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1 Corinthians 1:1-9



1 Corinthians - Steve Gregg

In this commentary on 1 Corinthians 1:1-9, Steve Gregg explores various themes present in the text. The letter written by Paul to the Corinthian church deals with several problems faced by the church, including divisions, immorality, litigation, and chaotic behavior during worship. The central message of the text is the obligation to love one another, and Paul emphasizes the importance of love and consideration for others when making decisions regarding Christian liberty. The relevance of the letter to modern-day Christians may require a deeper understanding of the cultural and historical context in which it was written.

Transcript

1 Corinthians 1-9 Paul mentions it as a previous epistle he had written before this one. He mentions it in 1 Corinthians 5 and verse 9. He says, I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. And then in verse 11 he says, but now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother who is a fornicator.

Now, he makes a distinction between what he wrote to them before in a previous epistle and what he's now writing to them. And that certainly indicates that this was not his first epistle to them, although whatever epistle he may have written before this one is not available to us. It has not survived.

It may have been very short, or there are some scholars who have felt that that earlier epistle might survive in the form of some of the chapters at the end of 2 Corinthians. I do not share this theory. You know, scholars come up with all kinds of ingenious theories that, to my mind, have absolutely no solid basis.

In fact, they're always looking for some ingenious new way of seeing things that no one's seen before. And some have tried to say that there's some chapters near the end of 2 Corinthians that might not have been originally part of 2 Corinthians, but might be something which somehow in the handling of these letters through the centuries attached the earlier lost letter of Paul to the Corinthians to it. There's certainly nothing to

compel us to that view, and we will not assume that to be correct.

We will assume that the first epistle of which he speaks in chapter 5, verse 9, is now lost. It's also possible that there was a third epistle that has been lost, because in 2 Corinthians he refers also to an epistle, an earlier epistle, which he says was written in sorrow and in grief, and it's not certain which epistle he may mean by that. Now, we're talking about some lines in 2 Corinthians chapter 7, and in 2 Corinthians chapter 2 we won't look there now because that's not the epistle we're studying at the moment.

But he does refer in 2 Corinthians, in the epistle we call by that name, to a letter that he wrote that was a sorrowful epistle where he required some church discipline to be conducted. The church had faithfully done it, and he was now writing to commend them for that. It is uncertain whether that epistle, that sorrowful epistle that Paul refers to in 2 Corinthians, whether he's referring back to this epistle that we call 1 Corinthians, as some people would think, or whether he's actually referring to yet another lost epistle that he had written to these people, which may have been written between the writing of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians.

On this view, and it is widely held among scholars, there were actually four Corinthian epistles, and we only possess the second and the fourth of them. The first being written before 1 Corinthians is lost, and the third, which was written between 1 and 2 Corinthians, would also be lost by this view. When 2 Corinthians is studied, there will be occasion perhaps to talk about the merits of that theory, not that it is of great importance.

Just to say that this is not the first time Paul has written to the Corinthians, it is at least a second epistle to them by his own statements, he says so. Now Corinth was a city in Achaia. Achaia was the southern part of Greece.

The Grecian peninsula was divided into a northern and a southern district or province. The northern province was called Macedonia, and the southern part of the peninsula, that part which jutted down into the Mediterranean Sea, was called Achaia. There was a point in this southern part of the peninsula where there was a very thin isthmus where ships would sometimes be portaged across a short land gap between two bodies of water.

This gap was about three and a half miles wide, and sometimes it was considered to be easier just to lift the ships out of the water and carry them for three and a half miles than to sail around the tip of southern Greece. Corinth was situated in a location where these ships came to cross this isthmus. Therefore it was a port city, it was a prosperous city, it had been wiped out about 150 years before Christ by the Romans, but about a century later, I think it was around 46 BC, Julius Caesar had rebuilt the city and it was now the center of Roman government in Achaia, the Grecian province of Achaia.

Now, even though it was the center of government, of the Roman province there, it was not at all a city that was well respected by the Roman world. The Corinthians were known not only to be prosperous but also very corrupt sexually in particular. The expression, to play the Corinthian, was a typical expression in the Roman world for a person engaging in the lowest and basest of sexual conduct.

Such a person was said to be playing the Corinthian. In the Roman plays of the period, in the Greek plays of the period, whenever Corinthians, that is citizens of this city, were depicted in the stories, they were always depicted as drunkards and licentious womanizers and so forth. One of the reasons for this is because in Corinth there was a temple to Aphrodite, the goddess of love.

Interestingly, maybe not significant to this point, but Paul wrote what we call the love chapter to these people about what love is and what love is not. In 1 Corinthians 13, he wrote this to the church that was stationed in the city where the goddess of love had her temple. The temple of Aphrodite actually was staffed by 1,000 slave prostitute priestesses.

This is known from what history records, if not in dispute. There were 1,000 temple prostitutes at the temple of Aphrodite and of course sexual fornication was one of the ways in which this goddess was worshipped at that temple. To us it seems maybe astonishing, though maybe not so much so as our own culture becomes more corrupt, but certainly it still seems a bit astonishing, even as bad as we have become, to think that there would be open prostitution at a temple and that sexual immorality would be regarded as part of a worship of a deity culturally.

Now some individuals might feel that way in our culture, I don't know, I guess I wouldn't be too surprised. All kinds of bizarre and kinky things are done by individuals. But our society at large has not yet come to the place where most people would view sexual immorality as a form of worship that is to be condoned and as a good thing.

This, however, was the case in Corinth, which is perhaps one of the reasons why fornication ran so unchecked through the culture and it was a problem in the church as well, as we find reading the Corinthian epistles. And I guess not too surprisingly so, we have in our own modern church in this country problems with fornication. And I guess the more corrupt our society becomes, the greater the temptations in this area become.

If we could imagine ourselves living in Corinth at a time where fornication had no stigma attached to it, no negative implications about it, one could see particularly how much greater the temptation would be or the propensity to fall into that kind of behavior, even after what person was a Christian, if they were to fall into sin of any kind, fornication would be one of the ones that would be particularly appealing and looked favorably upon in the culture. Well, Paul visited this city on his second missionary journey, probably around 51 or 52 AD, in all likelihood. And he came there from Athens.

He had evangelized in Macedonia, he'd been in Philippi and Thessalonica and Berea. And he'd come down and he'd been in Athens, we read of that, of course, in Acts 17, where he spoke to the philosophers on Mars Hill. He didn't have great success in Athens.

A few people did believe, but one gets the impression reading Acts 17 that it was sort of a letdown, in such a great cultural center as Athens, that there was not a major work established for the gospel there. But Paul went from there to Corinth. This is recorded in the 18th chapter of Acts.

We're told that Paul, when he came to Corinth, met a couple of Jewish people, an American couple, Priscilla and Aquila. And they were Jews who had been banished from Rome, they had recently come from Italy to Greece, and had taken up lodging in Corinth. Why they had chosen that city, we do not know, maybe they had relatives there.

We do not even know whether they were Christians at the time Paul met them, though it seems to me likely they were. Though maybe it isn't, you could argue it either way. Paul stayed with them, we're told in Acts.

He took up lodging with them, but it doesn't say he took up lodging with them because they were believers. But because they were tent makers, as he was, and he apparently either got a job with them or went into a temporary partnership or something, so that he could support himself in the ministry while in that town, where he remained for 18 months. Paul ministered for 18 months in Corinth, according to Acts 18.

And, you know, to tell you the truth, it's not clear at all whether Priscilla and Aquila were Christians when Paul met them. They certainly were by the time he left. The Bible does not record their conversion, it only records that Paul took up lodging with them and worked with them.

And I guess one could argue if they were already Christians before Paul met them, then why had they not done some evangelism in that city? I mean, it would seem like they had gotten there before him. On the other hand, if they had been Christian Jews from Rome, had recently come there, they might not have had an opportunity to do very much work and may not have had evangelistic gifts like Paul did. They may have just been Christians displaced to that area recently and may have been excited to see an evangelist apostle come to town and to welcome him into their home.

We can only conjecture about this, and I guess it's fruitless to do so, because it makes little difference. We know that at least in the time that Paul spent in Corinth, he was living with Christians, Priscilla and Aquila, for some of that time. He spoke in the synagogue first, and then was rejected there, as typically happened in most of the places he went.

And then he continued to work out of the home of someone named Justice. And as I say,

continued there about 18 months. After that, he went to Jerusalem for a brief visit to deliver some money there, and then he made a third missionary journey, which took him to Ephesus.

And in Ephesus, he remained for the better part of three years. And it was during that time in Ephesus that he wrote this epistle, at least so it would appear. In all likelihood, 1 Corinthians was written at about the year 55 AD.

Paul's stay in Ephesus would include that year, and it was probably near the end of his stay in Ephesus that he wrote this, because he mentions in chapter 16 that he only intends to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost. This is 1 Corinthians 16.8. But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. It suggests that he was at Ephesus and intended to remain there until the spring.

Or summer, excuse me. Pentecost falls in the summer. Some have felt that Paul's lengthy discussion of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 would make the letter particularly appropriate at Easter time, and that he may have written it about sometime in the spring, around Easter time, with its emphasis on the resurrection, and that he said, of course, that he'd be staying until summer and then coming to Corinth.

I personally don't see much merit in the assumption that 1 Corinthians 15 was written because he was writing at Easter time. It seems to me he wrote it because there was a problem in Corinth that had to be addressed, and that could be at any time of the year. If people are denying that there's a resurrection, it doesn't have to be Easter to warrant a lengthy treatise on that subject.

As far as the structure of the book of 1 Corinthians, there is evidence that Paul may have written 1 Corinthians in two installments. He says in verse 11 of chapter 1 that he had received a report from people of Chloe's household. Some people from the household, possibly a house church that met at Chloe's, had communicated with him, either by letter or in person, and had told him there were divisions in the church.

And so he wrote to them a response to this, and that response is found in the first four chapters of 1 Corinthians. There is some reason to believe that that was going to be the whole of his epistle, that the first four chapters were written, and he considered that his epistle to the Corinthians on this occasion, but that before it got sent off, he received other messengers. They are mentioned by name in chapter 16.

In verse 17, he says, I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus. And so apparently these three men came to him, possibly after he was about ready to send off the first four chapters, which four chapters he had written in response to Chloe's report. And that these people apparently brought further news about what was going on in the church, because Paul heard some alarming things, and in chapter 5, verse 1, he says it is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you.

And so he addresses that in chapter 5, and in chapter 6, he also is astonished to find that some of the Corinthians were taking each other to court, and suing each other. And so he addresses that. It is not certain, of course it is possible, that in chapters 5 and 6, with the references to fornication and litigation, that those may reflect information he also got from Chloe's household.

However, those things are so severe, such important things, that it hardly seems that he would give four chapters of discussion to the mere problem of divisiveness, which is a big problem, but I mean, with fornication in the church, and people taking each other to court, it seems as if he would hardly be able to contain himself talking about something nearly as generic as unity, for four chapters, and then, when he had this on his mind. Many feel that chapter 5 begins a further response to new information that he had received after writing the first four chapters. Along with the information about fornication in the church and litigation in the church, there apparently was delivered to Paul, perhaps by these same men, Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Machiachus, a letter from the Corinthian Christians, the leaders in the church perhaps, unable to answer some of the questions that they were being asked, or settle some of the disputes that were happening in the church, had sent Paul a letter hoping for his authoritative answer on some matters.

We see, for example, in chapter 7, verse 1, Paul says, Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me, so he's obviously responding to some letter that he has now received from them. And from this point on, he frequently says, Now concerning, Now concerning, Now concerning. He says it in chapter 7, verse 1, he says it again in chapter 8, verse 1, Now concerning the things offered to idols, and in chapter 12, verse 1, Now concerning spiritual gifts, Now concerning this, Now concerning that.

Apparently, from chapter 7 on, Paul is responding to a letter that was sent to him, and addressing those things about which they had asked. Therefore, we could possibly, tentatively at least, outline the book as follows. The first four chapters express Paul's concern about disunity in the church, and seem to be responding to a report that he received from those of Chloe's household.

Chapters 5 and 6 are also responding to a report of misconduct in the church that Paul has received, whether he received those reports from Chloe's household, or from this other group of Stephanonites, and Fortunatists, and Achaicus, who came to him apparently later. We don't know, but it seems that the latter is probable. So chapters 5 and 6 deal with issues of fornication and litigation in the church.

And then from chapter 7 on, we have Paul responding to things mentioned in the letter that was sent to him, probably carried by those same three men mentioned in chapter 16, verse 17. To put it in an easy way to remember, there were five problems in the church that Paul wished to address, and there were five questions that he wished to

answer. Five problems that he addressed, and five questions that he answered.

The five questions were apparently in their letter to him. So he deals with five problems first, for the most part first. Some of it's not exactly at the beginning.

The first problem in the Corinthian church was there were divisions, as he mentions in chapter 1, verse 11. And the specific nature of those divisions is expanded a little bit in chapter 1, verse 12. He says, now I say this, that each of you says, I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos, or I am of Cephas, or I am of Christ.

These people were dividing into camps behind teachers as they thought had the best insight into things, and dividing themselves as separate denominations, we could say, today. That was a bad thing, and Paul spent chapters 1 through 4 addressing it. The second problem in the church, as I mentioned, is fornication.

In chapter 5, he deals with that. Now, when we say fornication, we're talking about sexual immorality in generic terms, but the specific case was a case of shocking incest, and Paul shows his shock and astonishment about it in his response to it in chapter 5. The third problem the Corinthian church had, and that is taken up in chapter 6, was that Christians were taking other Christians to court. Christians taking Christians to court.

Paul thought this was unthinkable, and he tells why in chapter 6. Then, apparently, chapters 8 through 10 would indicate that there was some abuse of Christian liberty. Now, Paul was the apostle of Christian liberty, if anyone was. Paul was very much against legalism.

He was against trying to affix rules and regulations to the gospel as means of righteousness or means of salvation. He made it very clear, we're not saved by those things, we're saved by faith, by grace, and so forth. But, at the same time, Paul felt that the liberty we have is a liberty that is given to us to live a holy life, not to live a sinful life.

And it was certainly not a liberty that should be used flagrantly in such a way as might stumble or offend other people. In particular, the Corinthians, as part of their culture, just part of their normal way of life, before becoming Christians, had been frequent at certain public feasts in idol temples. There were many idolatrous temples.

I mean, the Temple of Aphrodite was only one prominent one. But, in almost all Greek and Roman cities, there were a lot of temples. And these temples were places, like the Jewish temple, where sacrifices were offered.

But they were offered to false gods, to idols. Or, as Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 20, they're offered to demons. But, the Greeks and the Romans had frequent public feasts there, because when the sacrifices were offered, some portion of the animal would be burned on the altar, and the other portion would be available to eat.

And so many sacrifices were offered, that there simply weren't enough priests to eat all the remnants. And so they would have public feasts, or in some cases sell the remnants of the meat, sacrificed to idols, in the meat market. So that there were many occasions of fellowship, as it were, around the table of idols.

There were times when people could go to these public feasts, and enjoy a good meal of meat that was left over from a sacrifice that had been offered to idols. Now, actually, prior to Paul's visit in Corinth, there had been a watershed decision of the Jerusalem Council, that Gentiles would not have to live under the strictures of the Jewish law. They would not have to be circumcised, and keep the Jewish law.

And we know about that from Acts 15. At that time, James had framed a letter, which had apparently been approved by everyone at the Council, including Paul and Barnabas. And in that letter he had said, listen, we're going to tell the Gentiles, they don't have to become Jews, they don't have to become proselytes and be circumcised and all that, but there are some things they should avoid.

And four things were mentioned. Meat sacrificed to idols was one of them. Things strangled, blood, and then fornication were the four things altogether that the Gentiles were told to avoid.

And these things were outlined in a letter, framed by James and the Jerusalem Council, and put into the hands, copied this letter, and put into the hands of Paul and Barnabas. With the instructions that Paul and Barnabas, in their Gentile missions, as they went out, would communicate these things to the Gentile Christians, that the Jerusalem Council had made these decrees. Now, Paul, apparently, was not heart and soul favorable toward these restrictions on the Gentiles.

It seems clear that Paul did not feel there to be anything particularly wrong with eating meat sacrificed to idols. He even says so in 1 Corinthians 8. And no doubt, although his obligation was to deliver this letter to the Gentile churches, including the Corinthians when he came there, because he visited Corinth in Acts 18, that's three chapters after the Jerusalem Council, so he would have been carrying these letters from the Jerusalem Council. Upon establishing the church there in Corinth, Paul would have been obliged to show them what the Jerusalem Council had dictated.

That they should avoid things strangled, and blood, and meat sacrificed to idols, and fornication. And Paul, apparently, faithfully taught this. However, in his private teaching, it would seem clear that he had also made it obvious that he didn't really feel all that strongly about some of those issues.

For example, things strangled, and blood, and things sacrificed to idols, all that had to do with eating. Now, Jesus had said, before Paul was even around, Jesus said, it's not what goes into a man's mouth that defiles him, it's what comes out of his mouth that defiles

him. The Apostle Paul understood this liberty probably better than almost anyone else.

He said in Colossians chapter 2 that you should let no one judge you concerning the things you eat or drink. In Colossians 2.16. And in Romans 14.17, he said the kingdom of God is not a matter of what you eat or drink. It's a matter of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Paul understood that if Gentiles ate meat sacrificed to idols, it was no big deal to God. Now, the reason that the Jerusalem Council had shown a concern about that is, as James put it, because Moses has those who have taught him in the synagogues in every city from earliest times. Which apparently means he wanted the Gentiles to abstain from some of these blatant pagan practices so that they would not offend the Jews who had been instructed from earliest times in Moses' way of thinking.

And the Jews would be offended by Christians, Gentiles or otherwise, eating meat sacrificed to idols and some of these other things. So, one can deduce from what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 8-11, or 8-10 I should say, that Paul in his presence among them had been obliged to communicate to them what the Jerusalem Council had said. Namely that Gentiles should abstain from these things.

However, he no doubt voiced his own private sentiments that all things really are lawful. That God is not going to judge you on the basis of what you eat and what you drink. That this is a Jewish idea and not at all a Christian one in itself.

Now, the reason I deduce that Paul said all those things is because after Paul left, a number of people seemed to misunderstand him. They apparently adopted as a slogan, all things are lawful to me. And as you know from reading 1 Corinthians, this expression is used several times.

Most commentators have the idea, they could be right and they could be wrong, but it hardly makes an awful lot of difference. But they feel that when Paul says all things are lawful to me, which he says about four or more times in 1 Corinthians, that he's actually quoting what some of the Corinthian Christians were themselves saying. And he's quoting it in order to add an amendment to it, something to balance it a little bit.

That when he says all things are lawful to me, many translations would quotations around that statement. As if Paul is quoting what he knows some of the Corinthian Christians to be saying. So that they are saying, all things are lawful to me, based on what Paul had taught.

Paul had taught that all things are lawful, no doubt. But then Paul has to balance that out and he says, yes but not all things are expedient, not all things edify, I will not be brought into bondage to any. These are some of the tags that Paul adds to that general motto.

All things are lawful to me, but not all things edify. All things are lawful to me, but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful to me, but I will not be brought under the bondage to anything." This is how Paul argues in this epistle.

Now, it seems that the Corinthians, by allowing themselves to eat meat, sacrifice, idols and things, felt that they were really following the spirit of Paul himself, and Paul had to correct them about that and said, yes, it's true, eating meat, sacrifice, idols is not a spiritual matter in itself. He says in chapter 8, we know that an idol is nothing at all, meat, sacrifice, idols is just no different than any other meat, there's no boogeyman there, you're not going to get demon possessed by eating this meat just because it was sacrificed in an idol temple, it's just a piece of meat, and that's all it is. However, he says, not everyone feels that way about it.

There are a number of people, he says, who feel that eating meat, sacrifice, idols is bad and it stumbles them badly when they see you do it. Therefore, although eating meat is not a moral issue, love is a moral issue, and to stumble your brother is not a loving thing to do. And therefore, Paul argues for three chapters, that although we have liberty in some of these areas, love would compel us to restrict our own liberty in certain matters in order to avoid giving other people problems.

These problems that he anticipates some might have would be, A, people just getting bent out of shape about it, people thinking you shouldn't do those kinds of things as a Christian, and judging you and being, you know, just having their own spirit polluted by their inability to process your liberty. But another problem it could raise, as he points out in chapter 10, is that if somebody, see there are some people who when they eat, eat sacrifice, idols, it becomes in their own thinking an occasion of devotion to the idol. Remember, these people were raised in a culture where they ate in idol temples all the time, and they did so as an act of worship.

It would be as if we decided that the Catholic mass was an abomination to God, and that the host and the cup and so forth that were offered in the mass were an idolatrous abomination. And then, we decide to have a feast and take communion ourselves, and some Catholic church donated a bunch of wafers, you know, a bunch of hosts for us, and some people say, we can't eat these, these are the hosts of the mass, this is an abomination, you know. And other people say, I don't know, maybe this is as good as any other crackers, why not, you know.

And there would be some who could eat them and feel none the worse for it, it wouldn't be a problem. And others, if they said, well, he can do it, I think I can try it too, perhaps if they were raised Catholic and they were so accustomed to it, the very eating of it to them would bring back the whole sentiment of the idolatrousness that it represented to them in their earlier life. And they could not eat those things without having this spiritual response to it, without it being a sort of a communion with this pagan spirit.

And Paul said, listen, you may be able to eat meat sacrificed to idols without it meaning a thing to you, it may just be a piece of meat to you, and that's all it has to be because that's all it is to God, but some people don't have that liberty in their spirit. Some people, if they would join you in that feast, to them they could not divorce that act of eating the meat with the former sentiments of devotion to the idol. And here's the thing, some Christians maybe can eat such things and other Christians should not because of the lack of liberty they have in that area.

But those who do not have that liberty might be encouraged by your example to do what you do. Where you may be strong enough to do it, they may not be. But if because they see you doing it, they say, well if he can do it, I can do it, they may be led into that which is for them sin, even though it may not be sin for you in itself, for them it may be sin and they may, by following your example, be led into it.

A friend of mine in Santa Cruz is very strong against all use of alcohol by Christians and we discuss it almost every time we're down there, because I'm not that strong against it, although I don't drink alcohol myself, I don't see any biblical reason to be strongly against the use of all alcohol. But he brings up this point quite frequently and it's a valid point, you know, that, okay suppose you can go out and have a beer with your people and it doesn't affect you and you stop after one or whatever, but someone else who has a problem in drinking, they go out and they see you doing that and they say, well if Steve can drink it, then I can drink it certainly, but maybe they can't, as a matter of fact. Maybe their drinking of it would be something that would stumble them, something they would feel guilty about or even something that would lead them into drinking in excess again.

It's obvious that not everything that some people can do can be safely done by others. It has to do with a weakness of conscience, it has to do with personal weakness of character, and Paul in 1 Corinthians 8-10 is talking about the need for Christians who do have the liberty to eat meat, sacrifice idols, to lay that aside, to not do it, for a number of reasons. One is because how it bends some people out of shape to see you do it because they don't have the liberty, and another is that they might even imitate you and do it and for them they can't handle it and it would be just more loving for you to restrict your liberty.

Now one can tell from reading 1 Corinthians 8-10 that there were some Corinthian Christians who were reveling in this liberty and even rubbing it in the faces of their more bound-up, their more legalistic brethren, and even to the point not just of eating meat, sacrifice idols, but of going into the actual feasts in the idolatrous temples. Paul addresses that and tells them that they shouldn't do that. So that's the fourth problem that Paul has to address in Corinth, outlining five problems in Corinth.

The fourth was that some were abusing their liberty, and Paul had to address that in

chapters 8-10. The fifth problem that Paul had to address was there was apparently chaos in the Corinthian worship. This took several forms.

One form that it took was women casting off the conventions of propriety of dress in the church service. In the particular case Paul addresses, it had to do with head coverings. The question of head coverings will occupy an entire lecture later on as we go through 1 Corinthians, and you'll find then, or actually you can know now because I can tell you, that I don't personally think that the head covering issue is something that is universally applicable to all cultures.

But certainly the problem of inappropriate dress can be, and particularly in that case, I believe the casting off of head coverings was more than a matter of immodesty on their part, but it was a matter of rejection of roles, rejection of their proper relationships, of male and female relationships, and we certainly have that problem today. Well that was one of the things that was disorderly about their worship, was women casting off their role and inappropriately dressing. Also in chapter 11 he addresses another problem of chaotic stuff going on in their worship, and that was at the communion table, which was apparently done at a feast.

It wasn't a symbolic gesture with just a few little tokens of food and wine, but actually at a feast, a love feast, they would take their communion meal, and there were some who were simply greedy and inconsiderate, and were taking more than their share, so much so that some food items were gone before everybody had gotten a chance to have some. And so some were going away hungry, and some were having far more than they should. That was a bit chaotic also.

And then there is a third problem of chaos in their worship, and that had to do with the way in which gifts were viewed and exercised in the church. Paul devoted a full three chapters to discussing that, chapters 12 through 14. And the impression is given from reading especially chapter 14, that the gift of tongues was a gift that was particularly attractive to the Corinthians.

It was a gift that they reveled in. It apparently had a high visibility in their services. And Paul had to give some instructions about how to employ the gift of tongues in a manner that is edifying for all, and not just a blessing to the person doing it.

And again, the idea is, throughout his discussion about this, is that love is what matters in the worship service. Love is all that matters. And in the midst of that discussion of the gift is 1 Corinthians 13, which is about love.

In fact, one of our previous teachers in 1 Corinthians, who used to teach it for us here at the school, every session he would begin by reading through 1 Corinthians 13, every Corinthian session, before he'd get to the material that was presently under consideration, he would read in its entirety 1 Corinthians 13. Which is not a bad idea, I

don't think I'm going to do that, but we should be aware of it. 1 Corinthians 13 is the central thought, not only of the book of 1 Corinthians, but of Christianity itself, and that is what love is.

And all of the problems that were happening in Corinth could have been resolved simply by an appeal to loving one another. And taking more than you're sure of the food of the communion meal, exercising gifts in such a way that just blesses you and no one else, and just dominates the service, taking each other to court, doing things that exercise your liberty, even though it offends or even hurts another person, all of these things are breaches of the basic Christian spirit, which is to love one another. And so the principal thought that Paul brings up in various places whenever he discusses these problems is the obligation that we are to love one another, and of course he has one whole chapter devoted to that, which is very famous and well known, and usually called the Love Chapter.

Now, those are the five problems that were in the church. Divisions, immorality, incest in particular, litigation, abuse of personal liberty, and the chaotic behavior at the worship time, at the corporate meeting. Now, in addition to those five problems that Paul addressed in this epistle, there are five matters of which they apparently inquired about.

One of them, the first one to be brought up, is in chapter 7, and that has to do with being married or being single. Very lengthy discussion in that chapter about the pros and cons of being single or being married. Apparently because Paul himself was single, and probably his traveling companions were also single, most of them, if not all, and also probably because Jesus himself was single, that gave strong reason for some people to believe that singleness was the most Christian state of life.

And Paul indicates that singleness is a desirable state of life, but he also is very realistic and says, but to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife and every woman have her own husband, and he indicates that being married is a gift also. He says that one man is given this gift and one another gift, meaning a gift of being single or a gift of being married in a particular context there. And so he discusses the pros and cons of being married or being single in 1 Corinthians 7. They apparently had asked about that.

A second thing they seem to have asked about has to do with meat sacrifice to idols, because we've talked about this already, but in chapter 8, verse 20, it says, "...now concerning things offered to idols." And it goes off on this discussion which ends up in addressing their problem of exercising their liberty in a too uncharitable manner. But it would appear they wanted to know about this. Some people were eating meat sacrifice to idols and doing so blatantly.

Is this good? Is this okay? Is this Christian? They wanted an answer from Paul, and he gives it in chapters 8 through 10. The question of women, their behavior in worship would apparently be something that they asked him about as well. The matter of head

coverings, because he seems to be instructing them not just of something he's heard about, but something they wanted a declaration from him about.

In chapter 11, verses 3 through 16. Also the question of spiritual gifts, which I already mentioned they were apparently out of order in their use of. It would seem that they wanted some teaching on that.

Chapter 12, verse 1, "...now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren." And he goes on for three chapters on that, chapters 12 through 14. And chapter 15, the only chapter we've not yet really spoken about, besides 16, is about the resurrection. And it would seem that this may also be something that was brought up in the letter that was sent to him.

They may have asked him some specific things about the resurrection. Because he says, for example, in 1 Corinthians 15, 35, that someone will say, "...how are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" Now, here he may be just anticipating what someone might ask, but since he's been answering questions asked in a letter prior to this, it seems very possible that these are the kinds of questions that people were asking in the letter about the resurrection. Now, the reason this would have to be addressed in a church is probably due to the fact that they were Greeks by culture, and Greek philosophy felt that physical matter was evil.

Death was viewed by the Greek philosophers as a welcomed release from physicalness. That the spirit of man, which is good, which is normally confined to a prison of flesh, is released at the time of death into his true spiritual liberty. However, they also felt that when they heard about the resurrection, that this was inappropriate.

Why would God raise the body, the wicked flesh, and re-entrap a spirit in it? The doctrine of the resurrection didn't settle well at all with the Athenians, as you know, because when Paul was preaching on Mars Hill, the people listened intently until he mentioned the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and then they wouldn't listen anymore. They laughed at him and mocked him. So they were Greeks.

The Corinthians were also Greeks, and apparently there were some in the church who were in fact saying that there was no resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15, 12, he says, "...now if Christ is preached that he has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" 1 Corinthians 15, 12. So some were apparently saying that very thing, that there is no resurrection of the dead, which Paul, of course, answers at some length in chapter 15.

So this is how the book is laid out. We will get into chapter 1 now. I don't know if there's anything else I need to say by way of introduction.

There are, by the way, there's a number of theories that have been put forward that I don't put much stock in. Attempts to read between the lines and try to discern what

various specific philosophical parties were playing upon the Corinthian church, especially when Paul says, some were saying, I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos, I'm of Sufis, I'm of Christ. Some would try to find out what exactly the theological distinctives were of each of these parties.

But I don't think there's enough information in Corinthians to tell us, and I'm not going to toy with that very much. Okay, in 1 Corinthians 1, the first nine verses are fairly a typical kind of opening to a letter such as Paul normally uses, and it gets down to the business at hand in verse 10. Let's look at those first nine verses, however.

Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes, our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, obviously, a lot of these three verses are common to what Paul would begin an epistle with, wishing for grace and peace and identifying himself and who his listeners are. One thing, though, that is perhaps a racist question is the reference to Sosthenes, our brother.

In most of Paul's epistles, it is Paul and Timotheus and Silas or Silvanus, some of the guys whose names are well-known to us. Sosthenes is not a well-known character, and yet he is mentioned with Paul in the opening of this letter, along with Paul, sending his greetings. Well, according to Acts 18 and verse 17, this man Sosthenes was apparently, before Paul came to town, the ruler of the synagogue in Corinth.

It says in Acts 18, 17, that all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat, but Galileo took no notice of these things. If you don't remember the surrounding events of this, this was when Galileo was first made procurator of Achaia. The Jews in Corinth tried to get Paul's preaching banished from the city by claiming that it was an illegal religion in the Roman Empire.

The Romans had this policy that when they would conquer a region, they would allow any existing religions to continue to exist, but they would not allow the founding of any new religions within their empire. So that Judaism, which existed before the Romans conquered Judea, was a legal religion, it was protected by Roman law, you could be a Jew. However, we know that Christianity arose after the Roman Empire had conquered that region, and therefore, if seen as a separate religion from Judaism, would have been technically an illegal religion, because it was new.

It was not there before the Romans came in. It arose in the time of the Roman occupation of Palestine, and as such, if Christianity were seen as a distinct religion in its own right, it would be seen as an illegal religion. Now, what the Jews in Corinth were trying to do was to try to convince the procurator recently come in from Rome, that Paul was preaching an illicit religion, a religion that was not legal in the Roman Empire, that

was new and novel.

However, the story goes that Galileo didn't see the novelty of it. He couldn't tell the difference between what Paul was preaching and what the Jews themselves believed, and the Jewish religion was permitted. He mistook Paul's preaching for a sect of Judaism, and therefore for a legal, protected religion.

It says in Acts 18.14, when Paul was about to open his mouth in his own defense, Galileo said to the Jews, if it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you. But if it's a question of words and names and your own law, look to it yourselves, for I do not want to be a judge over such matters, and he drove them from the judgment seat. It's after that that they beat Sosthenes before him, and he took no heed to it.

Reading between the lines, it's quite obvious that Galileo did not give them any satisfaction. He couldn't see this as anything other than an intramural dispute in Judaism. It's a matter of questions about your own law, you settle it within your own ranks.

This is a division in your own religious system. And it's really to the advantage of Paul and to Christianity at that time that Galileo did not see Christianity as something new and novel, because he would have outlawed it. But because this set a precedent for some time, at least until Jerusalem's temple was destroyed and it became evident that Judaism was gone, that Christianity was still surviving independently.

Until that time, Christianity was mistaken for a sect of Judaism, and that was to its advantage legally, although to its disadvantage theologically, because when the Gentiles were convinced by Judaizers that Christianity was in fact a sect of Judaism, that carried with it the assumption that you should be circumcised and all these things that Paul had to dispute. So, it had its advantages and disadvantages. This identity crisis Christianity had until 70 AD.

Is it Judaism or is it something else? Well, as far as the Romans were concerned, Paul's quite content to have them think it was Judaism, because that means it's protected by law instead of persecuted by law. The Jews were frustrated by Galileo's decision, and in order to get him to sit up and take notice of their complaint, they took their own ruler of the synagogue, Stasthenes. The synagogue was a Jewish, not Christian, organization.

And they beat him. The Jews beat their own ruler of their own synagogue before the Roman governor to try to shock him or get his attention or get him to take them more seriously, but he didn't care. He paid no notice of these things.

They just beat Stasthenes for nothing. But why did they beat him? Almost certainly, since the dispute was over Christianity, Stasthenes by this time had probably become a

Christian, which is why the Jews would take him, single him out, to beat him, to show that even though he was a ruler of a synagogue, he was not one of them. He was not a Jew as far as they were concerned.

He was one of these Christian heretics, and they were going to give a graphic demonstration to the Roman governor that there is no sameness here between Judaism and Christianity. Well, Stasthenes apparently found it good to leave Corinth after this. He was mistreated by his own countrymen, and it would appear, I mean, quite obviously, that Stasthenes was with Paul now in Ephesus when he wrote Corinthians, 1 Corinthians.

So, Paul sends greetings back to the Christians there from their own former synagogue ruler, now a Christian follower with Paul. Yeah, actually, it's interesting because Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, is also mentioned in 1 Corinthians as a baptized believer. Yeah, in Acts 18 and 8, it says, when Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household.

Apparently, Stasthenes also, now there could have been more than one synagogue in Corinth, or there could have been more than one superintendent of the synagogue. Crispus would be one of them. Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians, chapter 1, verse 14, his having baptized Crispus and Gaius in that city.

So, yeah, there were two rulers of the synagogue mentioned in Acts 18, whether they were both rulers of the same synagogue or whether the city of Corinth had enough Jews in it to have two synagogues. Either one is possible, but it's interesting that two synagogue rulers became Christians through Paul's preaching. It's remarkable in view of the fact that Paul did not generally have much success with Jewish people.

His greater success was usually with Gentiles, but notwithstanding the general lack of success Paul had with Jews, he did manage to convert two Jews who were rulers of the synagogue. Stasthenes then was with Paul at the time he wrote this, and he sends, along with himself, greetings from this man back home to the Christians there. Now, in verse 3 it says, "...to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." Now, the main thing about this verse that is distinctive is the meaning of, "...with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." Now, the reason I want to comment on that is because there are many things in 1 Corinthians, possibly more than any other epistle, there are things in 1 Corinthians that appear to be personal, that appear to be things that only the Corinthians would fully understand or need to apply directly.

I mean, he's talking about things that are going on at their worship services, the people getting drunk and other people going away hungry. Certainly not all churches have that problem, but the Corinthians did. The use of the gifts, or abuse of the gifts, was a thing distinctive to that congregation.

The incest that was tolerated there, and the Christians taking each other to court, these things were specific instructions, not to all Christians at large, although we can apply the principles wherever the problem arises, in any church. If there's people going to court against each other in the church, any church, we can go back to 1 Corinthians 6 and say, we'll see here's what Paul said to the Corinthians about it, we should apply the same principle to us. Nonetheless, it's quite obvious the letter was very personal and directed to a particular congregation.

This is particularly evident, for instance, when you read 1 Corinthians 11 about the head covering issue, and what's evident there about it is that we can't understand everything about what Paul is saying. There's too many allusions to things that they understood that we don't. He never explains exactly what he means by head covering, it is assumed his readers knew from their own culture.

He says that a woman ought to have authority on her head because of the angels, he doesn't give any explanation for that, though it's a very perplexing statement in 1 Corinthians 11. 10. Presumably, his teaching among them for 18 months before this time had covered that ground so that he didn't have to teach it more explicitly when he alluded to it in his letter.

There are many things in 1 Corinthians that strike us as allusions to things that the Corinthians themselves would already understand, but others might not. In 1 Corinthians 15, for example, Paul talks about those who are baptized with reference to the dead. Very questionable as to what the meaning of that statement is.

We'll discuss it, of course, in due time, but it seems clear that Paul's readers knew what he was referring to. Now, these characteristics of the letter make it clear that Paul was writing first of all to the Corinthians, and that's an important point for us to realize, not only about Corinthians but other epistles as well. The use of epistles by modern-day Christians is governed by the fact that we realize that the first application of everything Paul said is to his original readers.

Only by extension is the application made to any other Christians other than the original readers. We are, when we read 1 Corinthians or any other book, reading somebody else's mail, or as somebody put it, it's like listening to one end of a conversation on telephone just trying to guess what the part of you can't hear is saying by what is being said by the part of you can hear. There's a relationship already existing between Paul and his readers in most cases.

They have heard him preach, in this case, for 18 months in their midst. They knew his teaching. He probably thoroughly acquainted them with his doctrine and his beliefs.

Therefore, he only needed to allude to certain things briefly here, as he did also in Thessalonians. We know when we say 1 and 2 Thessalonians, there were allusions to

things that he said, remember when I was with you I taught you about these things? And so he says, we know what it is that hinders the man of sin from rising, but we don't. That's just the point.

He does, and his readers do, but we don't. He says, you know what it is. I told you about this when I was with you.

And that's the kind of thing that we have to take into account in trying to understand the epistles. There are things that were not written for our eyes. They were written for their eyes.

Now, that doesn't mean we get no value from them. We do. As I said, whenever there is a parallel kind of situation where these principles would apply to our own case, obviously they apply to us as much as to others, although sometimes through a different cultural expression, but still the principles remain true and applicable.

But the point I'd like to make is that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians without necessarily knowing that we would be reading it. And therefore, he didn't clarify things that are unclear to us by anticipating, oh, well, these Americans are going to be reading it 2,000 years from now. They won't understand this concept, so I'll explain it here.

He had his readers in line. He knew who they were. He knew what their culture and what their frame of reference was.

He knew what he'd already told them and how much they already shared a common knowledge with him. And he wrote to them as if they knew certain things. And the reason I bring that up at this point, where we're talking about verse 2, is because he addresses the letter to the Corinthians, that is, the church of God, which is at Corinth, called to be saints, with all who in every place call the name of Jesus Christ their Lord.

Some would say, no, see, Paul wasn't just thinking of the Corinthians when he wrote this. He was writing this to all in every place, not only the church in Corinth, but Christians everywhere, at all times, in all places. Nonetheless, I do not think this is how, I don't think that's correctly understanding this phrase.

I think the reference to those who in every place call the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is not saying that these are also the ones I'm saying this letter to, but these also, like the Corinthians, are called to be saints. Not only are the Corinthians called to be saints, but they are called to be saints along with everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, this statement, this universalist statement about everyone who calls on the name of Jesus, wherever they may be, is not a reference to who the letter is addressed to.

It is a reference to what he has last said about the Corinthians, that they were sanctified and called to be saints along with all other Christians. All Christians are called to be

saints. Now, I emphasize that because it does matter when you get to certain passages about, for example, maybe even in discussions about how tongues would be used in the church and so forth, it can be relevant to remember that Paul had a particular church with a particular problem in mind and might have written some things a little differently had that church had different circumstances.

And therefore, there may be some things that do not apply directly across the board to all churches as they did to the Corinthian church. We have to think if they do apply in what way. I'm thinking particularly of the head covering instruction because it seems to me that the instructions about head covering are reflective of the culture, the local culture and expectations of the people of the pagans around them as well as the Christians around them.

And yet those expectations are somewhat different in our culture. There is some relevant principle there and our task is to decide how that principle, which applied in that way to the Corinthians, how that same principle applies to us living at this time and in this place, our culture being what it is. So, I'm not trying to rob Corinthians of relevance to the modern church.

I'm saying that its relevance is not quite as accessible as just to say, well, it's fair, women should wear head coverings, so I want everyone to come in here in head coverings tomorrow. Because it's a little more complex than that. It's a little bit more like saying, okay, this church existing in this place at that time had this problem and Paul gave them these instructions about that problem.

Now, we don't have quite that same problem, not identical at least, maybe something similar though. We might have something analogous to that, in which case those principles will certainly have to be applied also here. But how? What is the analogy in our own culture of what Paul intended? What is the transferable truth that transfers from what he said to them in their time and place and applies truly to our own? That is going to be something we have to deal with a number of times in 1 Corinthians.

Let's look at verse 4. I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you by Christ Jesus that you were enriched in everything by him in all utterance and all knowledge even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you so that you come short in no gift eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ who will also confirm you to the end that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of his son Jesus Christ our Lord. Okay, now at one level this is just another one of Paul's I thank God for you passages which he does at the beginning of many of his epistles.

In fact, most of the churches he writes to right at the beginning after his initial opening he says something about how he thanks God for them when he prays for them. Sometimes he even gives them a sampling of the kind of prayers he prays for them. But

almost always he thanks God for them.

One notable exception stands out and that is which epistle? Do you remember? Galatians actually. Galatians is the one epistle where instead of saying I thank God for you at the same place you'd expect him to say it he says I marvel that you have so quickly turned away from the gospel. It's the only church apparently that Paul did not feel he could thank God for what was happening there which is an interesting consideration in view of the fact that he thanked God for Corinth even though they had horrendous things going on there.

People getting drunk at communion, a guy involved in illicit incestuous relations with his father's wife, things that Paul was appalled by and yet he found something to thank God for in the church and he tells us what it is here. And yet the Galatians who as far as we know were not committing immorality, were not getting drunk but all they were doing was getting legalistic. He couldn't bring himself to thank God for their situation which is really interesting to me.

Anyway he says I thank God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus. Now the grace of God that was given to you. We talked about grace not too long ago as having to do with more things than just forgiveness.

Grace is more than just God's mercy given to us and his pardon and his favor, his unmerited favor. It is that. It is certainly first chronologically in our life it is that.

We cannot have any grace from God until we have received that grace of forgiveness of sins, of acceptance in the blood and so forth. I've also mentioned in some of our other discussions I think in Romans it came up, Romans chapter 5 and there's many places in the Bible it actually comes up that grace is more than just forgiveness. Grace is more than just favor.

Grace is God's bestowal of all of himself, all of his riches to us at Christ's expense so that grace is sometimes described by the acrostic God's riches at Christ's expense which of course if you take the first letter of each of those words that spells grace. God's riches at Christ's expense. Certainly that's what Paul is talking about here when he says the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus because he expands on it.

He's not just talking about the fact that they got saved. He's talking about the manifestations of the operation of grace in their church which takes the form of giftedness. He says in unpacking that idea of grace that was given to him in verse 5 that you were enriched, God's riches at Christ's expense.

You were enriched in everything by him in all utterance and all knowledge. Certainly that is not any different in content of meaning than verse 7 where he says that you come short in no gift eagerly waiting the revelation of Jesus Christ the Lord. They are enriched,

they come short in no gift.

He's talking about their giftedness and in particular he mentions utterance and knowledge in verse 5 which are also later referred to in his list of the gifts of the Spirit in chapter 12. We talked about when one is given the gift of the word of knowledge and other various utterances. Now here Paul is thanking God for the fact that these people are gifted in spiritual gifts.

These gifts are a manifestation of the grace of God that's been given them, of the richness of grace. I've told you before but I'll mention it now again that the word gift in the Greek is charisma, hence the modern word charismatic to refer to people who are into or believe in the gift of the Spirit. Charisma comes from another Greek word charis which is the Greek word for grace.

Charis is grace, charisma is a gift of grace. Now Paul elsewhere speaks of the gifts of the Spirit as in fact manifestations of grace in our lives. In Romans chapter 12 verse 6, Romans 12, 6 Paul says, "...having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us." Our gifts differ from one another's gifts according to the difference of grace that's manifested in our lives.

If you look at 1 Peter chapter 4, the gifts of the Spirit are also associated with the manifestation of grace. In 1 Peter chapter 4 verses 10 and 11 he says, "...as each one has received a charisma, a gift, minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." That is a good steward of the gift that you've received. You have a gift, use it properly as a good steward.

But that gift is the manifold grace of God at work in you. The giftedness is a gift of grace. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are from the Spirit of grace.

That's 1 Peter 4, 10 and 11. Look a little further on in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, or even before that, a couple places 1 Corinthians can illustrate this. 1 Corinthians 3 and verse 10.

In 1 Corinthians 3 the end of verse 9 says, "...you are God's building." The church is God's building under construction. And using that metaphor Paul says in verse 10, "...according to the grace of God which was given to me as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation." That is of the church, of the building of God. He's talking about his evangelism in that city, his planting the church there.

He says he did this as a wise master builder. Now it might not seem very humble to call yourself a wise master builder. And so he makes it very plain.

I have done this as a wise master builder according to the grace that was given to me. This wisdom I exhibited in planting the church wisely is actually a manifestation of a gifting of grace. It's the grace that is given to me that enabled me to do this.

Look at 1 Corinthians 15. 1 Corinthians 15 verses 9 and 10. He says, "...for I am the least of the apostles, whom not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all." Meaning the other apostles. "...yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." He labored more than the other apostles, he says. That doesn't sound like a very humble statement, but he clarifies.

But it wasn't me, really. It was not I, but it was the grace of God that was with me. It was a gifting.

That is a grace that is given to me. Now, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are one way in which the grace of God is manifest, is enabling grace. Our endurance of suffering with a gracious spirit is another manifestation of grace.

Grace that enables us. In particular, though, when Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1-4, I thank God always concerning you for the grace of God that is given to you by Christ Jesus, he unfolds his meaning in the following verses by referring to the gifts, the richness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that have been bestowed upon them. That you were enriched in everything by him, in all utterance and all knowledge, and again in verse 7, so that you come short in no gift.

Now, verse 6, of course, falls between those two verses. After he says you are enriched in everything by him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you. Now, this rendering is perhaps unfortunate, that the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you.

Now, there's nothing heretical about it the way it stands. In you, the testimony of Christ is confirmed. We know that is true because the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are the sons of God, the Bible says.

And everyone that believes the testimony of God has the witness in himself, it says in 1 John. This inward confirmation is a biblical concept, though the question is whether Paul is really speaking about that here. I think not, in this case.

Because, well, he could be, but I mean, if what he is saying is that the testimony of the gospel was confirmed in your heart by the Holy Spirit, and that same Holy Spirit is manifested through these gifts of utterance and knowledge, that could possibly be his meaning. However, the word in, in verse 6, is a word that frequently means among, and corporately. And it could be saying that you have abounded in the riches of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed among you.

It was confirmed initially when Paul came by the same kinds of gifts operating in him. They had seen the confirmation of the gospel originally by Paul working signs and

wonders among them. Not in them, but among them.

And the testimony of Christ was confirmed among them by the same kind of phenomena that they now find themselves gifted in. But the gifts that, that sort of confirmed the gospel to them were Paul's gifts. The gifts of the Spirit resident in Paul, the signs and wonders he performed.

To confirm this probability of interpretation, I turn your attention to 2 Corinthians 12. In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul is reminding them of his having come to them originally and preached to them, and of the confirming evidences of the gospel that came along with his ministry when he preached in Corinth. 2 Corinthians 12 says, Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

Now he's reminding them of the gospel he preached when he was with them. When I preached to you, my preaching was accompanied with signs of my apostleship. Those signs were signs and wonders and mighty deeds as well as much perseverance on his part.

So we know that when Paul came to Corinth, although it doesn't say so in Acts, he tells us so in the letters that he wrote to the Corinthians that he brought with him not only the gospel but confirmatory signs that functioned as a part of his gifting in the Holy Spirit as an apostle. Signs of an apostle. Notice 1 Corinthians chapter 2. 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verses 1 through 4, he says, And I brethren, when I came to you, he's reminding them again of his first visit there when he had planted the church.

When I came to you, I did not come with excellence of speech or wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God, for I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I was with you in weakness and fear and much trembling, and my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Now he said when he was with them, he had not relied on convincing arguments to win them over, but on demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit, which of course would be the signs and wonders to which he alluded in 2 Corinthians 12, where he spoke about the signs of his apostleship.

Now, all that being so, and his even mentioning it, both in 1 and 2 Corinthians, to remind them that when he was with them, he didn't just give them words, he didn't just give them arguments, he gave them demonstration of the power of God to confirm his words. That would seem to weigh heavily in favor of interpreting chapter 1 verse 6, where he says that the testimony of Christ was confirmed among you, meaning by the same spiritual power that you are now finding yourself gifted with yourself. You yourselves are now gifted in these very things that you saw me doing when the gospel was first confirmed in your presence by the work of the Holy Spirit through my own gifts, he says.

So that, verse 7, you come short in no gifts, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, this certainly has the sound of saying that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are to be around until Jesus comes back. He said that the church of Corinth lacks no gift, and will lack no gift, while they are waiting for the coming of the Lord.

Now, there are some who do not believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are for today, and this is one of the verses that would seem to disprove their thesis. Their thesis is that, really, when the New Testament was completed, and the last of the era of miracles, the era of the gifts of the Spirit, ended, that now that we have a completed New Testament, we no longer need to have supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit, because those were needed, they say, back in the days before there was a New Testament. While it was still being written, people needed prophetic gifts, they needed tongues and interpretation, they needed revelatory words of wisdom and words of knowledge and discernment and so forth, because they didn't have the Scriptures, which we now have, to speak authoritatively and finally on these things.

Now, it's an ingenious suggestion, but it doesn't really have much to its credit. There is no place in the Bible that says the gifts were going to cease when the apostles died, or when the New Testament was complete, and this verse itself would appear to teach the opposite, that essentially the gifts are to be accessible to the church, and to be possessed by the church as long as the church is still waiting for the revelation of Jesus Christ. Now, those who say the gifts are not for today also know this verse is here, and some of them have said, well, you need to understand what he means by the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, because the word revelation here in the Greek is *apokalipsis*, or *apocalypse*, which means the unveiling.

Interestingly, that is also the name of the last book of our New Testament, the *apokalipsis* in the Greek, we call it the revelation of Jesus Christ, or some would say the revelation of St. John the Divine, but the literal title of the last book in the Bible is the *apocalypse*, or the *apokalipsis*, the revelation, and that is the word that's used here, and I've actually had some people tell me that they believe that what Paul was saying here is that the gifts of the Spirit will be around until the book of Revelation is written, until while we're awaiting the *apocalypse*, and that Paul somehow knew that John at a later date, after Paul was long dead, was going to see this vision on the island of Patmos and write the book, and that would be the completion of the New Testament. To me that is a very, very far-fetched suggestion. For one thing, there's not a clue anywhere in any of Paul's writing that he knew there would even be a collection of writings such as we call the New Testament.

He was writing individual letters, he no doubt knew that he was writing with the authority of the Spirit of God and so forth, but there's no clue anywhere that Paul knew that his letters were going to be gathered with other New Testament writings and put into a book with 27 books and with the book of Revelation positioned at the end. And he would have

to know all those things in order for his statement to have that meaning. You see, this then is pressed into service for those who say, well, with the completion of the New Testament, that is the completion of the book of Revelation, those gifts are no longer needed because the church would lack no gift waiting for that, but we're not waiting for that anymore because we now know that's already happened, that that book is already written, we can read it any time we want to, and now the New Testament is complete and we don't need the gifts anymore.

To me, that is such a stretch, such a case of eisegesis rather than exegesis, that is reading something into the passage rather than reading out of it what it would naturally mean to the readers, that it's almost so foolish as to not need reputation, if not for the fact that so many Christians appeal to this kind of an argument to try to rule out the gifts of the Holy Spirit in our time, at least what they would call fine gifts, which would mean anything miraculous. Okay, now, he's continuing his somewhat lengthy sentence in verse 8. "...who," referring to the Lord Jesus Christ, the one last mentioned in verse 7, "...who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now, one thing is clear, that what Paul does have in view as the end, you know, the furthest point in his reckoning is the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he calls the end. He will confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That certainly argues that the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ in verse 7 is probably talking about the same event, the second coming of Christ, and obviously that would be the way anyone would naturally understand Paul's meaning unless they had an agenda to try to prove some of the doctrines. To the contrary. Several things about verse 8. One, Jesus Christ is also going to continue to confirm you.

Now, he says in verse 6, "...the testimony of Christ was confirmed among you," or possibly in you, "...by the Holy Spirit, and Jesus will confirm you," will continue to confirm you in it, in the gospel, "...until the end." Now, the end, of course, when would Christ no longer need to confirm us in this manner? Obviously, whenever we leave this life. We won't need the same witness of the Holy Spirit and the same kind of support from Jesus in the Christian walk after we're no longer here on this planet. He obviously has the second coming in mind.

One thing I would point out to you, though, is that our tenure here on earth ends with what we usually call the rapture. Now, the rapture is when we're taken out of here. That would obviously be the point at which Paul is saying we have to be confirmed and maintained and preserved blameless until we're raptured out of here.

But he identifies that point in time, the time that we are waiting for, the time that it's the end of our stay here, as the revelation of Jesus Christ. He refers to it as the end and also of the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I point that out because those who teach a pre-

tribulation rapture believe that the rapture is something other than the revelation.

They would say the second coming of Christ is in two stages, the first being the rapture of the church and the second being the revelation of Christ from heaven. And they consider these to be technical terms for two different stages, the rapture and the revelation. Both parts of the second coming of Christ are separated from one another by a number of years, usually seven.

Now, this doesn't seem to confirm that. Paul says we are waiting for not the rapture but the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. By dispensational thinking, that term means the second part of the second coming, the part that comes at the very end.

And so we expect it to mean that because in verse 8 it says Christ is going to confirm us to the end, not just till some event seven years prior to the end, but to the very end. And that we may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, this is an interesting expression.

It's found only here, the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul frequently speaks about a day that he's looking forward to, but sometimes it's called the day of Christ, sometimes it's called the day of the Lord. In Philippians chapter 1, in verse 6, it's the day of Christ.

Now, this is only important because of the argument that exists between those who say there is and those who say there is not a pre-tribulation rapture. But in Philippians 1, 6, Paul says he's confident of this very thing that he who has begun a good work in you, that is in you Christians, will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. Well, the day of Jesus Christ is obviously the point at which the work will be completed, in which we'll be here till then.

God will be working upon us until that day, the day of Jesus Christ. Therefore, none can deny that the day of Jesus Christ would be when the rapture occurs. When God's done with us as Christians on the earth.

When we're finished, when his project is done with us, the day of Christ is the last point that we're looking forward to here on earth. Therefore, the rapture occurs at that point. And, by the way, the distantationalists agree with this.

They would agree the day of Jesus Christ is, in fact, the day of the rapture. However, what they would not agree with is that the day of the Lord is the same thing. Because, for example, in Acts chapter 2, Peter is quoting Joel, and in that place, Joel 2, I mean, Acts 2, verse 20, it says, Now, if the day of the Lord is also the day of the rapture of the church, which some people believe, that's not how I'm understanding this particular reference in Joel, but many people feel that the day of the Lord is the second coming of Christ, and that the moon's going to turn to blood and the sun to darkness before that day, and yet many people associate that with the tribulation, which would suggest that

the tribulation's going to come before the day of the Lord, and yet we're going to be here until the day of Christ, therefore, if the day of Christ and the day of the Lord are the same day, it perplexes the mind of the distantationalists, because it means that we're going to be here until the day of the Lord or the day of Christ, but these events that they associate with the tribulation are actually going to happen before that, so we're going to be here for those things, is essentially how they see the problem.

Now, how they fix the problem is to say, well, the day of the Lord and the day of the rapture are not the same thing. The day of Christ is indeed the day of the rapture, but the day of the Lord is a much more generic term for a longer period of time, extending from the rapture all the way through the tribulation and on beyond through the millennium as well. That entire time being called the day of the Lord or the day of God is different from the day of Jesus Christ.

Now, this stratagem is put together in this way for one purpose and one purpose only, to avoid the idea that the rapture occurs at the same time as the second coming of Christ. If the day of the Lord and the day of Christ are the same event, we know we're going to be here until the day of Christ because of what Paul says about it. That means we'll be here until the day of the Lord, and if the day of the Lord is in fact the end of the world, which by the way it is, if you look over at 2 Peter 3, we know this, then it means that we're going to be here until the end of the world, when the world is destroyed.

2 Peter 3, verse 10, says that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with the fervent heat. This is why the dissatisfactionists have to say, well, the day of the Lord means a long, long time that includes the whole millennium, because they don't believe the heavens are going to pass away when Jesus comes back. They believe that's going to happen a thousand years later after the millennium.

So, since that is all going to happen in the day of the Lord, the day of the Lord must be a very long time, over a thousand years long, to include the millennium. Anyway, that's all unnecessary. That's all trying to read into the passage something to salvage a doctrine that isn't there, namely the pre-trib rapture.

What we can see is that Peter says the day of the Lord is the end of the universe, the end of the world, as it's now known. And in verse 13 of the same chapter, 2 Peter 3, 13, it says, nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for the new heavens and new earth. So, the end of the present heavens and earth occurs at the day of the Lord, when it comes as it is in the night, that day.

But is that the same as the day of Jesus, the day of Christ, which is the end point of our tenure here on earth? Well, the only place that we get a direct answer to that question, though it could be deduced without any direct answer to the scripture, I mean, if Jesus is the Lord, then the day of Jesus would be the day of the Lord. But we don't have to only

reason that way, we can get it directly from scripture. 1 Corinthians 1, verse 8, Paul says that we will be blameless in the day of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

He puts those terms together. In some places it's the day of the Lord, in some cases it's the day of Christ, in this place it's the day of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Making it very clear that it's just one day that it's called by all these different names.

A particular day, the end of the world, when Jesus returns, when the heavens melt and dissolve with the fervent heat, and when we are caught up to make it low in the air, and so forth. That's the point at which Paul looks forward to, and that is the point at which the gifts as we know them today will no longer be necessary, as he says also later in chapter 13, we'll talk about that later. Verse 9, 1 Corinthians 1, 9, God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now the fellowship of his Son, the word fellowship, *koinonia*, means oneness or unitedness. We are united with Christ, we are in fellowship or oneness with Christ. He has called us out of his faithfulness into this oneness, this fellowship that is associated with his Son.

Being in Christ, we are one with all others who are in Christ. It's a fellowship, a unity. That's what the word *koinonia* suggests, is unity and a sharing of commonality.

We sometimes think of the word fellowship as having a slightly different meaning, but this is what it means here. Unity or oneness that is associated with his Son, which gets him to his point that he wants to address next, which is the disunity that is exhibited in this particular church, which we'll have to wait until next time to discuss because we've run out of time.