

Acts 1: Lesson Eight, Corinthians, Part 2 1 Corinthians 8 – 16

Subject: The Corinthians received a proper view of personal liberty, corporate worship, and the Resurrection.

Main Idea: True love involves looking beyond one's own interests to the best interest of others.

Principles:

1. *Although believers enjoy many personal liberties, love demands that we neither boast nor dishonor others in exercising them.*
2. *Since love is not self-seeking, our spiritual gifts are to be used for God's glory and the good of others.*
3. *Love rejoices with the truth and offers up the highest and noblest truths as positive motivation.*

Introduction

Have you found the church to be a place of counter-cultural relationships in which people put the best interests of others ahead of their own? John 3:16 says, "God so *loved* the world that He *gave* His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." God is love and His love is a giving love, an unselfish love.

In this lesson, we cover 1 Corinthians 8-16. In the heart of these chapters lies the "chapter of love," 1 Corinthians 13. Paul explained the nature of true love and called the Corinthians to look beyond their own interests to the best interest of others. We learned previously that Corinth was home to the Temple of Aphrodite, goddess of love, and famous for sacred prostitution. Paul made repeated references sexual immorality in his letter (5:1, 9, 11; 6:9, 13, 15-16, 18; 7:2; 10:8; 2 Corinthians 12:21). Sadly, the Corinthian church had not yet learned to demonstrate true love, which demands unselfishness. There was potential for their relationships to be a startling contrast to that of their neighbors, but instead, they were worldly. They argued about their teachers, were proud of their tolerance for ongoing sin in the church, took one another to court, and disagreed about the value of marriage. According to Paul, they were rich in speech, knowledge, and spiritual gifts (1:5-7), especially the more sensational gifts, but they were also spiritually immature and self-centered.

Many scholars believe that the repeated phrase "now about" throughout these chapters (7:1, 8:1, 12:1, and 16:1 and 12) indicates that at those junctions, Paul was addressing a question that the Corinthians asked him. The first question, regarding the value of marriage, was covered in the previous lesson. The second question was about idolatry and Christian liberty. The third regarded exercising spiritual gifts, especially in the context of corporate worship. The last two questions pertained to upcoming visits and had straightforward answers, which Paul gave at the end of the letter. But before ending, he took the opportunity the letter afforded to discuss the doctrine of the resurrection and hold it out as their ultimate motivation to mature and to love one another well. The way of love is the unselfish road. It involves looking beyond our own interests to the best interest of others.

I. A Proper View of Personal Liberty - 1 Corinthians 8-10

A. Problem Over Food Sacrificed To Idols – chapter 8

- i. The Question: The Corinthians’ question about personal liberty was whether it was permissible to eat meat that had previously been offered to an idol. In Greek and Roman sacrifices, the least desirable parts of the animal were generally burned and the tastier parts served at the celebrations that normally accompanied the sacrifices. In some cases, the choice meat was resold in the market. Paul ultimately answered the question by considering three specific instances in which Christians would have had to make a decision about whether or not to eat the meat.
- ii. The Deeper Issue – 8:1-13: Paul began by pointing out that there was a deeper issue at stake: the fact that some believers had more sensitive (weaker) consciences than others. The “weaker” believer would see the “stronger” one eating the meat and be emboldened to join them, only to feel distressed, disgusted, and guilty about it later. Therefore, while all the believers had “knowledge” (8:1) that idols are not real, the Corinthians needed to make decisions about this on the basis of love (8:1), in consideration for those with weaker consciences. The bottom line is that while believers are perfectly free to eat meat previously offered to idols (in that there is nothing inherently evil about it), they would sin if they offended someone in the process.
- iii. “Many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords’”- 8:5: Some of the newer translations have put the words “gods” and “lords” in quotations to indicate Paul’s intention when he wrote that “there are many gods and many lords.” Either Paul was simply acknowledging that the idols were representations of false “gods” or he was reminding those who were tempted to take the issue too lightly that real, super-terrestrial beings do exist in the spiritual world that often lie behind idol worship.

B. Paul’s Example in Giving Up His “Rights” - 9:1-23

- i. Paul’s Rights: Paul used himself as an example of one who had freely given up his rights. He had the right to be married and to earn remuneration for his work in the church, but he gave up those rights for the benefit of others. He proved his right to have been paid for his service to the Corinthians from an Old Testament verse that says “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.” Paul pointed out that such scriptures were given to teach principles. In this case, the principle is that the person who works deserves some benefit from it.

- ii. Becoming All Things to All People: Paul had given up this right while he was with them and had instead practiced his tent-making trade to support himself. He was, in fact, willing to lay down his rights to the point of becoming “all things to all people.” When he was with those with weaker consciences (such as Jewish believers, who had been culturally conditioned by their many laws), he refrained from things that might offend them. As for himself, Paul had a freer conscience. So when he was with others whose consciences were not easily bothered (such as Gentile believers), he freely enjoyed such things.

C. The Danger of Insisting on One’s Rights - 9:24-10:13

- i. The Danger of Indulgence: Before wrapping up this subject with specific answers about the question of the meat, Paul first issued a serious warning. In addition to sinning by causing another believer to stumble, believers are at risk of falling into sin themselves by insisting on indulging their rights. “Stronger” believers can become overconfident about their ability to overcome temptation.
- ii. The Race: Paul reminded them that all believers are running a race but not all get the prize. All believers finish the race and enter heaven, but not all enjoy the fullness of the blessings God intended for them in this life. Paul then illustrated this from the Old Testament.
- iii. An Example from History: Like us, the Israelites had many spiritual privileges. Yet when they traveled through the wilderness en route to Canaan, they fell into sin: idolatry, sexual immorality, testing the Lord, and grumbling. As a result, they did not enjoy the blessing in this life of entering Canaan.
- iv. Warning: Paul warned those who *thought* they were standing firm to be careful that they didn’t fall. God faithfully provides a way out when we are tempted, but we must watch for it and take it!

D. Paul’s Summary– 10:14-11:1: Having taught the important principles of giving up one’s rights for others and also guarding against self-indulgence, Paul concluded this segment by returning to the specific question about the meat. He gave three answers.

- i. Regarding Pagan Feasts: First, Paul told them definitely not to eat the meat within the pagan temples; that is, they were not to participate in the pagan feasts. As mentioned, demons lie behind idolatry and to participate in these festivals would rouse the Lord’s jealousy. We cannot eat at the Lord’s table and also at the devil’s table.
- ii. Regarding Buying in the Market: Second, they should feel free to purchase meat sold in the market that had previously been offered in pagan temples.

- iii. Regarding Private Dinner Parties: Third, if a nonbeliever invited them to a meal in their home, they should politely eat whatever their host ate. The one exception would be if anyone present drew attention to the fact that the food had been resold from the temple. In that case, the believer should refrain for the sake of person who pointed it out (who might believe it was wrong for a believer).
- iv. Finally, when determining whether or not to exercise a freedom, make sure you are glorifying God and not causing anyone else to stumble.

Summary Statement: With regard to personal liberties, the Corinthians selfishly demanded their own rights, rather than looking to the best interest of others.

Principle: *Although believers enjoy many personal liberties, love demands that we neither boast nor dishonor others in exercising them.*

Application: We must be discerning in exercising our rights. What freedom do you enjoy that might cause another believer or a nonbeliever to stumble?

- Contrary to the beliefs of some, the Bible does not forbid alcohol consumption. However, it *does* say that drunkenness is sin. You may feel personal liberty to have some alcohol, but have you considered who is watching you? Alcoholism is such a raging social and family problem worldwide that we must consider who we might trip up by exercising our liberty. How about the children or grandchildren in your home? In public, someone who knows you may happen to see you drink even a single glass of wine and be tripped up. If you are at a social gathering or in a restaurant, you may not even be aware that this person is watching and that addictive behavior runs in their family. They assume that if you, the more mature Christian, enjoy this liberty, it must be fine for them as well. And, if you feel confident that you won't take one drop too many, then Paul's warning is for you: "When you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall."
- What kind of an effect do the movies you see, the TV you watch, the music you listen to, the books you read, the way you dress, and the way you use your money have on other people? Do you exercise discernment and restraint in all these areas for your own sake as well?

We enjoy many freedoms, but we remain accountable to the law of love. Love requires that we look beyond our own personal interests to the best interest of others.

Transition: The Corinthians' second question pertained to the use of spiritual gifts (12:1), especially in the context of worship services. In chapters 11-14, Paul exposed specific, related problems: the women in the church were abusing their newfound freedom in Christ, the rich were slighting the poor, and those with spectacular spiritual gifts were looking down on those whose gifts were more practical.

II. A Proper View of Corporate Worship – 1 Corinthians 11-14

A. Regarding Head Coverings – 11:3-16

- i. Concerning the Issue of Headship: 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 is one of the most controversial passages in the New Testament. One particular disagreement revolves around the meaning of the word “head” (the Greek *kephalē*). 1 Corinthians 11:3 says, “Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”
 1. Many New Testament passages (Acts 2:17-18, 21:8-9; Gal 3:28) affirm the equality of men and women in Christ. In the first century, as in some parts of the world today, this freedom was counter-cultural. A woman’s rights were greatly limited. Jesus, however, spoke directly to women and treated them with dignity, something extraordinary in that day. In light of the cultural limitations, it is easy to see how delighted believing women would have been with their newfound dignity. But it is also easy to see how the new freedoms could have been abused. Apparently, some women in the Corinthian church so indulged their personal “rights” that they brought disorder to the worship services.
 2. While on the one hand, the term “head” is clearly a literal reference to a part of one’s body, the word also holds a figurative meaning in ancient Greek (as it does in English). A good many translators believe the figurative meaning in Greek (as in English) suggests *authority over*. If we understand the passage as establishing an order of authority, we still must remember that the issue was not one of equality. Verses 11-12 affirm the mutual dependence of men and women on one another. However, a structure of authority is effective in maintaining order. Thus, this passage may affirm order within marriage by teaching that wives fall under their husband’s authority.
 3. However, some highly trained linguists insist that the figurative meaning of “head” in Greek is closer to the idea of *origin* or *source*.ⁱ For them, the word “head” does not refer to an order of authority but the *order of nature* (11:14-15), in which man was excellently made through Christ, woman was taken from man’s flesh, and Christ is from Godⁱⁱ (while being equal with God from eternity past, He came forth and became flesh in the incarnation).ⁱⁱⁱ If this view is correct, then Paul was probably instructing the women not to so indulge their newfound equality with men that they disregarded customs (such as head coverings) that uniquely identified them as women. To deny their femininity was to deny the order of nature.

- ii. Veil or Hair? A second disagreement revolves around whether the head covering was a veil or one's own hair (either short or long).
- iii. The Sign of Authority on Her Head: A third concerns 1 Corinthians 11:10, which says, "For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have authority on her head." The reference to the angels is best understood in light of scriptures that suggest the presence of angels wherever God is worshiped (Psalm 138:1, Hebrews 12:22) and a commonly held belief that angels took offense at anything in worship that transgressed created order, the order of nature. The Dead Sea Scrolls indicate that the Jews of Qumran believed this. Paul seemed to also have this in mind when he charged Timothy "in the presence of God and of Christ and of the elect angels" (1 Timothy 5:21).^{iv} A more difficult task is discerning the nature of the "authority" that a woman is to have on her head. Some translators have added terms like "*a sign*" or "*a symbol*" of authority," but the Greek only says, "authority on her head."
1. *Sign of the Husband's Authority:* One view assumes that the authority, either a veil or long hair, was a *sign of the husband's authority* over his wife. Roman law required that a woman caught in adultery had her head shaved to publicly shame her. If long hair was a sign of the husband's authority over his wife, cutting her hair for any reason would disgrace him. If the covering was a veil, it must have been a cultural sign of submission to a husband's authority.^v Either way, the suggestion is that some of the Corinthian women, claiming freedom in Christ, were either refusing to wear a veil or cutting their long hair shorter, without considering the impact to their husbands.
 2. *"Authority" (God-given Rights) in Worship:* Some believe Paul did not have the woman's relationship to her husband in mind at all in this verse. Rather, by wearing her hair (or veil) according to the cultural custom, she was affirming the order of nature – that she was indeed a woman. While equal with the man, she did not need to prove her equality. In fact, to cut her hair (or remove the veil) would have been a distraction to those hearing her pray or prophesy (in verse 5, Paul suggested that he expected women to publicly pray and prophesy). However, if she left her hair long (or wore the veil), the married woman could freely use her God-given right (her "authority") to publicly pray and prophesy (Acts 2:17-18) without any distraction. This view also fits well with the larger context of using Christian freedoms wisely, for the sake of others and the advancement of the gospel.^{vi}

B. Regarding the Lord's Supper – 11:17-34

i. The Problem

1. A second problem in corporate worship was the abusive manner with which the Corinthians approached Communion. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, it was part of a full meal, in which other foods were served, in addition to the bread and wine. For this reason, many believe that early in church history, believers observed a weekly, communal, "agape" (love) meal, followed by the "Eucharist" (from the Greek word for "thanksgiving"), in which the bread and cup were shared.^{vii}
2. For the first three centuries, the church met in private homes. According to Acts 18:7, the first Corinthian believers gathered in the home of Titius Justus, a name that denoted Roman citizenship and identified him with Roman culture. Greek and Roman communal meals were infamous for being socially divisive. "Patrons' homes in Corinth normally seated nine in the *triclinium* (the best room) and as many as forty others in the adjoining *atrium* (the largest furnished room)." Those of lower social classes were seated in the larger room and served an inferior meal, within plain sight of the triclinium, where the high-ranking social class received better service.^{viii} The divisive treatment was apparently carried into the weekly agape meals. Those who had plenty turned the meal into an opportunity to indulge to the point of drunkenness with others of like status. Those who could not afford much were excluded for social reasons and remained hungry (11:20-21). The individualistic attitudes set a poor precedent for the church members to partake of the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner.

- ii. Paul's Solution: Paul reminded the Corinthians of the sanctity and symbolism of the Lord's Supper. The bread symbolizes Jesus' broken body and the cup is a reminder of His shed blood. It was a meal commemorating Jesus' death. Therefore, Paul exhorted the Corinthians to examine themselves prior to partaking, especially with regard to relationships within the body of Christ (11:28-29). According to Paul, their failure to do that was the reason some of them were sick and a few had even died. Christian worship services are not to foster divisions but unity. Entering into the sacred commemoration of Christ's death in a group where there is little love or unity is a serious offense.

C. Regarding Spiritual Gifts – Chapters 12-14: Having corrected these two specific abuses of corporate worship, Paul was now prepared to turn to the Corinthians' specific question concerning the use of spiritual gifts.

Once again, their attitudes and practices reflected the worldliness, immaturity, and selfishness that characterized their culture. Paul raised the Corinthians' thinking by first discussing the purpose for spiritual gifts (chapter 12) then explaining "the most excellent way" (chapter 13). Finally, he settled specific issues regarding the gift of tongues (chapter 14).

i. Purpose of the Gifts – Chapter 12

1. *The Common Good*: Paul emphasized that the Spirit of God unifies believers while simultaneously distributing different gifts. He then listed some examples of gifts. The Corinthians apparently valued the more dramatic gifts over those that were more understated, and of course, this became another source of disunity. The gifts were not being exercised with an attitude of service but for self-promotion. Paul used the human body to illustrate the unique functions of a unified whole. His point was that, although the gifts are different, they are all given for the common good. They shouldn't be a cause for divisiveness but for unity. A proper understanding of spiritual gifts will cause us to value one other as essential to our corporate spiritual health.

2. *Spiritual Gifts Today*

a. A special obstacle to unity within the Church today revolves around divisiveness over whether certain miraculous gifts (healing, tongues and their interpretation, casting out of demons) ended with the Apostolic Age. Those known as "cessationists" believe that those gifts were signs to authenticate the Apostles' early teaching, and therefore, not authentically present today. Others think all the gifts Paul names are still valid today. This is a position taken especially (but not exclusively) by charismatics. Finally, a group of scholars who is neither on the charismatic or cessationist ends of the spectrum say we cannot know for certain from the Scripture.

b. With regard to the gift of prophecy, there is common agreement that the ability to foretell the future ended when the last page of the Bible was written and God's revelation was complete. However, prophecy in a broader sense has always meant the proclamation of God's word. By this definition, preaching and teaching can fall under the gift, although some distinguish prophecy as words God brings to mind spontaneously, rather than from conscious reflection on the Scriptures.^{ix}

- ii. The “Most Excellent Way” – Chapter 13: Paul told his readers that demonstrating love is far more important than exercising a spiritual gift. In fact, without love, the gifts are useless since they are given for the benefit of others. He emphasized that love, rather than being an emotion, is a decision to be unselfish, to put another person’s needs ahead of one’s own. Finally, he reminded us that spiritual gifts will pass away at the end of the world, but love is eternal! A day will come when we will have no more need for knowledge, for all important things will be known to us. A day will come when preaching the gospel will no longer be necessary. A day will come when no one will commune with God in tongues because we will all live in His presence. But love will always be with us.
- iii. The Exercising of Tongues and Maintaining Order – Chapter 14
 - 1. *What is Speaking in Tongues?*
 - a. Speaking in tongues means a person speaks words of prayer or praise to God in a language unknown to them. Not all believers speak in tongues. Paul affirmed this in his explanation that the believers are gifted differently: “Are all apostles?” The obvious answer is “no.” He continues: “Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?” (12:29-30).
 - b. Some insist that tongues, as described by Paul and elsewhere in the New Testament, always means human language, never unintelligible ecstatic utterances. At Pentecost, the tongues spoken were clearly languages unknown to the speaker but recognized by others as their own native, human language. However, it does not necessarily follow that because those at Pentecost understood the languages spoken, that tongues are *always* known human languages. In 1 Corinthians 14:2, Paul described them as a language “*no one* understands.” It seems wise to avoid a dogmatic view about this, lest we fall into the very spirit of arrogance Paul condemned. Those who speak in tongues must heed Paul’s warning to not become arrogant for having the gift. Those who do not speak in tongues or do not attend churches where this is practiced must not pridefully insist they have superior doctrine in the matter.

2. *The Gift of Tongues as Inferior to Prophecy* - 14:1-25: The confusion within the Corinthian church over tongues clearly resulted from arrogance over the gift, as well as a disorderly use of it. Paul addressed both issues. Building on his exhortation to operate out of love, Paul compared prophecy to speaking in tongues. The Corinthians were to seek gifts that edified (built up) the members of Christ's body. Tongues do not build up the body, since others don't understand what is being said. Furthermore, since unbelievers consider tongues ridiculous when they hear them, tongues confirm unbelief. Thus, the Corinthians were told to give preference to prophecy, which not only benefits believers but also can have a positive impact on unbelievers.
3. *Instructions for Orderly Worship* – 14:26-40: Worship services are not a platform for pontification or self-glorification; they are a time for encouraging people and honoring God. In light of this, Paul gave the Corinthians several specific commands.
 - a. *Regarding Tongues*: In view of the Corinthians' misuse of tongues, Paul told them to limit its use within their worship services (verse 27). Additionally, the tongues could only be spoken when someone with the gift of interpretation was present, so that others could benefit (verse 28).
 - b. *General Orderliness and Control*: All aspects of the worship service (verse 26) were to be conducted in an orderly and controlled fashion. It seems that some in the Corinthian church went so far as to say that they couldn't help themselves but were compelled to express themselves by the Spirit. Paul denies this, saying that "the spirit of prophets are subject to the control of prophets." Again, the services were to benefit everyone, not just satisfy the needs of a few for self-expression.
 - c. *Married Women*: Paul told the married women to remain silent. In light of the facts that Paul spent so much time explaining that women who pray or prophesy publicly must cover their heads, that Acts 2:17-18 affirms men and women alike in the gift of prophecy, and that "women's vocal participation in worship [and in] instructional or leadership roles was accepted and affirmed" in general in the early church,^x we must ask why Paul called women to silence in this text.
 - i. Some believe it is a relevant, universal command that forbids married women from publicly participating in judging church doctrine.^{xi} Those who see it this way

would be quick to affirm that Paul wasn't saying that women are inferior but was merely calling them to subordination to their husbands.

- ii. Many scholars believe Paul's injunction was *specific to the local situation* in Corinth. In this passage, Paul issued two previous admonitions to silence: one to the person speaking in tongues where no interpreter was present (14:28) and one to the person who is in the course of uttering prophecy when revelation comes to another speaker. In both of these cases, the silence was required to correct a specific abuse. According to verse 34, the women's specific abuse was to the "law" of submission. But the law of submission to what or to whom?
 1. Given verse 35, in which the women are told to ask their questions of their husbands at home, some suggest that Paul meant *submission to their husbands*, based on the "law" of marriage they believe to be inherent in Genesis 1-3. If so, his command of silence was probably directed at the particular married women whose attitude and behavior had promoted disorder. Some may have gone so far as to publicly question the prophecies given by their own husbands, rather than discussing their concerns at home in private.
 2. Paul said the women were to submit, "as the law says" (verse 34). Some scholars point out only laws in the Talmud and Mishnah teach that a woman should be silent. The Old Testament does not teach that.^{xiii} Note the two verses preceding Paul's command in verse 34: "The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace..." It seems Paul was telling women to submit to the *law of orderliness* in worship, which has been his subject. It is likely that they were taking advantage of their newfound equality to such a degree that their self-promoting participation in worship (specifically in tongues and prophecy) was disorderly.

3. Regardless of what law of submission Paul referenced, since he told women earlier to pray or prophesy with authority, his call to silence must have concerned a specific situation. In any church where this was happening, Paul said the women should be silent.

Summary Statement: Paul spoke to the body of Christ at Corinth about head-coverings, communion, and the use of spiritual gifts to correct their self-centered attitudes and practices.

Principle: *Since love is not self-seeking, our spiritual gifts are to be used for God's glory and the good of others.*

Application: If we are truly thinking of the glory of God and the good of others, we cannot abstain from using our spiritual gifts. What steps have you taken to discover your spiritual giftedness? How does the Spirit of God shine through you most often? That may be a key to discovering your spiritual gifts. Many believers have multiple gifts, but one or two are usually dominant.

- If you find yourself quick to speak to others about Christ and His worth, or if information spontaneously comes to your mind that others find surprisingly appropriate and helpful, then you may have the gift of prophecy.
- If you are able to explain truth from God's Word in a way that makes it easy for others to understand, you may have the gift of teaching.
- If you are able to trust God easily in the small and big things, in abandonment to His promises, you probably have the special gift of faith.

Will you take the discovery and use of your spiritual gift more seriously knowing that the spiritual health of the body of Christ depends on it? Love is not self-seeking but looks to the best interest of others.

Transition: Before answering two questions about future visits straightforwardly in chapter 16, Paul presented one of the clearest teachings in the New Testament on the doctrine of the resurrection. It seems that the Corinthians were confused about the nature of the resurrection. Since love rejoices with the truth, Paul wanted the Corinthians to be properly informed.

III. A Proper View of the Resurrection – 1 Corinthians 15

A. Paul's Concerns

- i. Clear Doctrinal Understanding: The Sadducees rejected the doctrine of a physical resurrection (Mark 12:18), as did Greek philosophers (Acts 17:32). Apparently, the Corinthians carried this notion into the church and assumed that eternal life was only a life of the soul, not the body. Since the usual "now about" formula indicating that Paul was answering a question is absent, Paul must have heard about their misunderstanding.

- ii. Motivate to Maturity: Throughout the letter, Paul pointed out the Corinthians' immaturities. The opening and closing words of this section show his eagerness to motivate them to hold firm to the truth and devote themselves to the Lord's work. Perhaps Paul saved this subject for last, knowing that the resurrection is the ultimate motivation for sacrificial rather than self-centered living. Paul held up this lofty truth: there is more to life than the "here and now"; a resurrection day is coming.

B. Holding to the Gospel Message – 15:1-19

- i. Evidence of Christ's Resurrection: The Christian doctrine of resurrection begins with the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is a fact of history and a basis for many other important doctrines. The resurrection of the Lord was no mere resuscitation but a passing from existence in a purely human body to existence in a heavenly and eternal body. Paul stated that Christ died, was buried, was raised, and appeared to many after that. Paul was not promoting a myth. Many of those to whom Jesus appeared were still alive when Paul wrote and could easily testify to the truth of Christ's physical resurrection.
- ii. Implication of Christ's Resurrection for Believers: The doctrine of resurrection also concerns us, because the Bible teaches that we too will be raised. If Christ did not rise, the basis of our faith crumbles. But since He did, we too shall be raised. The gospel stands and falls on the truth of the resurrection.
- iii. Bodily Resurrection as a Part of the Future Order – 15:20-28: Paul stated that the bodily resurrection will occur as part of the future order. Christ was raised first. Next, we will be raised and Christ will reign and put all His enemies under His dominion. Then, the end will come and He will hand over His kingdom to God the Father who will destroy death, the last enemy. These events will usher in the eternal state.
- iv. Implications If There is No Resurrection – 15:29-34
 - a. *Baptism for the Dead*: In the middle of this discussion, Paul made an unusual statement: "Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them?" It seems this was the habit of some who did not believe in resurrection. Nowhere does the New Testament teach that we can make effective intercession or take action on behalf of the dead. Paul certainly would not have been holding up the practice as one that he approved. Once again, we find help from the context. Beginning with verse 29, Paul lists a number of things that are worthless if dead people will never rise again. This was just one example.

- b. *Other Implications*: Paul wrote that the dangers he himself had endured for the sake of the gospel would also be worthless. In fact, if the resurrection were not true, we might as well “eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” In truth, all such suggestions were the result of false teaching. Paul called the Corinthians back to sound doctrine.
- v. Continuity of Life – 15:35-49: Paul differentiated between seeds and animals and people to point out that each part of the creation has its own kind. This, he said, will also be true in the resurrection. In other words, there will continuity between the physical bodies we currently possess and the resurrection bodies we will one day receive. Our resurrection will be physical and not merely an existence of the soul or a reincarnation into some other life form. Our resurrected bodies will be of the same kind as our present bodies, only perfected. The continuity between them will apparently be considerable. In verse 52, Paul says that our bodies will be *changed* in the twinkling of an eye, not replaced but transformed. Our new bodies will bear the likeness of Christ’s resurrected body. In that body, Jesus ate and walked and talked and at times, was even recognizable by those who had known Him before His death.
- vi. Conclusion – 15:58: The Corinthians were exhorted to hold firmly to this and other doctrines that Paul had explained to them. Paul said our present labor for the Lord is not in vain because of the resurrection. In fact, the resurrection is our motivation to faithful service. It is also motivation to seek the best interest of others.

C. Paul’s Final Words – Chapter 16

- i. The Offering – 16:1-5: Paul concluded with some words to the Corinthians about the near future. First, he told them to prepare the collection he was gathering for those in Jerusalem, urging them to “save up” so their offering would be ready when he came to see them (16:1-4).
- ii. Personal Notes – 16:6-24: Apparently in answer to two additional questions, Paul encouraged them to save weekly toward the offering he would collect in his upcoming visit. He briefly mentioned Timothy’s imminent visit. Then he answered the last question, saying that Apollos planned to remain with him in Ephesus for the time being. He also commended three men from Corinth who had recently visited him (16:5-18). Finally, he sent greetings from Asia with love (16:19-24).

Summary Statement: Paul explained that the gospel hinges on the truth of Christ’s resurrection and affirmed that our resurrection, like His, will be physical. The resurrection is the highest possible motivation to look beyond our own interests to the best interest of others.

Principle: *Love rejoices with the truth and offers up the highest and noblest truths as positive motivation.*

Paul held up lofty truths. In 15:1-2, he reminded the Corinthians of the gospel, and in light of the Resurrection, he concluded, “Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (15:58). He did not delight in making correction. His delight was with the truth itself, because he understood the significance of its impact.

Conclusion

A day is coming when we will stand before our Maker in our perfected, resurrection bodies. Do we see and treat those in the body of Christ as the noble creatures they are destined to be? Do we serve one another unselfishly and encourage one another with lofty truths? Or are our relationships the same as those outside the church – full of bickering and insistence on their own rights?

Paul said, “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). True love looks beyond one’s own interests to the best interest of others.

ⁱ Brauch, Manfred T. *Hard Sayings of the Bible: 1 Corinthians 11:3, 7, 10, 29*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996.

ⁱⁱ Lampe, G.W. (1968). *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (p.749). Oxford, Oxford University Press.

ⁱⁱⁱ Brauch, Manfred T. *Hard Sayings of the Bible: 1 Corinthians 11:3, 7, 10, 29*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996.

^{iv} Brauch, Manfred T. *Hard Sayings of the Bible: 1 Corinthians 11:3, 7, 10, 29*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996.

^v Carson, D. A. (1994). *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition* (4th ed.) (1 Co 11:2–16). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press.

^{vi} Brauch, Manfred T. *Hard Sayings of the Bible: 1 Corinthians 11:3, 7, 10, 29*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996.

^{vii} Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (1 Co 7:39–40). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{viii} Keener, C. S. (1993). *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Ac 18:6–7). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

^{ix} Grudem, Wayne (1994). *Systematic Theology* (1058). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Press.

^x Brauch, Manfred T. *Hard Sayings of the Bible: 1 Corinthians 14:33-34*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996.

^{xi} Willmington, H. L. (1997). *Willmington’s Bible Handbook* (p. 685). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^{xii} Brauch, Manfred T. *Hard Sayings of the Bible: 1 Corinthians 14:33-34*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996.