually no connection between the two. Some of them had spoken in tongues, BUT THE SIGNIFICANT POINT HE IS MAKING IS THAT THEY ALL HAD BEEN BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AT SOME PAST TIME INTO THE BODY OF CHRIST.

I do not have the time to go into the details this morning, but let me simply point out that the first instance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the Bible is in Acts 2--so there could not have been a Church before that time. And if you make the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the filling of the Holy Spirit, and speaking in tongues all one it is because you have failed to read what the epistles have to say about these three doctrines.

When some one asks you if you have been baptized with the Holy Spirit, I hope that you will respond in the affirmative IF you know the Lord as your Saviour.

GOD IS DOING SOMETHING DIFFERENT IN THIS NEW TESTAMENT AGE--AND IT HAS TO DO WITH THE CHURCH, THE BODY OF CHRIST!

One other point before I close.

- C. We who know the Lord "have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (v. 13).

Here is a very simple way of telling us where the Holy Spirit is. Whatever you drink is inside of you.

Sometimes our hymns are not quite accurate from a Biblical point-of-view. I once heard Dr. Chafer point out the inaccuracy of the hymn,

"Holy Spirit, faithful Guide,  
Ever near the Christian's side."

He said it should read like this:

"Holy Spirit, faithful Guide,  
Always on the Christian's inside!"

Every Christian has been baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ. Every Christian is forever indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

How do we know?

The same way we know that we can be saved by trusting

Christ; THIS IS WHAT WE LEARN FROM THE WORD OF GOD!

Concl: I must close, but I trust that this has clarified some things for any of you who may have been in doubt about the body of Christ, and about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in this connection.

We will consider more of this next week. But it is only as we know this truth and act in accordance with it that we will find our place in relation to all other believers in the wonderful privilege that is ours of serving our Lord Jesus Christ!

There should be just as much harmony in the body of Christ as there is in any normal human body--and there can be if we will take to heart these simple things we have seen this morning.

THE MANY MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY  
1 Cor. 12:20-31

Intro: We have seen that when Paul, in v. 12, speaks of the body he is introducing us to a metaphor, or a simile. That is, he is taking a term, the body, and he is likening it to another body, the body of Christ.

This is an excellent way of teaching. You begin with something which is known, and then you show how it illustrates that unknown truth which you are seeking to teach.

The details of this metaphor continue down through v. 26 (with the exception of v. 13 where he shows what he is trying to describe).

This morning let us take the details of the metaphor, look at them one by one, and trust that the Lord will lead us to an understanding of the tremendous truth which Paul is here teaching to the Corinthians.

I. First of all, we need to note that ~~THERE~~ IS ONLY ONE BODY.

Christ does not have many bodies; He only has ONE!

Cf. vv. 12, 27, 28. (Point out that the Church of Corinth did not have all of the members mentioned in v. 28. Therefore, Paul is referring to a larger group than just the Corinthian believers.)

In Eph. 4:4 Paul writes, "There is one body." In Eph. 1:22, 23 he writes of "the church, which is his body." There are churches, local churches, but this is a much grander truth. ALL BELIEVERS TODAY ARE JOINED TOGETHER IN O-N-E BODY, and this BODY is called THE CHURCH!

II. Secondly, THE ONE BODY HAS MANY MEMBERS. Cf. v. 19.

One of the most important features about the human body is that, while we may speak of ONE body, it must have many different parts or it cannot be a body!

So, as we think about the body, let us note in particular that

A. The members are different. In the human body you have the eye, and the ear, and the nose, and the hands, and the feet, and so on.

The same is true of the body of Christ. We are not all the same, or else we could not be a body. We are different!



After recognizing this fact, let us notice

B. Why the members are different. There are two reasons.

1. Because this is the way God made the human body, and this is the way He made the body of Christ.

Note that the same term is used in v. 18 of the human body that is used in v. 28 of the body of Christ.

So, if we try to make everyone the same, we are tampering with what God has done, and, if we could, we would destroy the body.

This is no excuse for error, nor is it an excuse for immaturity. But we must recognize that the difference we see is because God has specifically designed the body this way.

2. Because each member is placed in the body to perform a different function.

For this reason we must not feel that we are unnecessary (cf. vv. 15, 16).

Neither should we feel that others are unnecessary (cf. v. 21).

In fact, vv. 22-24 indicate that some of the members of the body which are not seen and which seem to require the protection of the body are among the body's most important members. HOW COULD THE MOUTH SPEAK WITHOUT THE LUNGS?

So the important thing is not whether or not we are seen, but that we function according to the place and gifts which God has given us.

There must be a resounding "NO" given as the answer to each question in vv. 29,30.

This brings us to the practical emphasis in the chapter.

It is sometimes dangerous to try to read between the lines of Scripture, but would you check me this morning while I try to picture the situation in the Corinthian church with regard to the body of Christ.

Before I do, let us see what is my last point.

- III. THERE MUST BE NO SCHISM AMONG THE MEMBERS OF THE BODY.  
Cf. v. 25a.

Do you know what a "schism" is?

It is a split, a division, a rent; it means dissension.

DIVISIONS IN THE BODY OF CHRIST ARE CONTRARY TO THE WILL OF GOD. Instead, there should be care, there should be love (as chapter 13 will prove). There should be sympathy when there is suffering; there should be rejoicing when any member is honored.

Cf. Phil. 2:1-4.

Does this mean that we should be involved in the present-day ecumenical movement? ABSOLUTELY NOT. Remember: WE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT ORGANIZATIONAL ONENESS; WE ARE TALKING ABOUT SPIRITUAL ONENESS THAT IS BASED ON FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST AS THE ONLY SAVIOUR, FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST AS THE UNIQUE SON OF GOD. There can be no spiritual oneness when men deny the great doctrines of the faith, even though they may claim to be Christians.

The only unity that is recognized in the Word of God is unity that is based upon that Word. Any unity that ignores the plain teachings of Scripture is an empty sham!

But to return to our text . . .

Think of the divisions that existed in Corinth! Twice Paul has referred to them. Cf. 1:10-13; 11:18.

Why were they divided?

There were divisions among them because of the very subject Paul is concerned about in 1 Corinthians 12: spiritual gifts! Paul vs. Peter vs. Apollos!

How tragic! What a grief it was to Paul—and very likely to Peter and Apollos too!

It had retarded their growth. It had marred their fellowship. It had brought the judgment of God upon the people in the Corinthian Church. It had cut off their outreach.

What a serious thing it is to cause division in the body of Christ!

Concl: As I close this morning, let me read the Holy Spirit's picture of the Church, and what it should be, in Eph. 4:11-16. This is a passage which should be written upon the heart of every child of God.

(Over.)

In our song service this morning we sang:

"Like a mighty army Moves the Church of God;  
Brothers, we are treading Where the saints have trod;  
We are not divided, All one body we,  
One in hope and doctrine, One in charity.  
Onward, Christian soldiers, Marching as to war,  
With the cross of Jesus Going on before."

"We are not divided." Paul says, "For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13a).

We see believers divided today. We see churches divided. We must revive this glorious truth, recognize that it is true, and then ACT on it.

Not until we realize our oneness, and manifest this to men, will the Church be the mighty force in the world that it can be in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ so that men will turn from darkness to light.

Listen to the way our Lord prayed, and still prays:

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou has sent me" (John 17:20, 21).

There is no truth which is more basic in the evangelization of the world.

A FAR BETTER WAY  
1 Cor. 13:1-3

Intro: V. 31 of ch. 12 serves as an introduction to ch. 13.  
"And yet I show unto you a more excellent way," a far better way.

In saying this, and then going on to speak of love, he is not substituting love for any and everything else (as some people are trying to do today--substituting love for righteousness and for law); HE IS NOT SAYING THAT INSTEAD OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS YOU NEED LOVE, BUT ALONG WITH THE GIFTS YOU NEED LOVE.

Let me be very clear on this point.

You cannot serve God without spiritual gifts. We can only serve Him as He enables us. BUT, it is possible for a person to have many gifts, and yet not enjoy the blessing of God because there is no love in the exercise of our gifts.

THIS IS THE REASON THAT WE CAN SAY THAT SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE NO PROOF OF SPIRITUAL LIFE--NO PROOF THAT A CHILD OF GOD IS SPIRITUAL. THIS IS WHY CHAPTER 13 IS REALLY A TREATISE ON WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SPIRITUAL. It is an elaboration of ch. 3.

Chapter 13 is like a lull in a storm. In ch. 12 we have argument and reproof, and we have the same thing in ch. 14. It is almost like the Apostle cannot believe what he knows is going on in the Corinthian Church. THEY HAD GOTTEN INTO REAL TROUBLE WITH EACH OTHER OVER SPIRITUAL GIFTS! Vv. 4-7 of ch. 13 will give us a better picture of what had taken place, but let me say at this point that

- hatred had been manifested,
- hard things had been said,
- deep wounds had been inflicted.

The Church was in the most serious kind of trouble.

But here we see the great heart of the Apostle, his tenderness, his confidence that the Lord can make things different, that the Church can be saved from destroying itself.

Ch. 13 compares with the last part of Romans 8, with the first part of Eph. 1, with the last of 1 Cor. 15.

Here he is talking about love, not charity. He is not talking about the kind of love that one manifests for an inferior, nor is he talking about love that is based upon some loveable characteristic in someone else. HE IS TALKING ABOUT THE LOVE OF GOD--THE LOVE WHICH CAN ONLY BE SATISFIED BY BRINGING BENEFITS, BLESSINGS, INTO THE LIVES OF OTHERS! Cf. John 3:16 and relate it to Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22a.

The chapter has three divisions. We will only take up one of them this morning. They are:

- (1) The absolute necessity of love (vv. 1-3).
- (2) The distinguishing characteristics of love. (vv. 4-7).
- (3) The eternal nature of love (vv. 8-13).

The whole chapter shows why the exercise of our spiritual gifts is a far better way with love than without love.

#### I. THE GIFT OF TONGUES WITHOUT LOVE (v. 1).

I personally believe that this was a temporary gift, but I will not get in to this question this morning.

It does seem that it was around this gift that much of the controversy in the Corinthian Church raged.

Three times Paul has given a list of gifts in ch. 12 (vv. 10, 28, 30), and twice he mentions "tongues" last, and the other time next to the last.

Now he mentions it first.

As the Apostle refers to this gift it seems very clear that by "tongues" he means languages:

- (1) "Speak" - with articulate words, as compared with mere sounds, or with animal cries.
- (2) "Tongues of men and of angels" - would almost have to be languages.

Paul is describing something which never has taken place--  
FOR ONE MAN TO HAVE THE GIFT OF TONGUES SO THAT HE COULD  
SPEAK IN EVERY LANGUAGE OF MEN, AND WITH THE LANGUAGES OF  
ANGELS (whatever and how many that might be).

In Gal. 1:7, 8 Paul is concerned about what angels might say; here, with the languages they use.

Some of the Corinthians were boasting in the gift of tongues, but Paul wants them to know that if he, or any of them, could speak every language in the universe, that this in itself would not be enough!

If these languages are not used for someone else's blessing (as in Acts 2:1-12), if they are not exercised with love, then the result would mean no more than if

- (1) you were to take a piece of brass, and beat on it, or
- (2) if you were to take some kind of an instrument and make a meaningless noise.

The result would be zero!

But let us go on to the second verse.

## II. THE MANY-GIFTED CHILD OF GOD—WITHOUT LOVE (v. 2).

Paul was such a man.

Here he is talking about a man who has two gifts—as though the more gifts you have, the more justified you are in thinking yourself spiritual because you have more than anyone else does.

What are the two gifts?

- (1) "Prophecy."
- (2) "Faith."

And from this verse we get a clearer idea as to what each is.

### A. "The gift of prophecy."

In v. 1 Paul talked about having the gift of all-tongues; now he talks about having the greatest possible gift of prophecy.

What would it include?

#### 1. "All mysteries."

What is a mystery? Cf. 1 Cor. 2:7-16; 15:51 ff.; and esp. Eph. 3:3, 5, "How that by revelation he made known . . ."

It is truth which God has to reveal, but truth which was not revealed until after the coming of Christ. It is truth which is distinctly New Testament truth--subjects of tremendous importance!

Many Christians have not even heard of them. What would you think of somebody who could take the New Testament and teach you all there was to know about all of them?

But look! To this he adds

#### 2. "All knowledge." How is this different?

This means the ability to distinguish truths from each other, and to show the relationship that different truths have to each other. Paul is now extending his statement to include all of the Word of God.

But, you say, a person would practically have to have the omniscience of God to know this much!

And you are probably right. In 12:8 this is referred to as one of the gifts, but apparently it was a part of the gift of prophecy.

Now, suppose you have a person like this. This would be wonderful enough by itself. But then Paul adds

B. The gift of faith. Cf. 12:9.

But this is "all faith," which must mean PERFECT FAITH, faith in which there is never any doubt.

"So that I could remove (not, a mountain) mountains."

Cf. Matt. 17:19-21; 21:20-22. Please do not spiritualize this term mountain. Our Lord was talking about real hills, or mountains of earth.

Think how famous he would have become--doing things which not even our Lord did.

And we must realize that if he could do this, he could have cast out demons, healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, and so on and on and on! IT WOULD HAVE MEANT PRACTICAL OMNIPOTENCE!

What if God had gifted a man so that he was practically like the Lord Himself: omniscient in the Word, and omnipotent in the work!

Listen! (Read the verse again, emphasizing, "and have not love, I am nothing.")

III. The disciples wanting to call down fire from heaven (Luke 9:51-56). Also, Matt. 7:21-23.

For a person to have all of these gifts, and yet not use them as an expression for the blessing of others, he might just as well be what God never can be: non-existent.

But we have one more verse to do.

III. THE MAN WHO LIVES AND DIES BY SACRIFICE.

Surely, you can almost hear someone say to Paul, you might eliminate those mentioned in vv. 1 and 2, but it would be impossible for a person to do what is mentioned here and not do it in love.

Charles Hodge says that "thousands are deluded on this point, and think that they can substitute what is outward for what is inward . . ." (p. 268).

- A. He lives by sacrifice: "I bestow all my goods to feed (the poor)."

Note how we keep running into that word, "all." This may be the gift of helps (12:28).

How commendable this is, and what awards this would draw today—as then!

But the trouble is this: You can still give ~~everything~~ you have to, lit., put a morsel into the mouths of others, but be doing it for the commendation you receive, and not because you are really seeking to help the people you are giving to.

Giving can be 100% self-centered! If so, regardless of how much we give, it will profit us nothing with God!

And you can even go beyond that. What about the person who also is so dedicated that

- B. He dies by sacrifice.

Is this not what the Lord did, and do we not know what He said about this in John 15:13, "Greater love . . .?"

But, to show you have deceived our hearts can be, we can even be martyrs for the wrong reasons! For pride, or for principles alone, but not for people, or for the Lord!

Concl: These are very heartsearching verses, and they are meant to be! The Corinthian Church was like so many other churches. Regardless of how gifted we might be, no one (not even Paul himself) is as gifted as the person he is describing here. Therefore, love is even more important for us!

Next week we will see the distinguishing characteristics of love. But remember: You have God's love in you. Cf. Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22a. And it is a love which must seek the blessing of others. Therefore, you and I must realize that we will never really be happy as the people of God unless our lives are being lives for others—especially for those who know the Lord.

"As we have, therefore, opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). This is what it means to love.



THE CHARACTERISTICS OF DIVINE LOVE  
1 Cor. 13:4-13

Intro: Let us remind ourselves this morning of the place that the 13th chapter has in 1 Corinthians. There is probably no place in the entire epistle where we come closer to the main problem of the Corinthian Church than we do here.

There was serious trouble over the subject of spiritual gifts.

It seems that the trouble centered in the gift of tongues. Some considered tongues as the one gift that was greater than all other gifts. But we have an entirely different idea by the time we finish with chapter 14.

Several things are important:

- (1) Paul wants us to know spiritual gifts do not mean that a person is spiritual in his relationship with God.
- (2) He also wants us to know that spiritual gifts do not guarantee blessing.
- (3) Then, too, he makes it very clear that our gifts are nothing for us to boast about. The Lord has placed us in the body of Christ where He wants to use us, and He has given us the gifts which are necessary for our ministry in that place.

So, having enumerated many (but not all) of the spiritual gifts, he proceeds in chapter 13 to show that there is a far better way for gifts to be used than that which could be observed in Corinth: GIFTS MUST BE EXERCISED WITH LOVE—WITH THE MAIN OBJECTIVE THAT WE MIGHT BE USED TO BUILD UP OUR FELLOW BELIEVERS IN THE FAITH!

That is the reason he tells us that we can have gifts to a perfect degree, and we can sacrifice until even our lives are gone, but if it has not been to manifest love, THEN WE ARE NOTHING AND ALL THAT WE DO AMOUNTS TO NOTHING.

That we saw in vv. 1-3 last Sunday.

This morning we come to v. 4. With it we begin the second part of the chapter. V. 8 begins the last part.

In these two final sections we have the characteristics of divine love—in great detail in vv. 4-7, then concentrating on one particular feature in vv. 8-13: the eternity of love.

Have you ever tried to sit down to write out a definition of love?

It is not an easy thing to do—especially if you are trying to describe the love of God, the love of God as it should be seen

in us. Although Paul was led by the Spirit of God in his writing, he must have struggled in his own heart with this question. Where do you begin? Surely few men, if any, knew more about the love of God than Paul did.

But can you see from vv. 4-7 what he has done? Two expressions in vv. 8-13 will help us if we have trouble seeing it in vv. 4-7.

Paul talks about "childish things" in v. 11.

He also speaks of seeing "in a glass darkly," or as in the NSRB, "For now we see in a mirror darkly." This is in v. 12.

V. 11 with its "childish things," refers to the present; v. 12 with its "mirror" speaks of the future.

He had pointed this out back in chapter 3—their childishness. When he looked at them, he did not see what he expected to see: evidences of spiritual maturity, especially a real manifestation of divine love.

Instead, by their divisions, by their arguments over who had what gift, he realized that he was hearing about a church's baby-talk.

Now you expect to find that children are not seeing things from a mature point of view. BUT ONE OF THE EVIDENCES OF IMMATUREITY IS TO FIND AN ADULT TALKING LIKE A CHILD, OR ACTING LIKE A CHILD. Perhaps there is nothing that is more disgusting for children and young people today than to see an adult who tries to act like a child.

The same is true in the spiritual life. THE CHURCH IS BEING HAMPERED TODAY BY THE SPIRITUAL IMMATUREITY OF ITS LEADERS. Oh, how we need to read and digest what Paul has written here in vv. 4-7.

HE IS DEFINING LOVE, BUT HE IS DEFINING IT BY DESCRIBING "WHAT THEY OUGHT TO BE AND ARE NOT" (Expos. Gk. Test., II, 898).

Note first

I. THE VARIED CHARACTERISTICS OF DIVINE LOVE (vv. 4-7).

There are 15 in all. He begins with 2 positive statements. Then he follows with 8 negative statements. And then he concludes with 5 more positive characteristics.

Let us see if we can determine how Paul was thinking as he wrote, and what plan he followed in making these 15 statements.

First of all he shows

- A. The kind of a person that love will make us--in 2 statements: "Love suffereth long, and is kind."

This is how love affects us. It makes us patient and gentle.

We will be patient like God is (Rom. 2:4), and we will be gentle, benign, like the Lord Jesus was in Luke 7:36-50.

By nature we may be easily angered, and harsh in our dealings with others, but the love of God in us can change all of that.

BUT PAUL DID NOT SEE MUCH EVIDENCE OF THIS AMONG THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS.

- B. The kind of attitudes love will give us toward ourselves--in five statements: "Love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, ~~is not puffed up~~, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own."

Paul saw a lot of the same kind of selfishness in the church of Corinth that he saw among the people outside of the Church.

The fact that every one of these is stated as a negative would seem to imply that all five of these statements were being violated.

There were those who were jealous of the gifts which others had, and they wanted the same kind of a gift AND WOULD HAVE DEPRIVED THE OTHERS OF THEIR GIFT IF SUCH A THING HAD BEEN POSSIBLE.

There were those who were vaunting themselves, they were braggers, they were trying to make everybody in the church feel inferior to them. They were always showing off.

There were those who, in order to do this, had become "puffed up," that is, they had made themselves something that they were not. They were hypocrites.

There were those who were given to improper and indecent behavior in the church. They behaved themselves in an unseemly way in order to show their gifts--possibly with tongues. Cf. 14:23, 24.

There were those who would not take part in anything

unless it served their interests and worked to their advantage.

PAUL COULD SEE ALL OF THIS IN THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH AND IT MADE HIM REALIZE HOW LITTLE THEY KNEW OF THE POWER OF THE LOVE OF GOD TO CHANGE THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARD EVERYTHING.

- C. The way the love of God will affect our reaction toward people and toward circumstances.

This was major because it includes 8 statements—3 negative, and 5 positive.

1. The negative reactions: "Is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity."

There will be no sudden, violent reactions.

There will be no attempt to make sure that a person suffers to make up for the wrong he has done. Our Lord and Stephen were both examples on this point.

Love will never be glad when anyone does something unrighteous regardless of who does it, who it affects, or why it might be done.

Instead, we have

2. The positive reactions: "Rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

Love rejoices with righteousness, with the truth. Cf. Phil. 1:12 ff.

It will bear all things. This means to cover them. Love will excuse the faults of others before it will disclose them.

As far as the present is concerned, love will be quick to believe every hopeful or encouraging sign or report that comes.

As far as the present is concerned, love never sees a hopeless case. It talks in the language of Phil. 1:6.

And, at the end of the list, we learn that love will enable us to put up patiently with the most difficult circumstances because of the purposes God can accomplish in others. Cf. 2 Cor. 1:6.

Wouldn't you like to be the kind of a person that Paul is describing in these verses? Do you think that he was just being carried about by his own penmanship? Absolutely not! THIS IS NOT ONLY WHAT WE CAN BE; THIS IS WHAT WE MUST BE!

But let us look quickly at

## II. The Eternal Character of the Love of God (vv. 8-13).

- A. First--when comparing it with spiritual gifts (vv. 8-12).

Tongues will cease.

Prophecies and Knowledge will be superceded by Perfect Knowledge, as in becoming men we put away childish things.

BUT LOVE WILL NEVER FALL, NEVER PERISH, NEVER DISAPPEAR, NEVER CEASE.

- B. Then--when comparing it with faith and hope (v. 13).

It only remains to compare these.

Faith will be turned to sight. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:7.

Hope will be realized--"but then face to face." Cf. Rom. 8:24, 25.

But even here love is also "greatest" because Faith and Hope must be exercised in love or they lose their blessing.

Love will always remain the same.

Concl: You can go right down these points describing love and see how the Lord Himself illustrates them all.

But the question is this: How much do we manifest the love of God? What has God's love done in us--in our attitudes toward ourselves--in our reactions toward other.

Do our gifts, or our service, or our faith, or our hope, take precedence over LOVE? It must not be. It is only as these great truths concerning love are manifest in us that the Church will be what it should be, and that it will be used in the world to bring others to know Christ.

WHY PROPHECY IS SUPERIOR TO TONGUES

1 Cor. 14:1-19

Intro: I believe that a careful reading of 1 Corinthians would prove that, with all of the problems which Paul discusses in these 16 chapters, the Corinthian Church had one basic problem. It was their immaturity, their failure to grow as Christians!

This was apparent in chapter 3, and was manifest by the divisions that existed in the Church.

It is evident again in chapter 14 by the Apostle's repeated reference to edification. Of course, in chapters 12, 13, and 14 Paul is talking about their ministry in the Church, their service. He pictures every Christian as a member of the body of Christ. We have all been baptized by the Holy Spirit into this living Body, and God has placed us where we are and has sovereignly gifted us for the ministry that He intends to be ours.

Now—it will be very apparent that, if I do not see the need to grow spiritually myself, I certainly will not see the need for this emphasis in my ministry. Consequently, we come to another similarity between the church of the 1st century, and the church of the 20th century. WE SELDOM HEAR THAT THE PRIMARY REASON FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH IS THE EDIFICATION OF THE CHURCH

Before I read the Scripture this morning, I want, first of all, to define

I. THREE IMPORTANT WORDS WHICH ARE FOUND IN OUR TEXT.

A. The first is the word, EDIFICATION.

What does this word mean? Paul uses some form of this several times in chapter 14.

It means to build up. The dictionary (Webster's New World, p. 238) defines it as meaning "to instruct or improve morally and spiritually."

So, if we are to help people spiritually, if we are going to build each other up in our faith, then we must center our ministry on those things which will produce strong Christians.

What can this be?

Is it service? (Elaborate.) No. Is it giving? No. Is it in just attending church, especially the communion service? Not necessarily.

What is it then?

People are edified when they are instructed . . .

- (1) Instructed in the truths of the Word of God.
- (2) Instructed in the application of those truths to their daily lives.

If we are going to edify, then we must teach. Spiritual growth can come in no other way. IF YOU ARE LEARNING TO KNOW THE WORD OF GOD, AND IF YOU ARE LIVING IN ACCORD WITH THE WORD OF GOD, THEN YOU ARE BEING EDIFIED; YOU ARE A GROWING CHRISTIAN.

If you are not learning these things, nothing else you can do will take their place.

With this in mind it is important to remember that in the middle of the first century Paul could not go to the Corinthian Church and say, "Will you please turn to John 3 (or to Eph. 1, or to Rom. 8)."

The New Testament was just being written. The Church was just being established. They had the OT Scriptures, but now much had taken place. The Lord had come. He had died, and risen again—then ascending back to the Father.

All of these events were relatively recent, and their meaning was not yet fully known. THEREFORE, THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS USING UNUSUAL MEANS TO GET THIS TRUTH OUT TO PEOPLE.

This leads me to the second word:

#### B. TONGUES.

Today the Church is facing a revival of "tongues." But when you compare the modern emphasis on tongues with what is revealed in the Word of God, you find a world of difference between the two.

When Paul speaks of tongues, he is talking about languages! Cf. Acts 2:1-8.

1 Cor. 14:22a makes it very clear.

And v. 21 indicates that the emphasis on tongues, according to Isa. 28:11, 12 is with the Jew. "The Jews require a sign" (1 Cor. 1:22).

Tongues were used for evangelism in the early Church to hasten the spread of the Gospel, and there is nothing in Corinthians or Acts to lead us to believe that the modern charismatic movement has any connection with the phenomenon which was very prominent in the early Church.

The word "unknown" is not in the Greek. These were real languages, known tongues, if you please, but those who spoke them were sovereignly enabled to speak languages which they did not know and had never studied.

What a boon this would be to modern missions if such were still the case today!

This does not mean that God could not cause men to speak in tongues today, but it is very, very obvious that this is not the pattern the Spirit of God is using primarily in the evangelism of the world.

Corinth was at a crossroads with people of different languages coming and going. And this is why tongues became so important in that church.

But now we come to our third word:

PROPHESYING.

Paul wrote in Eph. 4:11, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets . . ."

Remember that we are dealing with a time when the Word of God was just being completed.

Therefore, one of our outstanding Greek authorities has defined a prophet as "one who, moved by the Spirit of God and hence his organ or spokesman, solemnly declares to men what he has received by inspiration, esp. future events, and in particular such as relate to the cause and kingdom of God and to human salvation" (Thayer, p. 553).

AS SUCH, THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN A TEMPORARY GIFT UNTIL THE WORD OF GOD IN WRITTEN FORM WAS COMPLETED.

Beware of men who claim to be able to add to the Word of God today.

But there were prophets in the early Church who spoke their own language to people who knew what they were talking about, AND THIS IS WHERE THE APOSTLE PAUL PLACES THE EMPHASIS.

With this background, let us now read 1 Cor. 14:1-19.

Note v. 22b.

## II. THE REASON PAUL PREFERRED PROPHESYING.

The church was divided over these two gifts. There are always

WHAT IS THE  
EXPERIENCE  
CALLED SPEAKING  
IN TONGUES?  
OF GOD, OR OF  
THE DEVIL —  
OR OF THE  
FLESH?  
FOLLOWED BY C.  
PEOPLE WHO HAVE  
A HUNGER FOR  
GOD — BUT  
WHO ARE  
UNTAUGHT.  
RESULT IS OFTEN  
THAT THEY  
DISCOUNT THE  
WORD —  
CF. BAPTISM OF  
SPIRIT AND  
TONGUES — YET  
NOT RELATED  
ANY MORE THAN  
ANY OTHER GIFT.



those who prefer the sensational to that which is normal and easily understood—and so the Corinthians had the emphasis which some make today, that everyone should speak in tongues!

Paul not only denies that everyone will speak in tongues, but he points out that unbelievers would think we were crazy if this ever happened.

More than that—he says it is better to prophesy with five words in a language that people will understand than to speak 10,000 words in a language that they do not understand.

Why?

Because no child of God is ever edified by that which he does not understand. AND TO PAUL, THE GREATEST, THE CONTINUING NEED FOR ALL OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD IS CONTINUAL EDIFICATION, CONSTANT GROWTH!

The PROPHET will, according to v. 3, instruct, exhort, and arouse.

He will:

- (1) Teach them what they need to know.
- (2) Tell them how to put it into practice.
- (3) By his very teaching, stimulate them into action.

Concl: This is what the church needs today. She needs to be TAUGHT, she needs HER LIFE VITALIZED, and she needs that undaunted enthusiasm which will witness to the world of the reality of her faith.

The Lord's people seem to be waking up to this. Pastors seem to be getting a clearer understanding of their calling, and the need of the hour.

Certainly the world needs to be evangelized, but it will never be evangelized until its vitality is restored.

Vitality is not restored by any tongues movement. Vitality will be restored through the teaching of the Word of God, and then by the Lord's people who will seek to live their lives according to that Word.

CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECTS / ORDER IN THE CHURCH  
ARE ALWAYS DIFFICULT, BUT 1 Cor. 14:20-40  
WE NEED TO KNOW THE TEACHING OF THE WORD ON TONGUES SO AS NOT TO  
SEEK SOME EXPERIENCE AS A SOLUTION TO ALL OF OUR PROBLEMS.  
Intro: Last Sunday in considering the first part of chapter  
14, we considered the two spiritual gifts over which  
there seems to have been great controversy in Corinth: TONGUES  
and PROPHECY!

We learned that Paul was talking about languages when he was talking about "tongues." They were known languages, but unknown only in the sense that the person who spoke in tongues spoke a real language which he did not know and had not been in the habit of using.

In other words, Paul is not talking about the incomprehensible and unintelligible gibberish which characterizes the so-called "tongues movement" today.

Concerning tongues, we also learned from v. 22a that the primary purpose of tongues is evangelism—as was the case in Acts 2, where Jews (cf. 1 Cor. 14:21) were being reached with the Gospel.

Therefore, the condition under which you would find tongues used would be:

- (1) Where Jews are present.
- (2) Where these are unsaved. They do not know the Lord.
- (3) Where the unsaved present do not understand the language that is being used.

In this way it was a "sign."

But, conceding that there might be times when tongues would be used for Gentiles, we do not find that God is working in this way today in the mission fields of the world. THEREFORE, WE HAVE EVERY REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THE GIFT OF TONGUES APPLIED PRIMARILY TO THE APOSTOLIC AGE, AND THAT, WHILE IT CAN BE USED TODAY IF THE CONDITIONS WHICH WE HAVE CITED ARE PRESENT, IT IS NOT THE PRIMARY WAY THAT GOD HAS OF WORKING.

Concerning prophecy, we learned that this had to do with one speaking under the special revelation of the Spirit of God, but that this was because the Word of God was not completed.

With the completion of the Word of God, and the establishment of the Church, these special gifts began to disappear from the scene.

Now, with all of this in mind, let us note this morning what Paul has to say about the way they were to conduct themselves "in the church" (v. 28), i.e., when the people of God met together for worship and for instruction. This section begins in chapter 11 speaking about worship.

The theme here is, order in the church!

We are to look for certain commandments, "THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE LORD." Cf. v. 37.

What are they?

- I. Commandment #1: "Let all things be done unto edifying" (v. 26b).

Possibly here Paul is using this term in a slightly larger way than simply of the edification of believers; HE MAY BE USING IT TO REFER TO THAT WHICH WILL BENEFIT OTHERS—whether Christian, or not!

For edifying, it is clear that prophecy, speaking in the language of the people who are present, is far more effective than tongues.

Cf. vv. 24, 25. Then contrast with v. 23.

Somehow the teaching had gotten started in Corinth that every child of God should speak in tongues, and they had started the practice of everyone talking at once!

Whenever this happens, people are inclined to turn away in disgust, saying, "Ye are mad," you are out of your mind.

Is not the sensational that is going to make a lasting impression upon the hearts of men; it is the reasonable, that which ~~they~~ are able to understand.

N.B. Even though we may not be concerned with the same circumstances as the Corinthians, it certainly should be a matter of vital importance was to whether or not our main reason in ministry is to edify others.

- II. Commandment #2: "Let all things be done decently and in order." Cf. v. 40. See also v. 33, "For God is not . . . of confusion (disorder and dissension) but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."

There must have been more confusion, more bitterness, more immaturity (cf. v. 20) manifested in the exercise of spiritual gifts than in any other problem the Corinthians had. THIS IS THE REASON THAT SPIRITUAL GIFTS DO NOT PROVE THAT ONE IS SPIRITUAL, OR SPIRITUALLY-MINDED.

But what is the order?

No more than three were to speak in tongues (v. 27). They

were to speak one at the time. And they were to only speak if there were someone to interpret--thus confirming the fact that it was really of God!

If a person were speaking prophetically, he was to stop when another started, and only three were to speak in this way.

At no time were things to get out of hand (v. 32).

The result was to be increased knowledge, and comfort (combining the ideas of exhortation, comfort, and encouragement), Cf. v. 31.

They were learning things which had not been written, and the truth was to have a practical result in their lives.

Now we have the Word completed!

But we need to determine just how these fit into our ministry today. I.e., if there is solid teaching, or if there is mass confusion.

III. Commandment #3: This is difficult ladies, but I will have a word for the men too. Cf. v. 34a, "Let your women keep silence in the churches."

I once heard a man say that this proved that Paul was not married because if he had been he would have told them to be quiet at home too!

What does this mean?

WILL YOU NOTE THIS CAREFULLY? In this context, it means that in Paul's day, any woman who spoke in tongues, or any woman who prophesied, in the church, WAS IN DIRECT VIOLATION OF THE WILL OF GOD!

Therefore, the fact that so many women are mixed up in the present-day tongues emphasis, and that they speak freely in public meetings, IS STRONG EVIDENCE THAT MOVEMENT AS SUCH IS NOT OF GOD!

I am not going to get into the subject of women in the church this morning, but I do want to deal with it as Paul touches on it here.

HOW WERE THE LADIES TO LEARN? Cf. v. 35.

Husbands, are you teaching your wives the Word of God? They need to be learning and they need to be learning from you! What a challenge this is for you to learn the Word of God so that you will be able to teach your family.

Concl: Sometimes Paul can be very straightforward in what he says. It may have a touch of irony in it, or it may have a touch of humor.

Sometimes it may even seem that he is becoming a little impatient.

Note v. 36 - then v. 37 (apostolic authority) - v. 38, indication that if they will not receive his teaching, he will go no further with them.

How much it is needed today that we come to the Word of God and accept it as our final authority. WHEN WE DO WE WILL BRING EVERY EXPERIENCE TO BE EXAMINED IN THE LIGHT OF THE WORD, AND NOT TRY TO JUSTIFY OUR EXPERIENCE BY WHAT WE THINK WE CAN SEE IN THE WORD.

THE GOSPEL--CREDIBLE, OR INCREDIBLE  
1 Cor. 15:1-11

Intro: As Paul approaches the end of this epistle he now turns to the one major doctrinal problem which had troubled the Corinthian Church: the doctrine of resurrection.

In some respects doctrine was involved in the first problem of the book because in chapters 1, 2 Paul speaks out against mixing Greek philosophy in with "the preaching of the cross." No one, however, was denying the importance of the death of Christ!

But here there is a denial!

And it is easy to see that Paul may have saved this to the last because of its vital importance. TO DENY THE DOCTRINE OF RESURRECTION LEADS TO A DENIAL OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, AND TO DENY THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IS TO DENY THE GOSPEL.

Paul goes into the implications of this in vv. 12-19.

Now let us be perfectly honest in facing this question, and possibly look more closely at it than we ever have before.

To express your faith in the doctrine of resurrection is to express your faith in the miraculous, in the supernatural. When Paul stood before Agrippa, he raised the very issue that he is raising in this chapter: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" (Acts 26:8):

So our belief about resurrection reflects our belief in God because if there is a God, and if Jesus Christ was the Son of God, as He claimed to be, then we should not be surprised to find resurrection in the Bible. ACTUALLY, WE SHOULD EXPECT IT!

But the fact remains that we have never seen anyone raised from the dead.

Therefore, to believe in the resurrection, do we have to close our eyes to reality and simply hope that we are believing the right things? If this is the case, then we could surely be absolutely wrong, and, to use the words of the apostle Paul, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (to be pitied; v. 19).

And so in the verses before us this morning, PAUL DOES NOT HESITATE TO SUBJECT THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION, ESPECIALLY THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, TO THE CLOSEST POSSIBLE SCRUTINY. Here we find FOUR MAJOR ARGUMENTS which, taken together, posi-

tively establish the resurrection of Christ, and, in so doing, positively confirm the doctrine of resurrection.

## I. THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS (1 Cor. 15:1,2).

Oh, but you say, you can prove anything you want to by experience, and have you not been telling us that we are not to seek experiences and to preach experiences.

I certainly have. EXPERIENCE BY ITSELF CAN EASILY BE MIS-INTERPRETED IF THIS IS ALL THAT WE HAVE TO GO ON. This is the reason I want it to be perfectly clear that this is only the first of four which Paul uses. All of the reasons must be taken together, BUT, IF WHAT I BELIEVE IS THE TRUTH, THEN MY EXPERIENCE WILL CONFIRM, NOT DENY, THE OTHER LINES OF EVIDENCE WHICH CAN BE USED TO ESTABLISH ANY TRUTH!

And so, Paul turns first to remind these Corinthian Christians how they had been saved (v. 2a). And he uses the present tense ("By which also ye are saved") to point to the certainty of their salvation and to the fact that it is a present possession.

They claimed to be saved. They knew that their lives had been changed. How had this come about? PAUL REMINDS THEM IN THIS CHAPTER THAT IT WAS THROUGH THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST, AND THAT BASIC TO THE GOSPEL (as he will show in v. 4) IS THE FACT OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

(Raise the question of salvation, and explain vv. 1, 2)

## II. PROOF FROM THE WORD OF GOD (1 Cor. 15:3, 4).

Unless our experience can be supported by the Word of God we may be misinterpreting our experience.

Note that two times in these verses Paul uses the phrase, "according to the scriptures." And he uses this in connection with two statements:

- (1) "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures."
- (2) "He rose again the third day according to the scriptures."

For us, this can be the strongest possible proof. Paul is declaring that both the death and the resurrection of Christ are clearly predicted in "the scriptures," i.e., in the Old Testament.

One of the greatest arguments for the divine inspiration of Scripture is fulfilled prophecy.

We do not have the time to go into this thoroughly this morning, but let me cite just two examples:

- (1) In Luke 22:37 our Lord applies Isa. 53 to Himself. "For I say unto you that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, 'And he was reckoned among the transgressors'; for the things concerning me have an end," i.e., a fulfillment.
- (2) Peter, speaking in Jerusalem, concerning the death and resurrection of Christ, said, "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those who follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days" (Acts 3:24).

And you cannot explain away the death of Christ by saying that He merely lost consciousness on the cross, and that He was revived in the tomb, because the clause, "and that he was buried," reminds us that both His disciples and His enemies knew that he was dead before they asked to bury Him and before permission was granted.

"The came the soldiers, and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who was crucified with him. BUT WHEN THEY CAME TO JESUS, AND SAW THAT HE WAS DEAD ALREADY, THEY BROKE NOT HIS LEGS" (John 19:32, 33).

### III. THOSE WHO SAW HIM AFTER HIS RESURRECTION (1 Cor. 15:5-8).

In Matt. 18:16 our Lord restated an OT principle used in establishing a truth. It is this: "In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." Cf. Deut. 19:15.

This means that if we could only produce two, or at the most three, witnesses who saw Jesus Christ after His resurrection, you would be in serious trouble to deny that the resurrection ever took place.

How many witnesses do we have? Even more than are mentioned here, but in these verses Paul mentions no less (in fact more) than 514 who saw Jesus Christ and were convinced that He rose from the dead.

Amazing evidence!

NOT AN APOSTLE,  
BUT HALF-  
BROTHER OF THE LORD, INCLUDED WITH "THE TWELVE."

And notice who they were: Paul, James, Peter (Cephas), and all the apostles (cf. Acts 1:2, 3), and over 500 who all saw him at the same time, and reported the same things. Best of all, Paul says you can talk personally with them because at the time he wrote this epistle (about 25 years later) most of them were still living! (Does this mean that many of the followers of our Lord were young people?)



## IV. THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL HIMSELF (1 Cor. 15:9-11).

It is always interesting to listen to the way a man talks about himself—especially how he refers to his salvation. Notice Paul's words.

Look especially at the phrase, "as one born out of due time." What does he mean?

HE MEANS THAT HIS WHOLE LIFE WAS LIKE A PRE-MATURE BIRTH, OR ACTUALLY LIKE AN ABORTION. He was one man no one ever expected would be saved!

Do you remember how Ananias resisted the Lord when the Lord told him to go to Saul of Tarsus. He said, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem; And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name" (Acts 9:13, 14).

The Lord's response must have amazed Ananias. "Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

Impossible!

No, it was not impossible. Years later Paul wrote to Timothy, still marvelling at the grace of God, "Nevertheless, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting" (1 Tim. 1:16).

This is why Paul called himself the chief of sinners. If he could be saved, then anyone could be saved. And the fact that Paul underwent such a change was in itself added proof of the truth of the Gospel, and so of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Concl: Thomas was not with the disciples the first time the Lord appeared to them. When they told him that the Lord was alive, he said, "Except I shall see in his hand the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). Eight days later he had this privilege, and you remember his confession, "My Lord and my God." But remember also what the Lord responded: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

The evidence is here, overwhelming evidence. It cannot help but strengthen the faith of believers, and possibly this morning be the means of bringing some to trust Christ as Savior.

WHAT IF THERE IS NO RESURRECTION?

1 Cor. 15:12-19

Intro: In vv. 1-11 Paul gives four conclusive proofs that the Gospel is the true message of salvation. They are:

- (1) The Corinthians themselves.
- (2) The way the death and resurrection of Christ was predicted by OT prophecy.
- (3) Those who were eye-witnesses of the resurrected Christ.
- (4) The amazing transformation in the life of the Apostle Paul himself.

In speaking of the Gospel, he makes it very clear that the death and the resurrection of Christ form the foundation stones upon which the whole truth of salvation is constructed.

If Christ had not died "for our sins," then we would have no salvation.

But it is equally true that He had to rise from the dead. If not it would have discredited Him as a person, and it would have discredited all that He said and did.

Before ever getting to the problem which led him to write of this subject, he reviews the whole subject of the Gospel and the solid ground any person stands on when he believes the Gospel.

Then he comes to the point: v. 12. (Read.)

Knowledge of the Gospel should have protected them from the heresy.

But possibly the Corinthian believers were making the same mistake that people are still making today. THEY STARTED WITH WHAT THEY DID NOT KNOW INSTEAD OF BEGINNING WITH WHAT THEY KNEW. Then they were subtly brought to deny what they knew because somebody had thrown up a lot of objections to them.

"Some of you" would certainly indicate that this trouble came from those who were identified with the Corinthian Church; whether they were saved or not, we cannot say. BUT THEY MIGHT HAVE BEEN SAVED, AND JUST HAD NEVER SEEN WHERE THIS FORM OF ERROR WAS LEADING THEM. And so Paul is prepared to show them!

I. THE PREMISE (v. 12).

Let us begin, he seems to say, on the basis that there is no resurrection of the dead.

Where does this lead us?

Now, before you look down on these Corinthians, let us ask ourselves, To what extent do we believe in the miraculous?

If we believe in God, then we should believe in the possibility of miracles! Paul asked Agrippa, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?"

Also, if you believe the Bible to be the Word of God, then you should believe in miracles. The authority of Scripture would settle it.

But God has even gone beyond this!

He has given us historical and practical reasons for believing in the resurrection. SO THE FARTHER WE GO, THE MORE THE EVIDENCE MOUNTS.

However, now Paul is willing to suppose with his fellow-believers that there is no resurrection. Again, where does this lead us. Let us see.

## II. THE DEDUCTIONS (vv. 13-19).

It does seem quite certain that someone had raised so many questions about how a body, dead for years and years, could be raised again, AND THAT THEY HAD BECOME SO OCCUPIED IN LOOKING AHEAD THAT THEY HAD NOT TAKEN THE TIME TO LOOK BACK TO SEE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS TEACHING.

Paul mentions three definite directions where we need to look.

### A. First and most important of all, HOW DOES THIS AFFECT THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST?

Paul goes right to the heart of the matter, AND TWO TIMES IN THIS PASSAGE HE TELLS US WHAT IT MEANS TO DENY THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD!

If there is no resurrection, then no one can be raised, and so "then is Christ not risen," cf. v. 13, and "then is not Christ raised" (v. 16).

You will notice that instead of leading up to Christ, he begins with Christ! After all, HE IS "THE TRUTH."

It is quite amazing to me that Paul says nothing about the resurrections of the Old Testament. Nor does he mention the resurrections of the New Testament (except for our Lord's). HE SPEAKS OF THE RESURRECTION OF

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST AS THOUGH IT CREDITS OR  
DISCREDITS ALL OTHER RESURRECTIONS—WHICH IT DOES!

There is no use talking about the superstructure if the foundation is crumbling. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psa. 11:3).

Jesus Christ becomes the greatest fraud of all times if He were not raised from the dead—and the evidence of the fraud is that His body is still in the tomb!

How people can deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ and yet still commend Him as a great teacher, a great example, etc., is impossible to understand.

If there is no resurrection, He is dead, He is not in heaven, He is not interceding for us, He is not coming again. He means no more to us than any other person.

AND THIS IS SO IMPORTANT THAT PAUL MENTIONS IT TWICE—letting this solemn fact lead to other deductions—two of them.

B. Secondly, HOW DOES THIS AFFECT THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL? Cf. vv. 14, 15.

Three things can be said.

1. "Our preaching is vain."

Several times in this epistle Paul mentions his preaching in Corinth. It must have been attended with great blessing from God. It was "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:4b). The message had been different from anything that the Corinthians had heard before.

But, Paul says, if there is no resurrection, and if Christ is not raised, then "our preaching" was nothing more than hollow emptiness, unable to produce results of any kind.

This would have produced some conflicts in their minds because they remembered that preaching!

And so it must follow that

2. "Your faith is also vain."

Paul had preached to them that "by grace they were saved through faith," that by faith completely without works they could be brought into perfect

relationship with God with all of their sins forgiven. But, in spite of what he had told them, this was not true IF Christ had not risen from the dead—because it was all dependent upon His resurrection.

And, what was even worse . . .

3. "We are found false witnesses of God," i.e., you have taken us by surprise and have found out that we have been saying things that God never did. There is nothing to it!

You can detect here how seriously Paul took his calling as "an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1:1).

But note: ALL OF THESE HAVE TO DO WITH THE PRESENT! Now Paul, after referring back to the foundation again in v. 16, answers the question

#### C. HOW DOES THIS AFFECT THE FUTURE OF OUR SALVATION?

Salvation is now just something that applies to this life, but its greatest glory is yet to come.

Paul wrote to Timothy, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8b).

1. "Your faith is vain" (v. 17).

The word for "vain" is different from that in v. 14. There it meant that there is nothing to it; HERE IT MEANS THAT IT LEADS NOWHERE!

Gregory of Nyssa likens it to building sand houses on the seashore, or chasing the wind, or shooting at the stars, or trying to catch your shadow. You can consider your faith as "aimlessness, the leading to no object or end" (Trench, p. 181).

3. "They also who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (v. 18). Those who have died thinking that they were right with God and bound for heaven suddenly realized that they were still under the judgment of God. (Paul is not talking about annihilation.)

4. "We are of all men most miserable." Cf. v. 19.

Why is this true? Because we as Christians can

never separate the present from the future. It is the future which gives meaning to the present. If there is no resurrection, then we have no future, and life is thrown into hopeless confusion. At least the people of the world have had the pleasure of the world, but a child of God will forego earthly pleasure because he is living in anticipation of the glory that is to come.

We know that we "have in heaven a better and an enduring substance" (Heb. 10:34).

But we have none of this IF there is no resurrection, because then Christ has not been raised. BUT ALL OF OUR HOPES FOR TIME AND FOR ETERNITY DEPEND UPON HIS RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD.

Concl: Does he leave us here?

Absolutely not! But the conclusion is too wonderful to pass over at the conclusion of this service. However, I cannot let you go without at least stating it. The issue is not uncertain.

Read vv. 20-23.

Christ has been raised. And we shall be raised—at His coming!

Our preaching is not in vain.

Our faith is not in vain.

We are true witnesses of God.

Our sins are gone.

Those who have died are more convinced than ever about the hope of resurrection.

And we of all men are most to be envied because we can say with Job of old (and the issue was clear then):

"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; And though after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh shall I see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another" (Job 19:25-27, with a slight variation from the KJV).

THE FIRST FRUIT AND THE LAST ENEMY

1 Cor. 15:20-28

Intro: Can you remember back to the verses we had on Sunday morning two weeks ago? What IF there were NO resurrection of the dead?

Moving from v. 19 to v. 20 is like waking up from a nightmare!

Or, it is like putting the foundation back under a building after you have torn it all away.

Paul does not need to say another thing to prove to us that IF there is no resurrection, and particularly, IF CHRIST was not raised from them dead, THEN WE HAVE NOTHING!

What a relief to read v. 20! AND REMEMBER THAT IT STANDS ON THE EVIDENCE PRODUCE BY PAUL IN VV. 1-11.

Now, in coming to these verses (20-28) this morning I want you to note how much time the Apostle covers.

- (1) He goes all the way from Adam in v. 22 . . .
- (2) . . . to "the end" in v. 24.

And, in doing so, he touches upon the two outstanding events of all history:

- (1) The resurrection of Christ (four times, vv. 20-23).
- (2) The coming of Christ (v. 23).

One is past; the other is future. And, the second would have been impossible without the first.

You might simply say that we have the two advents of Christ.

But when you put all of these together:

- (1) God's goal in creation: that He "may be all in all" (v. 28b).
- (2) Man's greatest enemy (and God's) which stands in the way: DEATH!
- (3) What God has done to destroy that enemy--and all others!

Let us look first at

I. THE LAST ENEMY. (Read vv. 24-26.)

What is an enemy? He is more than some person who does not like you. And an enemy will do more than avoid you. HE IS ONE WHO IS YOUR OPPONENT. HE WILL TRY TO THWART EVERYTHING YOU DO. IF ONE IS REALLY YOUR ENEMY, HE WOULD BE DELIGHTED TO SEE YOU DESTROYED.

Our Lord gives us an illustration in Matt. 13:28.

Now we must be careful to note that these are God's enemies while they are also man's.

It speaks of death as the last enemy. What are some of the others?

- (1) The devil is an enemy. Cf. Matt. 13:39.
- (2) We were once God's enemies, as are all unregenerate people. Cf. Rom. 5:10, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled . . ."
- (3) This world, its way of life, and all about it, is an enemy of God. Cf. Jas. 4:4.

SO, FROM MEN AND ANGELS, AND FROM THE WORLD THEY HAVE MADE, GOD HAS THOSE WHO ARE ACTIVELY OPPOSED TO HIM AND TO HIS PURPOSES IN THE EARTH. THEY ARE HIS ENEMIES, AND THE ENEMIES OF ALL WHO ARE ON HIS SIDE.

The Lord is coming again to the earth. And, without trying to distinguish between the Rapture and the Second Coming, Paul simply tells what the ultimate purpose of His coming will be: to "put down all rule and authority and power" and to "put all enemies under his feet" (vv. 24, 25). (Explain.)

Then, "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." God is going to divest His enemies of their power. He is going to bring them down to nothing! LAST OF ALL, HE WILL DESTROY DEATH!

Did you notice that, while Paul seeks to prove resurrection, he does not have to prove that there is such a thing as death. What an enemy it is! We all know!

The writer of Hebrews describes the whole human race when he speaks of men, "who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Cf. Heb. 2:15.

Where did death come from?

It came "by man," it came through Adam. And all who are "in Adam," all who are the descendants of Adam (which includes everyone who ever lived), DIE!

Whether you like it or not, whether you understand it or not, all men die—and this is the explanation that the Word of God gives to us. Read Gen. 2:17; 3:6; 5:5 ff.

Cf. Rom. 5:12 for a more complete explanation.

There is a spiritual death, but we are concerned here with physical death.



But God is going to put an end to death, and, if there is any doubt in this passage, John tells us when this will take place! Cf. Rev. 20:13-15; 21:4.

So it will come after the coming of the Lord, after the millennium, after Satan is loosed, after the great white throne. IT WILL COME WITH THE SETTING UP OF THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH.

But, for the present, it seems that Satan has done something which can never be undone when he brought the whole human race under the sentence of death.

Did we not read in Heb. 11:13 just a few weeks ago, "These all died in faith,"?

We say, "They died in faith," but the world says, "No, they just died like anyone else. When you're dead, you're dead!"

How can we have hope? How could even Job say that in his flesh he would see God! Cf. Job 19:26.

Here is our answer. Not only was Christ raised from the dead, BUT He has become

## II. THE FIRST FRUIT. (Read again vv. 20-23.)

Paul tells us that since death came through a man, it was necessary that it be removed by a man.

And, since everybody who was in that first man, Adam, died, it would be necessary for anybody who wanted to escape from death to be in the second man, in Christ!

This is where we come to our term, first fruit (always in the singular in the Greek original). What does it mean?

Note the background of the expression in Lev. 23:9-11. Any Jewish mind would go immediately to this passage.

A. First, it points to the uniqueness of the resurrection of Christ. The sheaf of firstfruits was the first one out of the field, the first of the harvest.

The point is this: Others had been raised from the dead before Christ was raised, BUT NO ONE WAS RAISED THE SAME WAY HE WAS. Listen to Rom. 6:9. "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him."

If Jesus Christ were to come back to the earth today,

His enemies could not kill Him!

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the first one of its kind.

But there is another thought here.

- B. It indicates that there are more to follow of the same kind." The first sheaf was just like others that would follow.

Cf. Phil. 3:20, 21.

Let us ask some questions.

- (1) When will this take place? "At his coming" (v. 23b). (Explain the Rapture and the Second Coming, and why Paul does not distinguish between them here.)
- (2) How will death be destroyed? By the res. of all who have died. Here we are concerned about believers only.
- (3) What will the result be? "That God may be all in all"—something He has never been in the hearts of His own even, all things to every person, where His will and His glory will all that His people will live for—just as the Father and the Son were one (John 17:21 ff.).
- (4) Will everyone share in this? No. Only those who are "in Christ" (v. 22). There will be no universal salvation.

— And by sparing some who will never die. Cf. v. 51.

Concl: How can you get in Christ?

Let me answer in the words of the Apostle John.

And all the marks of sickness, old age, etc.

In 1 John 5:11, 12 we read these words, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

Then he adds in the same chapter, v. 20, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, be erased even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

And even for us And—2 Cor. 5:17.  
now death has lost its sting.

THE DIRE CONSEQUENCES OF FALSE TEACHING  
1 Cor. 15:29-34

Intro: In the passage before us this morning Paul returns to the subject he had considered in vv. 12-19: WHAT IF THERE IS NO RESURRECTION? But he does so with a difference!

In vv. 12-19 his emphasis is mainly doctrinal.

In vv. 29-34 his emphasis is mainly practical.

In the preceding passages he shows how our message and our hope are nothing IF there is no resurrection of the dead.

But, almost as though he had neglected to say something he wanted to say before he soared to the heights in vv. 20-28, he now wants them to see what the false teaching had already done to them!

Let us note the consequences.

- I. Their acceptance of false teaching (the denial of resurrection) had robbed them of the ordinary wisdom which people will manifest who do not even know the Lord.

This is evident from two parts of our text.

- (1) He refers to the heathen custom of baptizing for the dead. Cf. v. 29.
- (2) He quotes one of the Grecian comic poets, Menander, and he does this in v. 33.

How apropos are two things our Lord said:

- (1) "If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt. 6:23 b).
- (2) "The children of this world (lit., the sons of this age) are in their generation wiser than the children (sons) of light" (Luke 16:8b).

Paul was quick to use the truth whenever it would support the Word of God.

- III. Cf. what he did on Mars' Hill when he declared who "the unknown God" was, and when he quoted from one of their poets who said that man was the offspring of God. Cf. Acts 17:23, 28.

What about these two examples in our text?

There are some 30 interpretations of what it meant to baptize for the dead. NOWHERE IN THE WORD OF GOD IS THIS SPOKEN OF AS A DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH!

Some have interpreted this as meaning a baptism that one receives when he knows that death is near. But there is nothing of this in the Bible. Others have felt that you could be baptized for the benefit of some loved one who had not been baptized. BUT THERE IS NOTHING OF THIS, EITHER OF THESE, IN THE WORD OF GOD.

The most reasonable explanation is that Paul is showing from a heathen practice that, when the heathen baptized for the dead, they were demonstrating a belief in resurrection!

Or, why would they do such a thing? The baptism of a body suggested the future importance of the body!

This was a very strong point.

But, dropping down to v. 33, he tries to rebuke the Corinthians by a quotation from Menander. In effect it meant that you cannot associate with others who do not believe what you do without being influenced in your life by what they teach.

Even the world understands this. Plenty of people who are not Christians are tremendously concerned about what their children are learning BECAUSE OF THE EFFECT THAT IT WILL HAVE UPON THE LIVES OF THEIR CHILDREN.

But Christians can be so naive that they feel you can play around with error, that you can depart from the teaching of the Word of God, and still go on living as you did when you held to the truth.

It is amazing to see how many times, when a believer begins to break down doctrinally, he also begins to break down spiritually.

WHY DO YOU THINK THAT PAUL AND THE WRITERS ALWAYS LAY A DOCTRINAL FOUNDATION FOR THE PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION THAT THEY HAVE TO GIVE?

Evils associations will defile your character and your life. This word, "defile," or "corrupt," was the word the Jews used when anyone misused the Temple!

Let us be careful that the light we have does not turn to darkness, and the only way we can prevent that is by staying by the Word of God.

But note another consequence.

- II. The denial of the resurrection failed to take into consideration why Paul would suffer for the Lord as he had.

Cf. vv. 30-32.

Are we to think that Paul enjoyed this kind of a life?  
Must we think that he foolishly took chances.

Notice: "every hour" in v. 30, and "I die daily" in v. 31.  
And don't spiritualize this truth. Paul was in constant physical danger, and yet he never let up in his ministry.  
HE EVEN MENTIONS AN EXPERIENCE IN V. 32 WHICH IS NOT MENTIONED ANY PLACE ELSE IN THE WORD!

How could he possibly do this?

Doubtless he knew that the Lord had said, "And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body and have no more that they can do" (Luke 12:4).

If there is no resurrection, then the Epicureans were right.

But they are not right. This life is not the end, but it leads to an eternity where the results of this present life will continue to be felt.

This leads us to the third consequence.

- III. Believers become morally like a man in a drunken stupor.  
Cf. v. 34, "Awake to righteousness, and sin not."

Paul tells us two other things about some of the Corinthians:

- (1) They were deceived.
- (2) They were sinning. It does not mean the kind of a sin that would disgrace them, but their lives were sinful because they were out-of-the-way of the will of God!

There is no greater tragedy then when believers get out of the will of God! The Corinthian epistle gives us many illustrations of the sad end when believers turn away from God and His Word.

Finally,

- IV. It seems that the people of the world go even deeper into their rebellion against God.

Two times in Corinthians Paul says, "I speak this to your shame."

Cf. 6:5.

Here is more than a rebuke that men are still without the

Lord. Paul says that men have non-knowledge, i.e., they have deliberately rejected the truth and have turned to false ideas of God SO THAT THEY ARE FAR WORSE THAN THE MASSES OF THE PEOPLE IN THE WORLD WITHOUT CHRIST. THIS WAS EVIDENTLY THE MAJOR PROBLEM IN CONNECTION WITH THE EVANGELISM OF CORINTH--AND THE LORD LAYS THE BLAME RIGHT AT THE DOOR OF THE CHURCH!

We can see this even today.

When the Word of God is preached positively and consistently with the blessing of God, there is an authority which the world cannot deny--and men will sit up and take notice!

But let men turn from the Word, and even the world turns away in disgust.

- Ill. (1) People have expressed to me contempt for the way the preachers of our day seem to have lost their way--if they ever knew it.
- (2) When I suggested to a young married man some time ago that he and his wife find a church, he said that going to church had been the biggest waste of time of anything that he had ever done.

It is no wonder that the world today is not only ignorant, BUT IT HAS REJECTED THE TRUTH AND HAD TURNED TO IDEAS THAT ARE UTTERLY FALSE, AND WILL LEAD TO NOTHING BUT THE ETERNAL JUDGMENT OF God.

Paul says to the Corinthian church, "I speak this to your SHAME."

Concl: Does this not point the way very clearly for us?

There are two things which must always have priority with us as the children of God:

- (1) We must never forsake the preaching of the Word of God, and we must never quit believing the Word. This is the first thing.
- (2) We must be careful that our lives are lived according to the Word of God.

(Conclude with 1 Tim. 4:6, 7 and 12.)

## HOW ARE THE DEAD RAISED?

1 Cor. 15:35-49

Intro: V. 12 and v. 35 make it clear that Paul is answering particular people who have been responsible for doing two things:

- (1) Denying the resurrection of the body.
- (2) Denying it on the basis that it is incredible to think that the human body, as it has always been, will be restored (which, of course, is not what Paul taught, as he will now proceed to show).

The divisions in this passage are quite clear.

First, we have the questions. This is in v. 35.

Secondly, Paul shows that even nature itself furnishes us with tremendous illustrations of resurrection (vv. 36-38). Every farmer lives on the basis of death and resurrection by planting his crops.

Thirdly, Paul shows that the body does not have to be raised the same way because there are many different kinds of flesh on earth (v. 39); there are also heavenly bodies as well as earthly (v. 40); and even these heavenly bodies differ from each other in glory (v. 41).

Fourthly, he comes to the heart of his answer in vv. <sup>42</sup>~~35~~-49 to show that there are moral needs which man has as well as physical needs for resurrection.

It is in this last section that I want us to spend our time this morning.

- I. Note the figure of speech continued from vv. 36-38--  
DEATH IS LIKENEED TO SOWING SEED IN THE GROUND (vv. 42-44).

What a blessing to be able to think of death in this way!  
It shows that death is not the end!

- A. The seed sown: a corrupt, dishonored, weak, natural body.

When the body dies, it immediately begins to decay, to return to the dust from which it was originally made.  
Cf. Gen. 3:19. This is corruption.

It is dishonored because there is an unseemliness and and offensiveness about death. For man who glories so in himself, death is a disgrace, a humiliation.

"Weakness" - "Nothing is more absolutely powerless than a corpse--it can do nothing and it can resist nothing."

The weakness which belonged to it in life, is perfected in death" (Hodge, p. 347).

It is "natural." This probably includes all of the above. It means that man is soulish, is human--that he has a life in common with animals in that he needs food and air and rest. BUT IS ALSO HAS IMPLICATIONS AS FAR AS MAN'S MORAL NATURE IS CONCERNED. Cf. 2:14. Also Eph. 2:3. There is, even in the life of the believer, that tendency away from God, that tendency toward sin--

"Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,  
Prone to leave the God I love . . ."  
Who has not grieved over his humanness?

B. The resurrection. What will the body be like then?

It will be incorrupt, glorious, powerful, and spiritual.

No longer will it be subject to physical death, nor to the infirmities which lead to death.

What glory man will possess then! Cf. Rom. 8:18; Col. 3:4; Phil. 3:20, 21. He will be magnificent, majestic, glorious, splendorous!

"Power" - No one can now measure the energies, the capacities, of the child of God in his resurrection body.

But it will be "spiritual," but a spiritual body! This word always carries with it the idea of supernatural. Cf. 1 Cor. 10:3, 4. That was real food, and this is a real body.

The resurrection body will look like the body we had before, but it <sup>will</sup> possess none of the physical and moral difficulties which we experience now.

All of this is revelation. Man would not know it if it had not been revealed. But it is not unreasonable. That is the reason Paul calls the man a "fool," that is, one who is senseless, who claims that resurrection is impossible, and unnecessary.

II. THE EXPLANATION OF THE NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL BODIES (vv. 45-49).

A. The two Adams--two men: Adam and Christ. Cf. "the Lord from heaven" in v. 47.

This is the only place in the NT where our Lord is call-



ed, "the last Adam." But it is used here to teach us that there are only two, and that there will be no more!

And he quotes from Gen. 2:7 to prove that Adam was created as a human being.

But the Lord was different. He was made "a life-giving spirit" (NSRB). He expressed this in John 5: 26-29, but v. 26 will be enough for now:

"For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself."

The passage has to do with resurrection.

And, anyone can tell that Adam preceded Christ, so that there is no question but that the better is yet to come. Cf. v. 46.

And the origin of the two Adams is contrasted in v. 47:

- (1) Adam was, lit., out of the earth, made of dust.
- (2) Our Lord was, lit., out of heaven, an expression of His Deity.

B. The two classes of people under the two Adams (vv. 48, 49).

1. The contrast (v. 48).

All that are in Adam are just like Adam—physical, destined for death with its corruption, its dishonor, and its weakness.

All who are in Christ share His destiny: incorrupt, glorious, powerful.

Then this is followed with:

2. The hope (v. 49).

To bear an image means to wear habitually and continuously something which you have derived from someone else—like the image on a coin, or like a statue, or like a reflection in a mirror!

Our bodies are just like Adam's body. We look just like he looked. He could walk down the streets of Portland, and no one would have noticed any difference—except that when he was 500 he probably looked like a man 35-40 years of age today! WHAT WE ARE PHYSICALLY WE HAVE INHERITED FROM ADAM. Let us not

be in any doubt about this.

(Spiritually we are what Adam became, but that is a secondary consideration in this passage.)

But, here is the glorious truth . . . "We shall bear the image of the heavenly."

Concl: Now, if there are only two Adams, then this means that this will be our final estate.

But who is he talking about?

Only those who have received the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

What a hope! Cf. 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Jn. 3:2; Rom. 8:29; Phil. 3:20, 21.

Just as certainly as we have always looked like Adam in the past, we will always look like the Lord Jesus Christ in the future.

WHAT ABOUT THE CHRISTIANS WHO WILL NOT DIE?

1 Cor. 15:50-58

Intro: The completeness of Paul's message on resurrection in 1 Cor. 15 is quite amazing!

He begins by showing how essential the resurrection is to the Gospel (vv. 1-11).

Then he shows what we lose and how we are to be pitied if there is no such thing as resurrection (vv. 12-19).

Thirdly, he shows how absolutely necessary the resurrection is to the working out of God's purposes in the earth—culminating in the establishment of the kingdom of God (vv. 20-28).

In the fourth place he seems to return briefly to show from a practical standpoint that both heathen and Christian practices indicate a belief in, and the importance of, resurrection (vv. 29-34).

Last week we have that passage (vv. 35-49) where Paul describes in detail the resurrection body.

Only one thing remains . . .

He mentioned the coming of the Lord in v. 23, but he has not told us what will happen to those Christians who are living when Christ returns, and therefore have not experienced physical death.

I. It might seem at first that we have reason for CONSTERNATION when we read v. 50.

It almost seems from what Paul has said so far that, if you do not die before the Lord returns, then you have no hope.

But Paul is simply coming to his final point on resurrection, and he states a fact which we all know to be true. Thinking of "the kingdom" as it is mentioned in v. 24, we all know that in our present bodies we cannot live for ever. Therefore, something has to happen to us.

III. We even know that we are limited to life on this earth without the aid of space suits such as our astronauts were wearing on the moon.

What is the answer to this problem—an answer which may very well face this generation of Christians. What will happen to all of the Christians who are living when Christ returns?

For such a question as this we do not want mere speculation,  
but—

## II. A REVELATION.

We want to know what God is going to do about this!

And now Paul begins to talk in a different manner from anything that he has said thus far in the chapter. Notice:  
"Behold, I show you a mystery." Cf. vv. 51-54.

What is "a mystery"?

- (1) It is something which has not been revealed before.
- (2) It is a truth not made known to any who are not the children of God.
- (3) But it is a truth which every Christian can know and should understand fully.

What is it? It has several parts.

A. "We shall not all sleep."

This means that we do not have to die, that there will be an entire generation of Christians who will not experience physical death.

I doubt if there has ever been a generation of Christians from the time of Christ until now but what they have hoped that they would not have to die.

NOW THAT PROSPECT IS OURS!

But this is followed by another revelation.

B. "But we shall all be changed."

This is obvious since "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." How wonderful it is to know that God has made some provision for us!

Next—

C. The suddenness of the change (v. 52a).

There will be no signs to indicate that this is about to happen. AND IT WILL NOT TAKE A LOT OF TIME FOR THE LORD TO DO THIS!

(Relate this to the long periods that men say it took God to make the world.)

When Paul calls it "a moment," he is speaking of a time

so short "that it cannot be cut in two or divided" (Thayer, p. 83). Godet calls it "an indivisible moment" (II, 438). We get our word atom from this word.

And to add to the emphasis, Paul adds, "in the twinkling of an eye." It will take no more time than it takes the eye to blink, and then open again. How many times has that happened to your eyes since you came in to this service this morning, and you haven't even noticed it! Nor have you missed a thing because your eyes blink. It happens just that fast.

(When we do stop to think about our eyes blinking it ought to remind us us this wonderful event.)

But then Paul tells us

D. The time when this will all take place.

"At the last trump." 1 Thess. 4:13-18 had already been written, and, if there is any question that Paul is talking about the coming of the Lord it is mentioned in vv. 20-23.

It is called "the last trump" because it will bring this age to an end. No one will be added to the Church after the sounding of "the last trump."

THIS MEANS THAT THE CHANGE FOR THE LIVING CHRISTIANS WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE SAME TIME THAT THE DEAD ARE RAISED.

Now we are ready to know

E. The nature of the change we will experience.

In order to understand the terms in vv. 52-54 we need to recognize that the terms "corruptible" and "incorruptible" have already been used in connection with those who have died.

Now Paul uses two other words in connection with those who have NOT died: "mortal" and "immortality."

Those who are "mortal must put on (as a garment) immortality." That is, those who are subject to death will "put on" bodies which will never, and can never, die!

What will be the difference between an immortal body and

an incorruptible body? There will be no difference at all. The words simply describe the condition of our bodies when the Lord came.

Having seen all of this, what are the

### III. RESULTS. There are three:

- A. Fulfilled prophecy (vv. 54-56). Alexander Maclaren says that at this point "glowing words of the old prophets rush into his mind" (IX, 250).

He quotes in v. 54 from Isa. 25:8, and in v. 55 he is referring to Hosea 13:14.

Death has been swallowing up 100% of the people from Adam right down to our own day. It is like a serpent with a deadly sting that has hit every human being. The Law only served to strengthen the sting.

BUT THE DAY IS COMING WHEN DEATH WILL BE SWALLOWED UP! "In victory" is from a Hebrew word which means, to everlasting, forever. Godet says it "is one of the most beautiful terms in the Hebrew language (netsach). It denotes the state of perfect inward vigour which excludes all possibility of outward decay" (II, 442).

- B. Praise to God (v. 57).

Although this is yet future, the Apostle speaks of "God, who giveth us the victory." Any promise that God gives of the future is so certain that it can be spoken of in the present tense.

He get the glory, lit., grace to God.

But the victory will come "through our Lord Jesus Christ." Cf. John 11:25, 26; 14:19; Rev. 1:5, 17, 18.

- C. Service, or ministry (v. 58).

Never was the word, "therefore," more significant!

"Be" means become. (See grammatical notes.) Such truth is to give enthusiasm to our work, to the point of weariness, because with such a future, our Lord, whose work it is, will see to it that there are results.

Concl: Paul was the greatest living example of the conclusion which he reaches here. No pressure could change him. In these days men are anything but "steadfast, unmovable," how we need to hear these words of the Apostle, pointing the way ahead.

## THE WORK OF THE LORD

Text: 1 Cor. 15:58.

Scripture reading: 1 Cor. 15:58-16:11 (noting that the subject of this message is found in 15:58 and in 16:10).

Intro: We have seen repeatedly in our study of 1 Corinthians that confusion reigns in every area of a Christian's life when he gets away from the Word of God.

"the work of the Lord,"  
This is often the thing which is emphasized the most, but the thing which we know the least about. Such was glaringly apparent in Corinth, and it is the same, or even more so, in the work of the Lord today.

I want to take this one verse this morning and consider it together with you in the hope that the Lord will teach all of us what it really means to be "laborers together with God" (1 Cor. 3:9a), lit., God's fellow-workers. It is related to our theme this morning, "the work of the Lord."

Let us look first at

### I. THE NAME OF THE WORK.

It is, "the work of the Lord."

Look carefully at this expression: "the work of the Lord."  
What does it mean?

It means that it is a work which He is doing. <sup>DIVINE</sup> <sup>SUPERNATURAL</sup>

It means that it is a work which belongs to Him.

It means that He, as the Lord, has the final and only authority to say WHAT is going to be done, and WHO is going to do it.

THIS IMMEDIATELY DESIGNATES THE WORK AS SOMETHING OTHER THAN A HUMAN WORK. There is nothing else like it in all the world—"the work of the Lord." You and I will never understand the real nature of what it means to serve Him until we understand this.

What is He doing?

All you have to do is to look at churches today to find out how far they have gotten from what the Lord came to do. May I remind you again: The only place where we answer this question is in the Bible, the Word of God.

What is His work?

John tells very simply and clearly in 1 John 4:14, "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world."

Luke gives it to us in Luke 19:10, in the words of the Lord Jesus Himself: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

The Apostle Paul tells us, "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. 1:15).

"But," someone says, "this proves that you Christians are not worried about people; you Christians are only interested in the salvation of men's souls."

A statement like this reveals how ignorant people are of the Word of God.

DO YOU KNOW THAT THE TERM, "SALVATION," IS ONE OF THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE WORD IN OUR LANGUAGE. It is a word which sums up the entire work of the Lord.

It is a word which expresses man's need in his relationship with God.

It is a word which indicates the kind of a person which God wants him to be right now!

And, it is a word which points to his ultimate destiny.

Cf. Tit. 2:11-14, "For the grace of God that bringing salvation . . ."

Godet says, "By the work of the Lord, the apostle understands labour for the spread of salvation and for the development of spiritual life" (II, 448, 449).

BY THIS DEFINITION EVERY CHURCH, AND EVERY PROFESSING CHRISTIAN, WHO IS NOT ENGAGED PRIMARILY IN SEEKING TO BRING THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST TO A WORLD IN ITS GREAT NEED THAT MEN MAY BE SAVED, AND THEN WORKING FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL GROWTH—~~EVERY CHURCH AND EVERY CHRISTIAN NOT SO EMPLOYED IF OFF ON THE WRONG TRACK.~~

There is nothing more vital to the needs of men today than the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And let me say this (and the situation in our country today



proves that what I am about to say is true): WHENEVER WE TRY TO SOLVE HUMAN PROBLEMS ON ANY OTHER BASIS THAN THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST, THOSE PROBLEMS WILL ONLY GET WORSE!

This is "the work of the Lord."

And yet in much of Christendom today it is never made clear that a person is not a child of God until by faith he receives the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior.

Now let us go on to speak of another matter:

## II. THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE WORKER.

Our text teaches us several things—all of them vital!

- A. The implication is obvious that every worker must be a true, born again, child of God.

How else can it be said?

Look at 1 Cor. 1:2-9 if you want to know who the workers are to be.

IF A PERSON CLAIMS TO BE ENGAGED IN "THE WORK OF THE LORD" THERE SHOULD BE NO QUESTION ABOUT WHERE HE STANDS WITH REGARD TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Anyone who does not know the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior has absolutely no right to be engaged in "the work of the Lord."

- B. He must be a child of God who knows something about the Word of God—about the doctrines, the teachings of the Word of God.

Why does Paul say in this verse, "Therefore," and then follow it up with, "forasmuch as ye know," i.e., you are assured, "that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

How do we know this?

Basically we know this because our Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, and His resurrection absolutely guarantees our resurrection. Otherwise, "we are of all men most miserable," and, "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die" (1 Cor. 15:19, 32).

How often we take someone who has just been saved, or one who may have known the Lord for a long time, but has never been taught—and we thrust him into some kind

of ministry!

Cf. 2 Tim. 2:15. How this needs to be emphasized today.

C. As far as our text is concerned, there are three qualities which every servant of the Lord should possess.

1. He must be "steadfast."

This same word is translated, "settled," in Col. 1:23, and then is followed with the words, "and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel."

A "steadfast" Christian is one grounded on the Word of God so that he is not going to be moved around by every Tom, Dick, and Harry who comes along with some new idea.

He is not going to be "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." He is going to know where he stands, and stay there!

2. He must be "unmovable."

By this he means that we will not give up. We know that we are on the winning side, and we work anticipating blessing.

Cf. 2 Cor. 4:8-10.

3. He must be "always abounding."

The work of the Lord is going to have pre-eminence in his life, and the idea of joy, thanksgiving, and praise is here—always reaching out, seeking those whom others might consider unreachable, always believing that with God, all things are possible.

III. THE WORKER'S ENCOURAGEMENT: "forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Why is it not in vain? Why will it yield returns, eternal returns? BECAUSE OF RESURRECTION!

Cf. Gal. 6:9; Isa. 55:10, 11.

"In the Lord"—whatever is done under His direction and with His blessing.

Concl: Do we qualify? Are we ready for such a ministry? It is meant to include us all. Although the Lord may yearn over men, He never lowers His standards for those who are to labor with Him.

FROM PROBLEMS TO PROSPECTS  
1 Cor. 16:12-24

Intro: This will be my last message on our present studies in 1 Corinthians. I have been preaching on 1 Corinthians since a year ago last July—with the exception of probably 7 or 8 Sundays.

The whole epistle, with the exception of chapter 16, has been devoted to problems.

Now, after mentioning "the work of the Lord in 15:58, Paul's concluding statements have to do with his part in the Lord's work, the part some of his co-workers have, and the part which the Corinthian church is to have.

One might well ask, "What could a church like this do in the way of ministry that would be pleasing to the Lord?" But we can see that the ministry must not stop because of the problems, but that, in some respects, their ministry was a part of the solution!

He says many things in this chapter—just like he was attempting to "pick up some loose ends." However, all has direct bearing upon the Corinthian church and Paul's relationship with it.

I have selected four parts of this great chapter, but I would like to speak of each of them, grouping them under three heads as follows:

- I. The need in Jerusalem (vv. 1-4).
- II. The need in Ephesus (vv. 8, 9).
- III. The need in Corinth (vv. 13, 14, and 22).

I. THE NEED IN JERUSALEM (1 Cor. 16:1-4).

One thing that can be said about trouble like the Corinthian church was having is this: It not only shuts off the blessing within, but it seriously curtails ministry without.

Paul speaks of "the collection for the saint" in "Jerusalem" (vv. 1, 3) as something which they knew about, but had not remembered.

But the need was still there, and Paul wanted the Corinthians to do something about it.

Why we have references to the poverty of the people of God in Jerusalem, no one seems to know for sure. But many have been the suggestions:

- (1) Some feel that the practice of selling everything and distributing it among all of the people of God

as we read in the early chapters of Acts—but there is no proof of this.

- (2) Calvin feels that Acts 11:28 gives the explanation: "And there stood up one of them (the prophets), named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great famine throughout all the world, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar."

But why did it not affect the people of God in other places to the extent that it did in Jerusalem—if this were the case?

- (3) The best explanation seems to be that there were many poor Jewish people who had received Christ in Jerusalem. These people were dependent upon the wealthy Jews for their work. The wealthy took advantage of their position to make life practically impossible for those who had turned to the Lord. James 2:6 and 5:1-5 seem to support this idea.

But, whatever the reason, there was the need. What could the Corinthians do about it?

With all of the hesitation among Jews about preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, would the Gentiles now give to the Jews?

At this point Paul speaks like a commanding officer in the army. In fact, there are several military terms in this chapter. The reason is this: Sometimes when people are just coming back to the Lord they need someone to point out the way to them, and in some detail. "As I have given order," Paul says, "to the churches of Galatia."

This leads us to see that this was more of a general, NT, plan of giving.

It is important that Paul says nothing of tithing. Nor does he encourage tithing any place in his epistles.

He says that, lit., upon the first of the sabbath, i.e., on the first day after the sabbath, they were to bring their offering as God had prospered them. They were to bring their offerings in proportion to the way the Lord had given them material blessing. No specific amount was set; that apparently was left up to each believer. But they were to do this as they came together for worship.

This subject, giving, is one of the major theme of 2 Corinthians, so I will not go into detail here this morning. At this point it is sufficient for us to recognize that:

- (1) Paul does not teach tithing.
- (2) He does teach systematic giving.
- (3) One reason for giving is to provide help for the people of God.

Now let us look at

## II. THE NEED IN EPHESUS (1 Cor. 16:8, 9).

This makes it quite certain that 1 Corinthians was written from Ephesus. How hard it must have been for Paul to enjoy what was going on in Ephesus while he had to be concerned about Corinth!

"A great door, and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries."

A "door" in Scripture means an entrance to an opportunity.

Here it must have been an evangelistic door—an opportunity to reach people with the Gospel. GOD IS THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN OPEN SUCH A DOOR!

"Great" means that there was an opportunity to reach great numbers. "Effectual" meant that many were turning to the Lord.

Luke tells us about Paul's ministry in Ephesus in Acts 19:10, "And this continued for the space of two years; so that all they who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."

What a door! And this was probably the reason why Paul wanted to stay there until Pentecost, because the Jews would be flocking to the synagogues as they did in Acts 2.

"But there are many adversaries." This is always true when people are being brought to the Lord. For some, this would have been a reason for leaving; to Paul, this was a reason for staying!

It is impossible to know when such a door will be opened, but we need to be praying for these and expecting God to open whole cities for the Gospel. We may be approaching such days ourselves!

## III. THE NEED IN CORINTH (1 Cor. 16:13, 14, 22).

As the epistle has indicated, the greatest need in Corinth existed in the lives of the people of God.

Again, Paul speaks like a military leader. (Read vv. 13, 14, noticing the contrast between the two.)

A. Five things they are to do (vv. 13, 14).

1. "Watch." (All of these verbs are in the present, continuous tense.)

What does it mean to watch? It describes a sentry on guard. Only here, the Christian is on guard for himself first.

This means prayer (Col. 4:2). It means a refusal to be lulled to sleep by the world (1 Th. 5:6). It means that you are on the lookout for any and everything that the devil might do (1 Pet. 5:8).

2. "Stand fast in the faith." "The faith" in the epistles has reference to the great doctrines of Scripture with special emphasis upon the Gospel. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:1.

The Gospel is not to be called in question. Its authority is to be a settled, established fact with every child of God!

How often this has come before us recently!

3. "Quit you like men."

This does not mean to quit. It is a now archaic expression which means to acquit yourself, to conduct yourself. It is opposed to a coward, or to what you might expect from women and children. Paul is calling for every believer, men, women, and children, to be courageous for the sake of the Gospel.

4. "Be strong." #3 and #4 are lifted right out of the OT. Cf. 1 Sam. 4:9; 2 Sam. 10:12. They were to be constantly getting stronger and stronger—the result of #1-#3.

Then, with a real contrast,

5. "Let all your things be done with love."

You see a Christian has two sides. He is to be strong, unswerving in his attitude toward the Word of God, always on the alert for the enemy—AND YET HE MUST ALSO BE A PERSON WHO IS CHARACTERIZED BY THE LOVE OF GOD, AND ALL OF THE TENDERNESS WHICH GOES WITH IT.

This is where the Corinthians were in great need, as seen by their divisions, and by their pride over spiritual gifts.

How about us? There is no limit to what God would do if we could just take vv. 13, 14 and live them!

Finally

B. One thing they needed to remember (v. 22).

Love for the Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest distinguishing characteristic of a child of God.

Without this—only Anathema (a transliterated word). Nothing but separation from God, final and eternal, awaits such a person.

How do we know?

Maran (Aramaic for the Lord) Atha (an Aramaic perfect verb meaning, has come). They are two words, not one.

Grammarians have tried and tried to make this a future, and it could be: a prophetic future—the perfect is sometimes used in this way. But probably what Paul is trying to tell us is found in the words of John in 1 John 5:20,

"And we know that the Son of God is come (Maran-atha), and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

IF YOU KNOW THIS, THEN YOU KNOW THAT THERE IS NO HOPE FOR ANYONE OUT OF CHRIST.

Concl: This is the first time I have ever preached right through 1 Corinthians. I could turn around and start all over again. But I won't. I am going to start 2 Corinthians next Sunday.

But let me say this in closing: NO BOOK OF THE BIBLE IS MORE NECESSARY FOR THE VERY PROBLEMS WE FACE TODAY. AND THERE CAN BE NO OTHER SOLUTION THAT THAT WHICH WE HAVE HEAR\*\*STANDING FIRMLY ON THE WORD OF GOD, UNQUESTIONED DEVOTION FOR THE SON OF GOD, AND A TENDERNESS FOR PEOPLE EVERYWHERE—FOR THOSE WHO KNOW HIM, AND THOSE WHO DO NOT!

May the Lord make these truths living in all of our hearts.