

A STUDY OF 1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTERS 11 - 14

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(Unless otherwise noted, the Scriptures used are from the New International Version - 1973 edition)

This brief study is primarily for my own enlightenment and edification. While all of the Corinthian letters are inspired by God, I have limited my study to this section because it is one of many parts of the Scriptures which I do not completely understand. Perhaps I never will. This, however, does not excuse me from obeying what I do understand and diligently trying to understand the rest. Remember! Man does not live by bread alone, but by “every” Word that comes from the mouth of God. Some of God’s words are easy to understand, but others are not. Peter, for example, wrote that in Paul’s letters some things were hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable would distort to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:14 - 16). Certainly we don’t want to distort the Word of God. Certainly we must be careful to handle the Word of God correctly.

In this brief section of Scripture Paul touches on subjects which the devil has used to divide the followers of Christ. It does not have to be that way. If we love Christ as we ought to, we will also love our brethren. We do not have to divide just because we disagree. Remember! Now we only know in part, but some day we will know fully. Fortunately, the importance of love is not divisive and is crystal clear. Love is more important than knowledge. Remember, knowledge puffs up, but love builds up (1 Cor. 8:1) In 1 Cor. 13 Paul points out that love is the most excellent way. It is our most important spiritual gift. While we may not agree on other aspects of this passage, we should all agree on love. While all truths are equally true, all truths are not equally important. Faith is essential to salvation and can even move mountains, but faith without love is nothing. Paul put it like this: **“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love” ((1 Cor. 13:13).**

I repeat, even though we may not agree on every aspect of Paul’s teaching, it is still possible for us to live in harmony and to love one another. In a symphony there are many different instruments playing different notes at different times. If all the musicians are following the music, and paying attention to the conductor, there can be beautiful harmony. When each believer submits to Christ there can also be harmony, even though we are different. Paul put it like this to the brethren in Rome who disagreed about eating meat. **“He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.” (Rom 14:6)** In matters like this, we must allow every child in the family to be judged by the Father and not by us.

They also had similar disagreements about the observance of special days. Paul wrote: **“One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself alone**

and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.” (Rom 14:5-8)

Perhaps it is presumptuous of me to write down my thoughts. Others, I’m sure, are more intelligent and better qualified to write than I am. In this regard I appeal to your patience. At the time of this writing I am 78 years old and not long ago had major surgery for colon cancer. I have been married to my childhood sweetheart for over 60 years and God has blessed us with 5 children, 26 grandchildren, and 7 great grandchildren. Even if no one else cares, perhaps I can at least leave a few marks on the trail to give guidance to members of my own family. Noah built an ark to save his family (Heb. 11:7), and it was well worth the effort. So, as I start this pilgrimage through this fascinating passage of Scripture, I plan to record the journey by means of the printed page. I thank in advance anyone who joins me in this journey.

*** 1 Cor 11:1 - “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”**

There are at least two possible meanings to these words, both of which can be helpful.

1. The first is that Paul received his instructions directly from Christ. He emphasized this fact to the Galatians. Paul was an apostle, not by man or by men, but by Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:1). He emphasized this fact by writing: **“I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.” (Gal 1:11-12).** Carpenters often use a pattern to make certain a series of boards are all the same length. When doing so it is important to always use the same original board as a pattern for the rest. It is almost impossible to cut the second board exactly the same length. Always returning to the original pattern is a wise procedure to follow. Paul did not receive his teaching from Peter, James, or John, he receive it directly from Christ.

This is a wonderful example for everyone! The teaching we receive directly from Christ is like fresh water from a fountain. Second hand information is like a cistern. (See. Jer. 2:13) Someone has observed that a church cannot rise above it’s leaders any more than a river can rise above it’s fountain head. I believe this is true. That’s why, regardless of who our human teachers are, we must always look beyond them to the perfect example of Christ.

2. The second possible, and perhaps more practical meaning is that the Corinthians were to emulate the life style of Paul himself. When Christ commanded “follow me” He expected His disciples to use Him as a pattern. Jesus said: **“everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher” (Lk. 6:40).** What we “do” often has more influence upon our students that what we “say”. Please consider these and other Scriptures as well:

- **“Therefore I urge you to imitate me” (1 Cor. 4:16)**
- **“For you became imitators of us and of the Lord” (1 Thess. 1:6).**
- **“We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make**

- ourselves a model for you to follow” (2 Thess. 1:3:9).
- “Join with others in following my example” (Phil. 3:17)’
- Etc.

Paul was indeed a good example. Like an athlete in strict training he worked hard every day lest after preaching to others, he himself might be disqualified for the prize (1 Cor. 9:24 - 27). Timothy, more than any other, exemplified the life style of Paul. Of all Paul’s helpers no one was like Timothy. Like a father and son they served together in the work of the gospel (Phil. 2:19 - 24. It is a poor example for teachers to be lazy and irresponsible and then teach their students: “Do as I say and not as I do”.

* **1 Cor 11:2 - “I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the teachings, just as I passed them on to you.”**

This is another verse that challenges me. How could Paul “praise” them when they had so many problems. It is obvious that the Corinthians were immature and wrong in a great many ways. Here are only a few:

- They were divided over human leaders like Paul, Apollos, and Cephas (1 Cor. 1:12).
- They were not spiritual, but worldly. Consequently Paul had to feed them with milk and not solid food (1 Cor. 3:1 - 4).
- They not only accepted a type of fornication not even tolerated by the gentiles, but apparently were even proud of it (1 Cor. 5:1 - 13).
- They took their brethren in Christ before unconverted and ungodly judges (1 Cor. 6:1 - 8).
- Etc.

In the light of their many imperfections, how could Paul praise them for holding to his teachings?

At this time, here is the best explanation I can offer. As we have pointed out, the Corinthians were both immature and worldly (1 Cor. 3:1 - 4). Every parent has to deal with immaturity and so did every apostle. It is not uncommon for a very small child to believe they can drive a car, fly an airplane, or ride a bucking bronco. When they grow up they look back and realize how immature they were. In the mean while, however, it is important that parents not destroy their dreams or quench their thirst for the future. Perhaps this is why Paul praised the Corinthians.

At the time Paul wrote this letter he was just across the Aegean Sea at Ephesus. Consequently, the Corinthians communicated with him on more than one occasion. For example:

- Some from Chloe’s household informed him of quarrels in the church (1 Cor. 1:11).
- The Corinthians wrote Paul a letter asking questions about marriage (1 Cor. 7:1).

- Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus also came to Ephesus supplying information about the church in Corinth (1 Cor. 16:17).

The authority of Paul as an apostle is of particular significance. He wrote: **“Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.” (1 Cor 9:1-2)** While the Corinthians failed in many ways, it does seem that they remained faithful to Paul rather than his enemies.

Paul’s praise of the Corinthians may have been triggered by a letter from them indicating their allegiance to him and his teaching. His praise, therefore, does not imply that they were mature for obviously they were not (1 Cor. 3:1 - 4). Holding to the ”teachings” perhaps refers to the oral traditions regarding Christ as the four Gospels were not available at this time. Because the Corinthians were headed in the right direction, and clinging to the teachings about Christ, they needed all the encouragement Paul could give. Even babies need to be praised when they take a few small steps.

It needs to be noted that Paul did not praise them for the way they came together in their assemblies (1 Cor. 11:17)

*** 1 Cor 11:3 - “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”**

This “chain of command” or “authority structure” is obvious.

- God is the head of Christ. Even though Christ is God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16), Jesus still only did what God wanted Him to do. While many passages teach this truth, the prayer of Christ in Gethsemane should suffice to make the point. Jesus surrendered His own will and obeyed what God wanted Him to do.
- Christ is the head of man. The man is to obey Christ just as Christ obeyed God.
- Man is the head of the woman. Women are to submit to their husbands: **“For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church” (Eph. 5:23).**

Responding to the suggestion that the word “head” means “source”, Greek professor Kenny Boles noted: “A careful examination of 2,336 times the word is used by 36 different ancient authors, in which not even once does ‘kephale’ mean source”

*** 1 Cor 11:4-10 - “Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head — it is just as though her head were shaved. If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head. A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and**

glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.”

In attempting to understand a riddle or solve a problem, it is wise to start with what we do know and then seek to understand what we do not know.

In this regard we know that prophets played an important role in the early church.

- The church is built upon a foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone (Eph. 2:20)
- Joel predicted that in the last days “sons and daughters” would prophesy (Acts 2:17).
- A prophet named Agabus came down from Jerusalem to Antioch and predicted a famine throughout the whole world (Acts 11:27).
- There were prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1).
- Judas and Silas were prophets (Acts 15:32).
- In the church God appointed first of all apostles, and then secondly prophets (1 Cor. 12:28).
- In the assembly two or three prophets were to speak and others were to weigh carefully what was said (1 Cor. 14:29).
- God gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers (Eph. 4:11).
- Etc.,

The word “prophet” literally means “one who speaks forth”. For example, Aaron was a prophet to Moses (Ex. 7:1). Because Moses had not spoken the Egyptian language for 40 years Aaron “spoke for him” in communications with the Pharaoh. The prophets in Old Testament times did not always predict the future but they always spoke for God. Often their message from God was to rebuke people for the sin in their lives. The true prophet speaks for God, and the false prophet speaks for the devil.

In Romans 12 Paul lists seven gifts in the early church. The word for “gift”, as you know, is “charismata” from which we get our English word “charismatic”. The seven “charismatic” gifts are prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing, leading, and showing mercy (Rom. 12:6 - 8).

The Corinthians were to desire spiritual gifts, but especially the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 14:1). The prophetic gift was important because it brought “strengthening, encouragement, and comfort” (1 Cor. 14:3). Evangelists and preachers may not be able to foretell the future, but they can still be prophets in the sense that they can strengthen, encourage, and comfort the brethren.

But now let us return to the text. What is the significance of the covering? Everyone is to submit to the authority of God in our lives so it is important to try and answer this question. Perhaps

one key to help us understand Paul's inspired words involves the different way that men and women dressed in Corinth.

The way we dress involves not only who we are, but who we want to be. The boy who wants to be a soldier will dress like a soldier. The girl who wants to be an actress will dress like an actress. The man who dresses like a woman is rebelling against the way God made him. The woman who dresses like a man is rebelling against the way God made her. Cross dressing, as you know, was forbidden by Moses ((Deut. 22:5). Since the women in Corinth wore veils, a man who covered his head was acting like a woman. While this spirit of rebellion is always wrong, it is particularly abhorrent while "praying or prophesying"

While dress styles change from age to age and country to country, the principle remains the same. Those who speak for God must be submissive to God. Nothing should detract from His supremacy in our lives. To dress in any way that manifests a spirit of rebellion against God is always inappropriate.

But let us also consider the expression "**because of the angels**". The emphasis of the early church involved spiritual reality. True worship no longer takes place in Jerusalem, but in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:24). Jewish worship involved physical things, like a mountain that could be touched (Heb. 12:18). Christian worship involves spiritual reality than cannot be touched. Regardless of where the early Christians met they believed that they were surrounded by a great cloud of spiritual witnesses. These witnesses included "thousands upon thousands" of angels (Heb. 12:22). There was rejoicing in the presence of the angels when a sinner repents (Lk. 15:10) and Timothy received his charge before the elect angels (1 Tim. 5:21). In the end of the age the angels will be reapers who remove all who do evil and throw them into a fiery furnace (Matt. 13:37 - 43).

When a woman properly covered her head, this "sign of authority" communicated to the angels her submissive spirit. If you are not concerned about what the angels think about the way you dress, you ought to be!

*** 1 Cor 11:11-16 - "In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God. Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice — nor do the churches of God."**

Paul now repeats the facts of creation which he mentioned in the previous verses.

- While both man and woman were created in the "image" of God (Gen. 1:27), , man is distinguished by reflecting both the "image and glory" of God (1 Cor. 11:7)

- Woman, by contrast, reflects the image of God, but the “glory of man”. The word “woman” means that she was taken from the man (Gen. 2:23).
- While all life comes from God, neither man nor woman can reproduce without the other. Consequently neither can be independent of the other.
- Originally woman was taken from the man, but thereafter life comes from her womb. Adam called his wife “Eve” because she would be the mother of all living (Gen. 3:20).
- Presumably, Adam and Eve’s hair grew at approximately the same rate. Adam’s role to till the ground and hunt for game, however, made it impractical for him to have long hair. This lesson comes from the “nature” of the roles God gave them.
- While Samson, as a Nazarite, was to never cut his hair (Jud. 13:5), long hair was a disadvantage to the farmer, hunter, or warrior. David’s rebellious son, Absalom, for example, had long hair, and it was a disadvantage to him in battle,. While riding his mule under a tree, his long hair became entangled in a tree and left him hanging in mid air (2 Sam. 18:9). Thus defenseless, Joab took three javelins and plunged them into his heart.
- If anyone was contentious about this, they needed to understand that this teaching was not given only to the Corinthians, but also to all the churches of God.
- There is obviously a cultural aspect to this teaching. We must be careful not to bind first century dress styles on 21st century Christians.
- Regardless of changing dress styles, however, no true believer should ever dress or act in a way that manifests a rebellious spirit.

*** 1 Cor 11:17-22 - “In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!”**

Again, these words remind us that Paul had received information regarding what was going on in Corinth. While he praised them earlier, with reference to their meetings, he does not praise them now. In fact, he charged that their meetings actually did them more harm than good. How sad! This places a new significance on our meetings. Just because we meet each week may not give us any spiritual advantage. If the teaching we receive is not Biblical, and the relationships we encounter are destructive, we might be well advised to stay home.

HERESY

Remember that the church is a “body” (1 Cor. 10:17; 11:29; 12:13 - 27; Etc.) Every body must have a way of getting rid of poison in order to be healthy. When your kidneys fail, for example, you will die. Paul writes that there **“have to be differences among you to show which of you**

have God's approval". The Bible word translated as "differences" is "haireisis" which means "heresy". Because there is so much confusion about the meaning of this word, let us study it more closely.

Our English word "heresy" comes from a Greek word "haireomai" which means "choice". It is used 9 times in the N. T. Scriptures (Acts 5:17; 15:5; 24:5; 24:14; 26:5; 28:22; Gal. 5:20; 1 Cor. 11:19; and 2 Pet. 2:1). In the KJV it is translated 5 times as "sect" and 4 times as "heresy". In the Jewish community people "chose" to be members of various "sects" such as Pharisees, Sadducees, Nazarenes, etc. As you know, people become Christians by "choosing" Christ. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (Jn. 14:6). He is the only True Foundation for uniting our divided universe. Caiaphas, who has been described as the Balaam's ass of the New Testament, prophesied that Jesus was not only to die to save the Jewish nation, but also to bring all the scattered children of God together and make them one (John 11:51, 52). This, as you know, is the eternal plan of God. God determined before the foundation of the world to **"bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ"** (Eph. 1:10). Jesus is the One and only foundation for Christian unity: **"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ"** (1 Cor. 3:11). Like metal is drawn to a magnet, believers are drawn to Christ (Jn. 12:32).

Thus we have a simple test by which to determine those who are "approved" and those who are "not". Those who cling to Jesus are "approved" and those who cling to someone else, or anything else, are not approved. Like poison excreted from a boil, when the heretic leaves the Body it is more healthy.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

It is interesting to note that often the very things that God gives to unite us, the devil uses to divide us. The Lord's Supper is just one of many examples. Eating together provides a special bond. Partaking of "one loaf" is to remind us that we are "One Body" (1 Cor. 10:17). The controversy experienced by the Corinthians is quite simple compared to the many controversies over the Lord's Supper today.

Let us review ! On the night before Calvary Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, gave it to His disciples and said **"Take and eat; this is my body"**. Then He took the cup, gave thanks, and offered it to His disciples, saying **"Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."** (Matt 26:26 -29)

Because the Lord's Supper involves the New Covenant we need to consider it in great detail. When Paul quoted the words of Isaiah: **"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what god has prepared for those who love Him"** (1 Cor. 2:9), he was not talking about heaven. He was talking about the amazing relationship with now have with God through the New

Covenant. The very next verse confirms that **“God has revealed it to us by His Spirit”**. Please focus your mental and spiritual energy on the Lord’s Supper as it is significant beyond words.

The early church continued steadfastly in the Apostles teaching, fellowship, the “breaking of bread” and prayers (Acts 2:42).

Paul was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost (Acts 20:16), yet he stayed 7 days in Troas so he could meet with the brethren there. Note that their meeting was on “the” first day of the week and not “a” first day of the week. The brethren met together on the day Christ came out of the tomb and also on the day when the church was established. The day of Pentecost came on the first day of the week (Lev. 23: 15, 16). Note also that the primary purpose for their meeting was to “break bread” (Acts 20:7). It seems therefore that the early church broke bread every first day of the week.

The church was established around A.D. 30 and Paul wrote to the Corinthians around A.D. 57. Thus the church had been observing the Lord’s Supper for over 25 years. It was the abuse of the Lord’s Supper by the Corinthians that occasioned this teaching. The Lord’s Supper was to demonstrate the unity of the One Body: **“Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.” (1 Cor 10:16-17)**

When the Corinthians came together, however, it was impossible for them to eat the Lord’s Supper for their assembly demonstrated division. The rich came early and ate all they wanted before the poor arrived. Paul certainly did not praise them for this ungodly behavior.

*** 1 Cor 11:23-26 - “For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.”**

Since the Lord’s Supper involves the new covenant, let us look more closely at the difference between the old and new covenants.

THE OLD COVENANT

- The Old Covenant was the Ten Commandments.
- Deut. 4:13 could not be more clear: **“He declared unto you His covenant, the Ten Commandments, which he commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets”**.

- Deut. 5:2 - 3 states: **“The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. It was not with our fathers that the Lord made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today.”**
- Deut. 5:22 states: **“ These are the commandments the Lord proclaimed in a loud voice to your whole assembly there on the mountain from out of the fire, the cloud and the deep darkness; and he added nothing more. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me.”**
- The tables of the covenant, as you know, were kept in a receptacle called “the ark of the covenant”.
- The relationship between the Old Covenant and blood is explained to the Hebrews in this way: **“This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep." In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. (Heb. 9:18 - 22).**
- The Old Covenant came from Mt. Sinai and brings slavery. It is therefore represented in an allegory by a slave woman named Hagar and her son Ishmael (Gal. 4:21 - 25).
- The symbolism of laws written in stone is also significant. Planting a stone does not produce life for there is no life in a stone. That’s why the covenant written in stone was, and is, a covenant of death. This is specifically stated in 2 Cor. 3:7)

THE NEW COVENANT

When Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper He described the cup as “the blood of the covenant” (Matt. 26:28). Before entering into any covenant it is wise to understand the nature of that covenant. For this reason, let us focus on the New Covenant. It is so radically different from the Old that the two cannot be combined. Like new wine and old skins, or new cloth and an old garment, the two are not compatible (Matt. 9:16, 17). Remember, Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper as the “blood of the covenant”.

Please consider: **“For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said: ‘The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will**

remember their sins no more.' By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.” (Heb 8:7-13)

While the Old Covenant came in a storm and was symbolized by a stone, the New Covenant is symbolized by a Seed. The first time Jesus is mentioned in the Bible He is called a “Seed” (Gen. 3:15). He is later designated as the “Seed” of Abraham, and the “Seed” of David, etc. There is of course life in a seed. As Paul wrote as a minister of the new covenant that the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Cor. 3:6).

When Jesus told Nicodemus that he had to be born again, He illustrated the new birth by reference to seeds. **“Flesh gives birth to flesh, but Spirit gives birth to Spirit” (Jn. 3:6).** Since every seed reproduces after its own kind, the only way we can get spiritual life is from a spiritual seed.

Nicodemus had fleshly life because a fleshly seed was planted in the fleshly womb of his fleshly mother. Since flesh and blood are temporal, they cannot inherit an eternal kingdom (1 Cor. 15:50).

The only way Nicodemus, or anyone else, can receive spiritual life is from a spiritual Seed. That's why we have to be born again.

Nicodemus received the “image” of Adam from his earthly father. That seed not only carried the DNA of his father, but also an elaborate schematic to determine every aspect of his earthly body. The complexity of human life is beyond the grasp of the finite mind.

When Nicodemus was born again, he received the “image” of God (1 Cor. 15:44 - 49). We bear a likeness of God because His Seed remains in us (1 Jn. 3:9). Just as a physical seed possesses the power to direct our physical development, the spiritual Seed also choreographs our development to help us be like Jesus. Remember, God has predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29).

So the inspired writer of Hebrews continues the contrast between the Old Covenant and the New:

“It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to

bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.” (Heb 9:23 - 28)

*** 1 Cor 11:27-32 - “Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.”**

Several lessons seem obvious from this passage.

First, this passage deals with the appropriate “manner” necessary to take the Lord’s Supper. It does not teach that we must be worthy to take the Lord’s Supper, for no one is worthy. We are all sinners dependent upon grace. Paul’s teaching involves taking the Lord’s Supper in a “worthy manner”. Remember the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector. The Pharisee was proud of himself, and the tax collector was ashamed (Lk. 18:9 - 14). Since God resists the proud, it was the sinful tax collector that approached God in a “worthy manner”. This is the humble attitude needed to properly take the Lord’s Supper.

Second, it shows the seriousness of take the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner. Those who take the Lord’s Supper in an improper manner are sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Those who rejected the Law of Moses died without mercy, but rejecting the blood of Christ is an even more serious offence (Heb. 10:26 - 31).

In the third place, it makes clear the error of closed communion. No church has the right to deny you the privilege of communing with Christ. It is His supper and if He invites you, no man has the right to deny you that privilege. Even visitors unknown to the church are well known by the Lord. That’s why we are taught not to examine one another, but to examine ourselves.

In the fourth place, as we partake we must “discern” or “recognize” the Body of Christ. There are two aspects that need to be recognized. First, the physical body of Christ that was nailed to the cross. Second, the spiritual Body of Christ which is the church. The Corinthians were specifically in error in this regard, for when they came together, they deliberately divided themselves from other members of the Body (1 Cor. 11:18 - 22).

Next, taking the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner resulted in sickness and death. Certainly these words involve spiritual illness, but perhaps also physical illness and death. We should never despise the chastening of the Lord (Heb. 12:6). If we “examine ourselves” in a proper way, we can avoid the judgement of the Lord (2 Cor. 13:5).

*** 1 Cor 11:33-34 - “So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each**

other. If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will give further directions.”

Matthew 7:12 has been called “The Golden Rule”. It reads: **“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”**

We should always treat one another in the way we would want to be treated, but especially when we come together in the church and partake of the Lord’s Supper! The way we take the Lord’s Supper should be an example of how God wants us to live every day of the week.

*** 1 Cor 12:1-3 - “Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus be cursed,’ and no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.”**

Here is another example of how the devil divides us by twisting something good into an instrument of division. **“There is only one body and one Spirit” (Eph. 4:4). “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13).** The Holy Spirit does not divide us. God gave the Holy Spirit to bring all believers together into One Body. Those who seek to divide the One Body do not have the Spirit (Jude 19).

In verse 1 of our text, the word translated as “spiritual gifts” is ‘pneumatikon’. Since the word “gifts” is not in the text, some have translated it as “spiritual matters”. Spiritual matters is a large subject including both good and bad spirits. Those who sacrifice to idols sacrifice to demons and not to God (1 Cor. 10:20). “Somehow”, the Corinthians were once led astray to worship mute idols and evil spirits. Now, however, they were to be no longer “led astray”.

One Bible word for “gift” is “charisma” from which we get the English word “charismatic”. Unfortunately, this good Bible word is often perverted to only refer to speaking in tongues. There are, of course, many spiritual gifts other than speaking in tongues. Seven “charismatic” or “spiritual” gifts are listed in Rom. 12:6 - 8 and speaking in tongues is not on the list. That list includes prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing, leading, and showing mercy. The ability to serve Christ in an unmarried state is also a charismatic gift (1 Cor. 7:7). Even salvation itself is a charismatic gift (Rom. 5:15, 16)

Paul wrote to “every one” regarding spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:3). Peter wrote that “each one” should use whatever gift he has received to serve others (1 Pet. 4:10). Charismatic gifts are not for only a few special people in the Body, all the members of Christ’s Body are gifted. In fact, our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). Anyone who does not have the Holy Spirit does not belong to Christ (Rom. 8:9). One thing the Holy Spirit does for believers is to lead us. The Scriptures are clear. The children of God are led by the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:14).

Just like your head directs the members of your body, Jesus directs the members of His Body. Your head directs the members of your body through a central nervous system, but Jesus directs the members of His Body by means of the Holy Spirit.

The word “creed” comes from the Latin word “credo” which means “I believe”. “Jesus is Lord” is the oldest creed among Christians, and perhaps the only creed that unites us. Denominational creeds were written to exclude. The Episcopalians accept the Anglican Creed, the Lutherans the Augsburg Confession of faith, the Presbyterians the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Methodists, the Methodist book of discipline, the Baptists the Philadelphia Confession of faith, etc. Unfortunately, there are often other creeds within each of these denominations. The Philadelphia Confession of the Baptists in 1688, for example, was deemed insufficient by some and they wrote the New Hampshire Confession in 1833. Then others wrote the Free Will Confession in 1868. The Baptist World Alliance lists 211 different Baptist denominations, not counting the largest which is the Southern Baptist Conference, which recently left that alliance.

There is a sense in which we need no creed but Christ. When Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the Living God, Jesus replied: **“Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.”** (Matt 16:17-18) The true identity of Christ comes from God and not man. When anyone confesses that “Jesus is Lord” they are confirming the testimony of God.

1 Cor. 3:11 bears repeating at this time: **“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.”** (1 Cor 3:11). While the Bible is inspired and profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16) it is not the foundation for unity among believers. Jesus is the foundation for unity. Please consider:

- The Jews on Pentecost were united by Jesus. They came from many different countries, and many different Jewish sects, but they were completely united in Christ. At this time not one book of the New Testaments Scriptures was written.
- The last book of the Bible was not written until around A.D. 96 and the oldest list of all 66 books dates back only to the fourth century. Christians, however, all during these formative years could still be united.
- Even after the invention of the printing press, millions of believers still do not yet have a Bible and thousands do not even have a written language. This does not keep them, however, from being united in Christ.
- Illiterate pagans who are born again become our brothers and sisters in Christ even though they do not have a Bible and cannot even read.
- Yes! We need the Bible. Just as the Hebrew nation could not survive without manna, the Christian cannot survive without the Bible (Deut. 8:3). This does not detract from the fact, however, that the foundation of our unity is still in Christ.
- Please be cautious about adding to this old and simple creed. These three words. “Jesus is Lord” can unite us. Because members of God’s family are of different ages and abilities, we often do not always understand the words of our Heavenly Father in the same way. Our

“fraternity”, however, is based upon “paternity”. If God is our Father we are brothers in Christ whether we agree with one another or not (Heb. 2:11).

* **1 Cor 12:4 - 11 - “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”**

At the risk of being redundant, the focus of the Spirit, and the focus of this letter is unity. The same Spirit gives “different kinds of gifts”, “different kinds of service”, and “different kinds of working”. There is still only One God (Eph. 4:6), however, and He is bringing us together in Christ. Our differences should never divide us for it is God Himself Who makes us different.

- Different “gifts” - as we have already pointed out, the word translated as “gifts” is “charisma”. The root word “charis” which means “grace”. We do not deserve our gift, but it is freely given to us by God.
- Different “service” - the word “service” is from “diakonia” from which we get our word “deacon”.
- Different “working” - the word “workings” is from “energema” from which we get our word “energy”.

This is not really complicated. Paul wrote to the Philippians that God works in us to “will” and to “act” (Phil. 2:13). The new convert first has the desire to do something, then God gives them to ability to make it happen.

This same message is in the passage before us. God gives us a gift to help us serve, and then gives us the energy to make it happen.

God gives to “each one” a manifestation of His Spirit for a common good. Then nine different specific gifts are mentioned.

- **“Wisdom”** - Wisdom, as you know, is promised to all who ask for it in faith: **“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.” (James 1:5-8)** Over and above this wisdom promised to everyone, the

- Holy Spirit has especially gifted certain in the Body with the gift of supernatural wisdom.
- “Knowledge” - Someone has observed that knowledge of the accumulation of facts, and wisdom is the ability to use those facts. The late Dr. Henry Morris wrote a book titled *“Men of Science, Men of God”*. In this book he gave brief biographies of 101 believers who were pace setters and pioneers in many scientific disciplines. Each of these scientists, I’m sure, would give credit to God for helping them to obtain knowledge. Peter, by contrast, received knowledge from God by direct revelation. God revealed to him that Ananias and Sapphira were lying to the Holy Spirit about the money they received from selling a piece of property (Acts 5:1 - 11). God also gave others this gift of supernatural knowledge.
 - “Faith” - No one can be saved without faith, but God gave to some a supernatural measure of faith. The apostles, for example, certainly had faith. When they encountered a certain demon possessed boy, however, they didn’t have enough faith to heal him. Jesus did have enough faith. He explained their failure by their lack of faith (Matt. 17:14 - 23). Some people have enough faith to move mountains, but others do not.
 - “Gifts of healing” - Everyone can pray and receive answers to prayer for healing. But certain people in the Body are especially gifted in this regard. Peter’s shadow, for example, apparently had healing power (Acts 5:15) and Paul could even transfer healing power from himself to a handkerchief (Acts 19:12).
 - “Miraculous powers” - The power that raised Christ from the dead is available to all believers (Eph. 1:17 - 23). As in the previous examples, however, the Holy Spirit gave certain individuals exceptional supernatural powers. Philip, for example, had the power to do miraculous signs (Acts 8:6). Apparently, he could not pass on this gift to others. That’s why the apostles sent Peter and John to assist him. The apostles could lay hands on believers and impart special powers from the Holy Spirit, but Philip could not (Acts 8:18).
 - “Prophecy” - As we have already pointed out, the prophet was merely one who spoke for another, as Aaron spoke for Moses. The major role of prophets in the Bible was to speak for God, much as preachers of the Gospel speak for God today. We are to seek for the gift of prophecy so that we can strengthen, encourage, and comfort the brethren (1 Cor. 14:1 - 5). It seems, however, that prophets like Agabus could predict famines (Acts 11:28), and Paul’s imprisonment (Acts 28:10, 11). There is a sense in which all can prophesy (1 Cor. 14:31) and also a sense in which only a few have the prophetic gift.
 - “Distinguishing between spirits” - No one was to forbid a prophet to speak, but everyone is cautioned to “test everything” (1 Thess. 5:21). John wrote that we should test the spirits because many false prophets had gone out into the world (1 Jn. 4:1). All the sheep of God are somehow able to recognize the voice of the Shepherd (Jn. 10:4). Some in the body, however, are especially gifted to distinguish between the good spirits and the bad.
 - “Speaking in different kinds of tongues” - When the church began the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to speak in other tongues. On that occasion, people from all over the world heard the Gospel preached in their own language. This was apparently accomplished without the need for an interpreter (Acts 2:1 - 12). The spiritual gift mentioned here was different. These different kinds of tongues had to be interpreted. If there was no one to interpret the person with the gift of tongues was to keep silent (1 Cor. 14:28).
 - “Interpretation of tongues” - At Pentecost, the people heard the Gospel in known languages,

such as the language of the Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, etc. Paul, however, made reference in I Cor. 13:1 to the tongues of “men and angels”. Just as some had the supernatural gift to speak in other languages, others had the supernatural gift to interpret what they were saying. As we have said, if there was no interpreter, the person with the gift of tongues was to keep silence.

All of these spiritual gifts came from the same Spirit and were given to various individuals just as the Spirit chose.

*** 1 Cor 12:12-13 - “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”**

The reference to the church as a “body” is significant. The church of Jesus Christ is an “organism” and not an “organization”. The Scriptures never refer to “members of the church”, only “members of the Body” (Rom. 12:4; 1 Cor. 12:24; Eph. 3:6; 4:25; 5:30; Col. 3:15; etc.) Unfortunately, many become members of an earthly organization without ever making contact with Christ (Matt. 7:22, 23).

It is also important to note that there is only “One Body”. When the church in Jerusalem was scattered by persecution the Good Shepherd never lost contact with any of His sheep. Or to use the analogy of our text, the Head never lost contact with any member of His Body. Because there is only “One Body” when the believers in Jerusalem faced hardship and famine, other members of the Body throughout the world provided help by means of generous financial contributions (2 Cor. 8, 9). When you drop a heavy object on your toe, your whole body will react and try offer relief. How simple! How profound!

As we have already remarked, what God gives us to bring us together, the devil uses to divide. Baptism is another illustration of this. There is only “one baptism” (Eph. 4:5). It doesn’t matter whether you are rich or poor, Jew or Greek, male or female, slave or free, there is only “one baptism”. This common experience introduces us to the “One Body”. Or to say it in another way, we are “baptized into Christ” (Gal. 3:27). Unfortunately, the devil has somehow convinced many to argue about the obvious.

Here is a brief overview of baptism.

- Jesus commanded all nations to be baptized by the authority of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:18 - 20). This single Scripture should end all arguments.
- The apostles dutifully obeyed this command. Every time someone confessed Christ, they were immediately baptized (See Acts 2:38 - 41; 8:36 - 40; 16:29 - 34; 22:16; etc. Since Jesus has “all authority” where does anyone get any authority to postpone baptism.

- Jesus taught us to pray that God's will would be done on earth, just as it is done in heaven (Matt. 6:10). When God commanded an angel to shut the mouths of lions that were about to eat the prophet Daniel (Dan. 6:22), can you imagine the angel postponing obeying that command?
- Since Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize all believers (Mk. 16:15, 16), we can safely assume that all the believers in Corinth were baptized. Our text confirms this: **"We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body"**.
- When Paul said **"Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the Gospel" (1 Cor. 1:17)**, he was not teaching that people should not be baptized. In fact he just told them he had baptized Crispus, Gaius, the household of Stephanas, and perhaps others. The point is that everyone needs to be baptized to obey Christ, but Paul often chose to delegate that responsibility to others. All the Corinthians were baptized, but Paul only baptized a few.
- Remember, Jesus was baptized to fulfill all righteousness (Matt. 3:15). Those who refused to be baptized rejected the counsel of God (Lk. 7:30). Yet Jesus did not personally baptize anyone, but delegated that responsibility to others (Jn. 4:2).
- The Holy Spirit obviously is involved in our baptism. When Jesus was baptized the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove and lighted on Him (Matt. 3:16). Peter promised that when we believe and are baptized we will receive the remission of our sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Because we are baptized "by one Spirit" this not does not necessarily infer that everyone is to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
- Why would anyone call Jesus Lord, and then not do what He commanded (Lk. 6:46)?

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

- John the Baptist said that he baptized with water, but One coming after him would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Since John immediately explained that the One they were expecting would gather his wheat into the barn and burn the chaff with unquenchable fire, I am assuming that the baptism of fire does not refer to the tongues like fire at Pentecost.
- This prophecy by John the Baptist was realized on the Day of Pentecost when the church was founded. Jesus made reference to this just before ascending into heaven. He said: **"Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."** (Acts 1:4-5)
- As these believers were immersed in the Holy Spirit, they spoke in tongues that were understood without the need for an interpreter (Acts 2:3 - 12).
- This same promise was remembered by Peter when the household of Cornelius was baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:16).
- Please note that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was a PROMISE and not a command. If you "commanded" someone to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, how would they obey that command?
- We are commanded, however, to be "filled with the Spirit" **"Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,**

always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Eph 5:18-20) Apparently, we can be “filled” with the Spirit just as we can be “filled” with wine. It seems that being filled with the Spirit is different from being baptized by the Spirit.

- There are at least three ways we can receive the Spirit and increase His influence in our lives.
 - God gives the Holy Spirit to those who keep on asking (Lk. 11:13).
 - God gives the gift of the Spirit to those who repent and are baptized (Acts 2:38)
 - God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32).
- Remember! While the Holy Spirit manifests Himself in many different ways, there is still only One Spirit (Eph. 4:4).
- The Holy Spirit we receive is precisely the same Holy Spirit that operated in the life of Jesus. We do not however receive the Holy Spirit in the same measure that Jesus received Him. Remember, Jesus received the Spirit “without limit” (Jn. 3:34).

We repeat, God gives the Holy Spirit to unite a fragmented and divided world. **“For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”**

*** 1 Cor 12:14-20 - “Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.”**

When you were born the first time, God knitted you together in your mother’s womb (Ps. 139:13). From the moment of conception your physical characteristics were determined. You received 23 chromosomes, and 15,000 genes from each parent. Everything about you physically was thus determined from day one. The combination of these genes and chromosomes determined your sex, facial features, the color of your skin, and everything else about your physical body. Your physical DNA has never changed. In addition to your physical appearance, your inward parts were also in that original divine blueprint. This included the intricate nature of your heart, brain, lungs, etc. Because you were born of your father’s physical seed, you bear the “image” of your earthly father. His DNA is in every drop of your blood.

When you were born again, you receive the image of your Heavenly Father (1 Cor. 15:49). Because His Seed within you produces new life, you are a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17) This new life causes you to be more like your Heavenly Father every day (1 Jn. 3:9). Since it is God Who places you in His Body, He also determines what function you will perform.

God is Sovereign. He is the Potter, and we are the clay. We have no right to say to God: "Why have you made me like this?" (Rom. 9:20). This is true about our old man who is physical, and also our new man who is spiritual.

Four parts of the human body are mentioned in our text (1) Foot, (2) Hand, (3) Ear, and (4) Eye. Let's take a moment and examine these one at a time.

1. Leonardo DaVinci said: "The human foot is a masterpiece of engineering and a work of art". It has 26 bones, 33 joints, and over 100 muscles. The arch of the foot has ligaments that stretch and contract with every step. Acting in harmony with the calf muscles this helps to store up energy and provide a spring in every step.

2. There are 27 bones that make up the wrist and hand. Prosthetic engineers are yet to design anything as efficient and useful as the human hand. This amazing combination of bones, tendons, muscles, and nerves enables us to thread a needle, type on a computer, or catch a football. At the same time your hand can be tough enough to break a brick with a karate chop.

3. Some consider the ear to be the most complex sensory system in your body. There are 3 little bones in your ear that never grow. This enables your ear to hear middle C on the piano in precisely the same way regardless of your age or size. Your ear can process minute waves of sound from molecules striking your ear drum and transmit them to your brain as words or music. The minuscule difference between sound entering one ear and then the other enables you to immediately tell from which direction the sound is coming.

4. The eye is an interrelated system with about 40 sub systems. The retina has 137 million rod like cells for black and white vision, and 7 million cone shaped cells that enable you to see in color. The eye, the optic nerve, and the visual cortex are able to capture, deliver, and interpret 1.5 million pulse messages a millisecond.

When you became a new creation, we can be confident that God designed your spiritual reality to be more amazing than your physical reality. Remember! The things we see are only temporal. It is the unseen things that are eternal (2 Cor. 4:18).

*** 1 Cor 12:21-26 - "The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it."**

Every part of the body is useless without other parts of the body. A hand cannot function without an arm, wrist, and the circulation of blood, Etc. It cannot catch a ball without the eye or feel pain without sensitive nerves that send signals to the brain. This is true of every member of the body. We cannot speak with certainty regarding “those parts of the body that seem to be weaker”, yet are indispensable. Consider, by way of example, however, your kidneys. Your kidneys are not seen, admired, or talked about, yet they are indispensable. Your kidneys contain 64 miles of piping and every day separate 180 quarts of filtrate. 178 quarts of purified blood are returned to your system and 2 quarts of poison are expelled as waste. Your liver is also indispensable. It is designed by God to regulate the amount of sugar in your blood. When you have eaten more than you need, the liver will store the excess. It keeps a reserve of aminos and glycogen on hand for emergencies. The speed of your blood is controlled by the vasomotor center at the base of your brain. Your blood flows slowly when you are resting, but faster during times of strenuous activity. Even the lowly elbow has an important part to play in helping your body to function more efficiently.

Therefore, let us celebrate our differences and not look down upon any member of the Body!

*** 1 Cor 12:27-31 - “ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts.”**

Some commentators prefer to believe that the Corinthians are “a” body of Christ and not “the” body of Christ. This seems in conflict with Paul’s repeated statements that there is only one Body, and by one Spirit we are all baptized into it. Please prayerfully consider this lengthy quotation from a very old and rare book by Thomas L. Lindsay. The book is THE CHURCH AND THE MINISTRY IN THE EARLY CENTURIES and the following quote is found on pages 14 - 15:

“The unity of the Christian Church . . . is not confined within the bounds of space and time as merely material entities are. It can be present in many places at the same time, and in such a way that, as Ignatius says, ‘where Jesus Christ is, there is the whole Church’. The congregation at Corinth . . . was not a Body of Christ, for Christ is not divided; but the Body of Christ in its unity and filled with the fulness of His powers. It is in this One Body, present in every Christian society, that our Lord has placed his ‘gifts’ or charismata . . .

The Christians of the early centuries clung to this thought, and we have a long series of writers, from Victor of Rome, in the second century, down to Clement of Alexandria and Origen, who tell us that the whole Church of the redeemed with Christ and the angels, is present in the public worship of the individual congregation. The promise of the Master that where two or three were gathered together in His Name there would He be in the midst of them, was placed side by side with the thought in the Epistle to the Hebrews that believers are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses; and the combination suggested that in the simplest action of the smallest Christian

fellowship there was the presence and the power of the whole Church of Christ . . .”

I think this is true. Christian worship does not center around anything that can be touched with human hands, it centers around Christ, whom we have not seen you love (1 Pet. 1:8). This is precisely the emphasis of Scripture that we have not come to a mountain that can be touched: **“But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”** (Heb 12:22-24)

Let us now consider those whom God has appointed in the Church.

- First of all God has appointed apostles. Remember that the Church is built upon a foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ being the Chief Cornerstone (Eph. 2:20). The word “apostle” literally refers to one who is sent (*apo* - from and *stello* - to send). There are three levels of apostles mentioned in the Bible.
 - Jesus occupies the highest level of apostleship as He was “sent” by God. We are to fix our thoughts on Him as the apostle and high priest whom we confess (Heb. 3:1).
 - The next level of apostles are the 12 “sent” by Christ. This too was a unique position as these men will sit upon 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28). Remember also that the wall of that celestial city is built upon 12 foundations, and on them are the names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb (Rev 21:14)
 - The third level of apostles are those “sent” by the church. This list includes men like Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14), other messengers “sent” by the churches (2 Cor. 8:22); also Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25) and Silas (1 Thess. 2:6). Those sent by the church obviously do not have the same authority as do Christ and the Twelve.
- Secondly, God appointed prophets. While we have already commented on the prophetic gift it is important to remember that God chose to involve man in the process of evangelizing the world. God gave man this privilege, not angels. Faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10:17) and salvation comes through preaching (1 Cor. 1:21).
- In the third place God appointed teachers. There are four commands in Matt. 28:18 - 20 (1) Go; (2) Make disciples (3) Baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; (4) Teach them to obey everything Christ commanded. Three of these commands are given in the form of participles. The only imperative is to “make disciples”. The Greek word is “*matheteusate*” which is the 2nd pers. pl. aor. 1 imper. act of “*matheuo*”. A disciple is a student. You can plant churches without making disciples, but you cannot make disciples without planting a church. Disciples, of course, are to continue to receive teaching that they may obey everything Christ commanded.
- Then God appointed workers of miracles. Everyone must have faith to be saved, and anyone with faith can receive answers to prayer. Yet, God in His infinite wisdom saw fit to empower some with the special ability to work miracles. Miracles can sometimes cause unbelievers to pay attention to the preaching of the Word. For example: **“When the crowds**

heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said.” (Acts 8:6)

- Next come special gifts of healing. While all supernatural healing is miraculous, all miracles do not involve healing. Ananias and Sapphira, for example, experienced miraculous power, but were killed, not healed (Acts 5:1 - 11).
- Then God appointed some with the special ability to help others. When the early church needed money God gave to Barnabas the special ability to meet that need (Acts 4:36, 37). When Paul was deeply discouraged God used Titus to bring him comfort (2 Cor. 7:6). When Paul needed help in Rome, the church in Philippi sent Epaphroditus to meet that need (Phil. 2:25 - 30). While everyone can help others on many occasions, God has appointed some in the church with the special ability to help others.
- God also appointed some to be administrators. Everyone has some ability to get organized, but some are especially gifted in this area. The Bible word for used here is “kubernesis” which is used in Acts 27:11 of the pilot of a ship. When the ship was beset by a storm the pilot immediately began to give orders.. No ship can be successfully piloted by a committee. God also saw this same need in the church and thus gave some the gift of administration.
- Last on the list are those gifted to speak in different kinds of tongues. This is an important gift, but not the most important. Certain clear cut instructions are given regarding the use of this gift. Only two or three are to be permitted to speak in tongues, and then only if there is an interpreter. If there is no interpreter the speaker is to keep quiet. (1 Cor. 27 - 28) Paul wrote: **“ I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. 19 But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.” (1 Cor 14:18-19)**

Again we repeat the warning about the devil using good things to divide us. Not everyone was an apostle, prophet, or teacher, Etc. but all of these gifts were given by God for the good of the congregation. They should never been the source of strife and division. While God arranges the body as it pleases Him, we are still instructed to “earnestly desire the greater gifts (1 Cor. 12:31).

*** 1 Cor 12:31-13:3 - “And now I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.”**

Paul wrote to the Ephesians that the love of Christ “surpasses knowledge” (Eph. 3:19). It is better experienced than understood. Please prayerfully consider the following Scriptures about love.

- **“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.” (1 John 4:7-8)**
- **“Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul**

and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matt 22:37-40)

- "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35)
- "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)
- "But the fruit of the Spirit is love . . ." (Gal 5:22)

1 Cor. 13 is known as the "Love Chapter" of the Bible. Note that it comes in the midst of teaching about spiritual gifts. There is obviously a spiritual dimension to the love described in this chapter.

Please consider again the disciples of Jesus prior to Pentecost. Jesus had empowered them to **"heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons"** (Matt. 10:8). Yet, there was some other "power" they were to wait on. Jesus specifically commanded them not to leave Jerusalem until they received the gift that the Father promised (Acts 1:4). Once they received this "power" then they could leave Jerusalem and become His witnesses to the world (Acts 1:8).

I am convinced that this promised gift involved love. There is a sense in which Bible teaching about love is not new. The book of Deuteronomy commanded the Israelites to love God with all of their hearts, soul, and strength (Deut. 6:5). Leviticus 19:18 also commands that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. The "new" aspect of love commanded by Christ was that we are to love one another as He loves us. It is one thing to intellectually know that we are to love our enemies, but it takes a new dimension to put this love into practice.

Jesus gave this new command in the upper room the night before He was crucified. At that time the disciples apparently didn't even love one another, let alone their enemies. It was on this night, as you recall, that a "dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered the greatest" (Lk. 22:24). As long as they were thinking like this they were not ready to represent Christ to the world.

It needs to be remembered that the Corinthians did not lack any spiritual gift (1 Cor. 1:7). At the same time, however, they were so immature that Paul had to feed them with milk and not solid food (1 Cor. 3:1 - 4). Their immature jealousy and quarreling could be cured by the Jesus kind of love produced by the Holy Spirit.

Of all the spiritual gifts given by God, love is the "most excellent". It is more important than tongues, prophecy, or mountain moving faith. It is desirable, invincible, and eternal.

*** 1 Cor 13:4-7 - “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, 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.”**

When a beam of light is passed through a prism it becomes all the colors of the rainbow. It is the same beam of light, but it manifests itself in a variety of different colors and shades. So also with the light of love. This same truth helps us to understand the “fruit of the Spirit” as described in Galatians 5:22 - 26). Note that the Scriptures do not say that the “fruits of the Spirit are” but the “fruit of the Spirit is”. The Holy Spirit produces love which manifests itself in a variety of ways. Here is a brief list of some of the wonderful attributes of love.

- Love is “**patient**”. Peter asked if he was required to forgive his brother up to seven times, Jesus responded that he was to forgive him seventy seven times (Matt. 18:22).
- Love is “**kind**”. The Scriptures teach over and over that God is kind (Rom. 2:4; 11:22; Titus 3:4; Etc.) The Holy Spirit helps us to manifest kindness so we can be like God.
- Love “**does not envy**”. Sometimes it is easier to “mourn with those that mourn” than “rejoice with those who rejoice” (Rom. 12:15). When we love as God wants us to we do not envy those who are more successful than we are.
- Love “**does not boast**”. Earlier in this letter Paul pointed out that God deliberately chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise (1 Cor. 1:27). He did this so that anyone who boasts should boast in the Lord (1 Cor. 1:31).
- Love “**is not proud**”. As you know, the original sin in heaven involved the fact that Satan became proud (Ez. 28:17). No wonder God hates pride (Prov. 6:17). No wonder love is not proud!
- Love “**is not rude**”. Those who have the mind of Christ are more interested in promoting others than they are in promoting themselves. In humility of mind, love causes us to consider others better than ourselves (Phil. 2:3).
- Love “**is not self seeking**”. On the night before Calvary Jesus washed the feet of His disciples (Jn. 13:1 - 17). Love enables us to see the needs of others before our own.
- Love “**is not easily angered**”. Anger is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:20) and it does not bring about the righteous life that God desires (Ja. 1:20). We are constantly warned in Scripture against anger (Eph. 4:31; 6:4; Col. 3:8; Etc.)
- Love “**keeps no record of wrongs**”. Absalom never forgot that his brother Amnon raped his sister. Two years later Absalom killed his brother (2 Sam. 13:23 - 29). David, by contrast, loved Absalom so much that he was willing to forget all the bad things in his life (2 Sam. 18:33).
- Love “**does not delight in evil**”. Jerusalem was so filled with evil that God decided to have the city destroyed. Jesus did not delight in this, he wept over Jerusalem (Lk. 19:41 - 44).
- Love “**rejoices with the truth**”. When the prodigal son “came to his senses” and recognized the truth, his father rejoiced (Lk. 15:22 - 24). The older brother, as you know, did not rejoice. Love causes us to rejoice with truth.

- Love “**always protects, always trusts, always hope, always perseveres**”. When Jesus was crucified His mother stood “near the cross” (Jn. 19:25). She did this because she loved.
- **LOVE NEVER FAILS!** Other gifts like prophecies, tongues, and knowledge will someday pass away, but love will not.

The Apostle John at one time had such a violent temper that Jesus called him a son of thunder (Mk. 3:17). Later he would see the power of love and write: **“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”** (1 John 4:7-12)

*** 1 Cor 13:8-12 - “Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”**

Little children lack discernment and must be taught a proper set of values. A small child, for example, may prefer a cheap toy to a diamond ring, or pretty wrapping to the gift inside. Loving parents patiently teach them a proper sense of values. Though the Corinthians may have had 10,000 guardians, they didn’t have many fathers (1 Cor. 4:15). Because Paul considered himself as a father to them, he wanted them to understand that the things we see are temporal (2 Cor. 4:18). Even he people whom Jesus healed ultimately died. We must constantly be reminded that it is not foolish to give up the things you cannot keep to gain the things you cannot lose. Though John the Baptist never performed a miraculous sign (Jn. 10:41), he was still the greatest prophet ever born of a woman. Even more remarkable is the fact that the least in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than John (Matt. 11:11).

As we have already stated, the devil does everything he can to divide the people of God. The wonder of Bible baptism, the mystery of the Lord’s Supper, the gift of His Holy Spirit and the glorious promise of His return have all be used by the devil to divide the people of God. So also with gifts of the spirit and miracles. Unfortunately, these too have been a battleground where sincere believers disagree and divide.

Some time ago a prolific author and professor of Greek took the view that the word “perfect” in our text refers to the completed revelation of God. He felt that miraculous gifts were like

scaffolding. Scaffolding is only necessary until the building is completed. Thus, when the last of the Scriptures was written, he believed that miraculous gifts ceased to exist. His teaching was even put in print in a book. Some time later he changed his mind and felt so strongly about it that he asked the publisher to insert a page in each book reflecting his change of mind. I mention this to emphasize that honest Bible students can disagree, even with themselves. Please do not let the devil divide the Body of Christ!

Jesus taught that men should always pray and not give up (Lk. 18:1). God is still perfectly capable of answering prayers. All over the world prayers are being answered in ways that defy what we have come to consider as the “Laws of Nature”.

If God does not choose to answer your prayer in the way that you want Him to, do not be discouraged. Remember the example of Paul. He prayed three times that God would take away his thorn in the flesh, but God chose not to do so. While this thorn was a “messenger from Satan”, God still used it to teach Paul that the power of Christ was made perfect in his weakness (2 Cor. 12:7 - 10).

*** 1 Cor 13:13 - “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”**

As we have already point out, all truths are equally true but not all truths are equally important.

The Jewish Rabbis listed 613 commandments in the Law of Moses. All of these commandments were equally true, but they were not all equally important. Jesus said so! Out of all these commandments, Jesus selected two upon which all of the Law and the Prophets could be suspended.

“Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.’ ” (Matt 22:37-40)

Faith, hope, and love are all essential. Because they are all essential we may be tempted to discount this Scripture as irrelevant. Before doing so, however, let us learn a lesson from history.

Martin Luther discovered the truth of justification by faith and played a significant role in reforming the church. He is to be congratulated for this discovery for without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). But love is more important than faith and apparently Luther didn’t understand this. In 1524 a large group of peasants rebelled against the nobility. They called themselves the “Evangelical Brotherhood”. They began attacking those who lived in castles believing that God was inspiring them to kill just as He had done Gideon during the period of the

Judges. Luther, who lived at Wartburg Castle while translating the New Testament Scriptures into German, ranted against these peasants with unbelievable hatred. He ordered that they be “*crushed, strangled, and stabbed, privately and publicly, by whomsoever can do it, just as one would beat to death a mad dog*”. (Manual of Church History by Albert H. Newman, Vol 2, p. 80) About 100,000 peasants were slaughtered like sheep.

John Calvin was another great reformer who also seemed to not understand or implement the priority of love. In 1541 he established his “Theocracy” in Geneva, completely confident that he was doing precisely what God wanted. Anyone who opposed him was considered Satanic. Calvin’s theology began what historians call the “Theocratic Reign of Terror”.

- No mercy was shown to enemies of the theocracy.
- A system of espionage was introduced where informers shared the fines imposed and children were encouraged to testify against parents.
- On Oct. 27, 1553 Michael Servetus was burned at the stake for daring to disagree with Calvin. After writhing in the flames for half an hour he cried out: “Jesus, thou Son of the Eternal God, have compassion on me”. Then he died.
- From 1542 - 1546, 58 were executed and 76 were banished.
- During the pestilence of 1545, 34 women were burned or quartered on suspicion of spreading the plague by magic.
- Calvin encouraged the public execution of rebellious children based on Deut. 21:18 - 21.
- In 1568 Phillippe Deville was beheaded for striking his father.

Jesus told us that we could recognize a teacher by the fruit he produced. You cannot gather grapes of thorns or figs from thistles. In this regard it seems that both the teach of Luther and Calvin have been weighed in the balance and found wanting. Please prayerfully consider these inspired words from Paul:

“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”
(Rom 13:8-10)

Faith, hope, and love are all essential, but the greatest of these is love.

*** 1 Cor 14:1-5 - “Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit. But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I would like every one**

of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified.”

The primary command of Christ to His Disciples was “follow me”. Vine, in his Expository Dictionary of N. T. Words, states that the expression “follow me” is found “77 times in the Gospels of following Christ, and only once otherwise, Mark 14:13”. Following Christ involved establishing new priorities. The man, for example, who wanted to “first” bury his father had the wrong priority (Lk. 9:59, 60). Following Christ involved forsaking anything that would detract from the priority of Christ. Following the way of love does the same. Christ must be first, and so must love.

If we should substitute the name of Jesus for love in 1 Cor. 13, the text would still be true: **“Jesus is patient, Jesus is kind. Jesus does not envy, Jesus does not boast, Jesus is not proud. Jesus is not rude, Jesus is not self-seeking, Jesus is not easily angered, Jesus keeps no record of wrongs. Jesus does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. Jesus always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Jesus never fails . . .”**

While following the way of love we can still “eagerly desire” spiritual gifts. If we have the Spirit of Christ, we will desire the gifts that will best advance the cause of Christ. The Psalmist said that if we would delight in the Lord, He would give us the desires of our heart (Ps. 37:4). Before you came to Christ your life was corrupted by evil desires (Eph. 4:22), but when you delight in the Lord He give you desires that are good. God, Who formed you in your mother’s womb, knows what spiritual gifts will be best in your life.

The gift of prophecy is of particular value for it “strengthens”, “encourages”, and “comforts” those who hear. Tongues, by comparison, are only helpful to the church if someone interprets.

The many references to speaking in tongues in this section indicate that the Corinthians needed teaching on this subject. Perhaps we do too! There are obviously different manifestations of this gift. As we have said before, when the church began God gave tongues that did not need to be interpreted. On that occasion devout Jews gathered out of every nation under heaven and they all understand what was being said in their own native language (Acts 2:8). As we have also said before, the gift of tongues referred to here is obviously different.

The phenomenon of speaking in tongues is real. This, however, does not mean that it always comes from God. When you encounter someone speaking in tongues, there are at least five possible explanations of what is taking place..

1. It could be coming from God. God is Sovereign and can do anything He wants to regardless of what we decide.
2. It could be coming from the devil. Ron Clements was at one time in a Sunday School class I taught. In 1987, he and two other classmates in Carl Junction, Mo., killed Steven Newberry as a

sacrifice to Satan. I heard Ron Clements testify in court that he would like on his bed in the form of an upside down cross, read the Satanic Bible, and speak in tongues to the devil.

3. It could have a medical explanation. A dear friend died some years ago speaking words his son could not understand. His son asked me if he was speaking in a special language to the angels. I do not know! This is certainly a possibility, but it is also possible that the lack of oxygen to his brain was preventing him from speaking words that could be understood.

4. It could be being faked. I knew of a man in Nevada who made fun of those who were speaking in tongues by deliberately faking the gift they treasured. While God is the judge, it seems inappropriate to make fun of people. God commands us to love everyone, even our enemies.

5. It could be a combination of the above.

Here is a brief review of what the Bible teaches about tongues from 1 Corinthians. This is only a brief summary - please read everything the Holy Spirit has to say on the subject.

- 1 Cor. 12:10 - The Holy Spirit distributes gifts as He pleases for the common good and tongues and interpretation of tongues are both included in the list.
- 1 Cor. 12:28 - Not everyone could speak in tongues.
- 1 Cor. 13:1 - Speaking in the tongues of men and angels is not as important as love.
- 1 Cor. 14:2 - Anyone speaking in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God. He utters mysteries in his spirit.
- 1 Cor. 14:4 - He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself.
- 1 Cor. 14:5 - Paul would like for everyone to speak in tongues, but rather that they prophesy.
- He who prophesies is greater than one speaking in tongues unless he interpret.
- 1 Cor. 14:6 - Paul would only come to speak in tongues if it was by “some revelation, or knowledge, or prophecy, or word of instruction”.
- 1 Cor. 14:9 - Unless you speak intelligible words you are only speaking into the air.
- 1 Cor. 14:13 - Anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret.
- 1 Cor. 14:14 - If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.
- 1 Cor. 14:18, 19 - Paul could speak in tongues more than all the Corinthians, but would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.
- 1 Cor. 14:21 - In the Law it is written that God would speak to the people through men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners. Even then they wouldn't listen.
- 1 Cor. 14:22 - Tongues are a sign for unbelievers, not for believers. Prophecy is for believers, not for unbelievers.
- 1 Cor. 14:23 - If the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, those who do not understand, or those who are unbelievers, will think you are out of your mind.
- 1 Cor. 14:26 - All spiritual gifts are for the strengthening of the church.
- 1 Cor. 14:39, 40 - Do not forbid to speak in tongues, but everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

*** 1 Cor 14:6-12 - “Now, brothers, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of**

instruction? Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the flute or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me. So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.”

Let us step back and consider again why Christ built the church and gave Himself up for it. As you know, every living thing must have an environment to survive. A fish cannot survive without water, and men cannot survive without air. Before God created any living thing He had to first create an entire eco-system so it could survive and grow.

His “new creation” is no exception. When unconverted people are “born again” they need the right kind of environment. Like little babies need a family, new believers need the church. When the family of God assembles on the first day the week they need the right environment. Common sense demands that believers need to understand what is being taught when the saints assemble. If a soldier hears a trumpet, but cannot understand what it means, he doesn’t know whether to go to bed, or go to war.

The use of “lifeless” things as an illustration helps us to focus on God. A flute or a harp are mere instruments. They have no ability to make music if someone is not playing them. Believers too are to be mere instruments in the hands of God. We do not assemble on the Lord’s Day to hear what I think, or you think, we assemble to hear what God has to say. Where there is no revelation from God, but people cast off restraint (Prov. 29:18).s

In the days of Moses worshipers were forbidden to make an altar with dressed stones (Ex. 20:25). Perhaps one reason why using a tool defiled the altar, is that it may detract someone from making God the center of worship. The assembly of the saints is not a place for mortal men to show off.

Regardless of what takes place in the assembly of the saints, the centrality of Christ needs to be maintained.

*** 1 Cor 14:13-17 - “For this reason anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind. If you are praising God with your spirit, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say "Amen" to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying? You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified.”**

As we will read later, **“The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets” (1 Cor. 14:32)**. There is no need for chaos among those controlled by the Spirit of Christ. Confusion and disorder come from the devil, not from God (1 Cor. 14:33).¹

Paul wrote to the Romans: **“We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: ‘The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.’ For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” (Rom 15:1-4)**

Paul wrote a similar message to the Galatians: **“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal 6:1- 2)**.

To the Philippians he wrote: **“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5)**.

Remember! The manifestations of the Spirit are given for the common good (1 Cor. 12:7). What you do in the assembly is to build up others. John the Baptist had it right, Jesus must increase, and we must decrease (Jn. 3:30). If you use your spiritual gift to make yourself look good, you are abusing what God has given you. So, if you have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16), you will take control of your spiritual gift so that it can be used to build up the Body.

When the church began about 3,000 people were baptized into Christ (Acts 2:41). Their conversion, however, necessarily involved their mind. No one can truly become a child of God based on mere emotions. We are transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2). The Bible word for repentance is “metaneo” which literally means to change your mind.

Note that in these four verses there are three references to the “mind”.

- **“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.”**
- **“So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind;”**
- **“I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind.”**

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that we are to “test everything” (1 Thess. 5: 21). Just as an assayer tests metals, we are to test teaching. Th is scrutiny not only involves teaching, but also singing. Just as it is wrong to teach error, it is also wrong to sing error.

Idolatry is not rational, but Christianity is. Isaiah made fun of idolaters by pointing out how irrational it is to cut down a tree and use part of it to cook your dinner, and the rest to make an idol which you intend to worship. How do you know you are not burning up your god and worshipping

fire wood? (See Is. 44)

The Bible word for “church” is “ekklesia” which means “assembly”. This word is used three times in Acts 19 to refer to a pagan “assembly” (Acts 19:32, 39, and 41). These pagan worshipers assembled and for two hours shouting “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians” (Acts 19:34). Note Acts 19:32: **“The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there.”**

How sad when the assembly of believers is in confusion and most do not even know why they are there.

*** 1 Cor 14:18-21 - I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue. Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults. In the Law it is written: ‘Through men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to me,’ says the Lord.”**

Many decisions we make as followers of Christ are not between right and wrong, but between better and best. Paul could speak with tongues more than “all of you”, but he didn’t. He could have spoken in tongues and also prayed for an interpretation, but he didn’t. Why? He answered this question by writing that he would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than 10,000 words in a tongue.

He urged them to “stop thinking like children”. Children are born self centered and selfish. When the infant is wet, dirty, or hungry it cries for attention. The infant does not stop to consider that its mother may be tired, sleeping, or sick. The infant is totally self centered. As the infant grows to maturity they must be taught to be considerate of others.

There is no doubt about it, Paul considered the Corinthians to be **“mere infants in Christ” (1 Cor. 3:1)**. Their lack of spiritual maturity helps us to understand what Paul wrote to them, and why.

The quotation from the Law about “strange tongues” and “lips of foreigners” is from Isaiah 28:11, 12. Unfortunately, the warnings of Isaiah were falling upon deaf ears. The priests and prophets were staggering with beer and befuddled with wine (Is. 28:7). “Very well then”, Isaiah warned, “with foreign lips and strange tongues God will speak to this people.”

Imagine the shock these priests would experience when they came home and found someone speaking the Assyrian language in their own house. Perhaps this would get their attention. On the day of Pentecost God did several things that got the attention of all who were present:

(See Acts 2:1 - 21)

1. God sent a violent wind from heaven through the temple and everyone “heard” the sound.
2. They also “saw” what seemed to be tongues of fire resting on those who spoke.
3. These speakers were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.
4. Everyone present heard them speak in his own native language.
5. Unbelievers present assumed they were drunk.
6. Peter insisted, however, that what they were experiencing was a fulfillment of a prophecy made by the prophet Joel.
7. God, of course, can use any method he wants to, to get people’s attention.

*** 1 Cor 14:22-25 - “Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers. So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and some who do not understand or some unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among you!”**

Those attending the assembly are divided into two groups, believers and unbelievers. The believers do not need the “sign” of tongues for they are already “convinced” about the reality of God and their need for instruction. While the primary purpose for the assembly is to benefit believers, it is inevitable that the light of Gospel truth will dispel darkness wherever it is found. Remember! Unbelievers are transformed by the renewing of their minds. If they do not understand, they cannot be converted.

Once, while taking a group of young men hiking, I gave to each a match and asked them to start a fire. There were plenty of dry leaves and small twigs available, but not one of them ignited a fire that lasted. One young man found some paper and for a minute or two had an impressive blaze that was over twelve inches high. Unfortunately, his fire, like all the others, burned out and disappeared. At this point I showed them how to build a fire. I started with just a few dry leaves and small twigs. A neglected fire, however, will always burn out. So I carefully added more twigs while the fire was hot. Next I added sticks that were a little larger. Soon we had a blazing fire and cooked our lunch. Once you have a good fire established you can even put wet logs on the fire and not put it out. In fact, a good hot fire will even melt snow and dry out logs near by. There is a lesson here regarding the church. It is best to start a fire with dry wood, and it is best to start a church with reliable people.

Timothy was told to teach “reliable men” because they would teach others. **“And the things**

you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” (2 Tim 2:2). As a point of interest, the word translated “men” in this passage is “anthropois” from which we get our English word “anthropology”. The word that refers to a male and not a female is “aner”. In other words, Timothy was to teach both reliable men and reliable women. Unreliable people are like wet wood. God cares about everyone and wants all men to come to the knowledge of the truth. But unreliable people need to be dried out and warmed up before they can be on fire for Christ.

When unbelievers “understand” that God is in the church, then they will be converted. Jesus once explained a simple way to tell good teaching from bad teaching. He said: **“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.”** (Matt 7:15-20)

It is a fact that the teachings of Jesus transform society for the better. Charles Darwin, for example, could not help but notice that the message of the Christian missionary was like an enchanter’s wand. When he returned to England and heard some speak disparagingly of Christianity, he rebuffed them with these words: *“They forget, or will not remember, that human sacrifices, and the power of an idolatrous priesthood—a system of profligacy unparalleled in any other part of the world—infanticide a consequence of that system—bloody wars, where the conquerors spared neither women nor children—that all these have been abolished; and that dishonesty, intemperance, and licentiousness have been greatly reduced by the introduction of Christianity. In a voyager to forget these things is base ingratitude; for should he chance to be at the point of shipwreck on some unknown coast, he will most devoutly pray that the lesson of the missionary may have extended thus far.”* (Journals of Research by Charles Darwin p. 414.)

Some years ago I exchanged letters with a woman who was convinced that the Bible denigrated women, and that Paul, in particular was guilty of making life hard for females. In our last exchange I challenged her to tell me where on earth she wanted to live where the Bible has never been taught. She responded that this was a good question and that she would get back with me after the holidays. That has been some 20 years ago and I still have received no reply.

When unbelievers taste the “fruit” of Christianity they can recognize that God is truly in the church.

*** 1 Cor 14:26-28 - “What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. If anyone speaks in a tongue, two — or at the most three — should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no**

interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God.”

We have observed that the church is God’s special environment where His new creations can survive and grow. As Paul wrote to the Romans: **“Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.” (Rom 14:19)** Everything done in the assembly is to build up and unify the Body.

This chapter, more than any other, provides insight into how Christians worshiped in the first century. Note, in particular, that more than one person was involved. Anyone who had a hymn from God could sing it. Anyone who had a word of instruction from God could say it. Two or three people could also speak in tongues provided there was an interpreter. Verse 29 also provides that two or three prophets could speak. Remember! The Body is not made up of one part but of many (1 Cor. 12:14).

At this point let us pause to consider the words “clergy” and “laity” which are often used in the modern church. The word **clergy** is not found in our English Bible. It comes from the Greek word “kleros” which is found 13 times in the N. T. Scriptures. It is translated 1 time as heritage, 2 times as inheritance, 3 times as lot, 5 times as lots, and 2 times as part. The word involves the idea of casting lots and indicates that certain people are “chosen” by God. God chosen people, however, are not just a few leaders robed in priestly garments. Every Christian has been chosen by God and is therefore a part of God’s clergy. This is made plain in in 1 Pet. 5:3 where elders are told not to “Lord it over God’s heritage”. The word translated “heritage” is “kleros”. The people being shepherded by the elders were called God’s clergy. All of Gods’ people are His chosen ones.

The word **laity** is not found in our English Bibles either. It comes from the Greek word “laos” which is found over 140 times in the N.T. Scriptures. Every time the word is found it is translated as “people”. A careful reading of Scripture reveals that the Bible words kleros and laos both refer to the same group of people. The people are God are called His clergy and the clergy of God are called His people.

Note also that spontaneity was an integral part of these meetings. Fresh manna is best! As we have already pointed out **“the spirits of the prophets are subject to the control of prophets”** (v.32). There is no reason for meetings of God’s people to degenerate to boring repetition or meaningless confusion.

*** 1 Cor 14:29-33 - “Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.”**

While there are many practical lessons to learn from this passage, please note that there are limits to our freedom in Christ. If you have the gift of tongues, you are free to use that gift in the assembly only if there is an interpreter. The exercise of this gift is limited to two or three individuals. If you are the fourth person who wants to speak in tongues, you must wait for another occasion. The same applies to prophets. If you are a prophet you are not free to exercise your gift any time you want to. If you are prophesying and another prophet receives a revelation from God you are to stop and allow the second prophet to speak. As in the case with speaking in tongues, only two or three prophets are to speak on any given occasion. If you are the fourth prophet, you must also surrender your freedom to the will to God and wait for another time.

As we have already said, we are to follow after the things that make for peace and mutual edification (Rom. 14:19). We are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but are to encourage one another to be faithful in our service to Christ (Heb. 10:25). An ant can eat an elephant, but not all at one time. We must be patient and realize that Christian growth also comes a little at a time.

Unfortunately, the Corinthians came together not for the better but for the worse. Their meetings did more harm than good (1 Cor. 11:17). Fortunately, the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to provide godly remedies for this problem.

*** 1 Cor 14:33-35 - “As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.”**

We began this brief study by stating: “This brief study is primarily for my own enlightenment and edification.” This is true, in particular, with the role of women in Christian service. My plan is to start by only putting pieces of the puzzle together with which I feel confident. You are, of course, free to disagree with me if your loyalty to Christ compels you to do so. Every child of God has the right to “find” meaning in the Father’s words. No child of God has the right to “give” it meaning.

The Catholic Church seeks to maintain unity by an “infallible interpreter”. The Wikipedia Encyclopedia explains the dogma with these words: *“Papal infallibility is a dogma of the Catholic Church that states that, in virtue of the promise of Jesus to Peter, the Pope is preserved from the possibility of error “When, in the exercise of his office as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, in virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church.” This doctrine was defined dogmatically in the First Vatican Council of 1869–1870, but had been defended before that, existing already in medieval theology and being the majority opinion at the time of the Counter-Reformation.”*

Many Protestants seek to maintain unity by an “infallible interpretation”. This is the reason

why they write creeds. Leaders in various denominations create a creed to unify those who they consider faithful, and exclude those whom they consider are not.

Unfortunately, neither approach seems to be answering our Lord's prayer for the unity of believers (Jn. 17:20 - 23).

Someone has said: "If a creed says more than the Bible it says too much. If it says less than the Bible it does not say enough. If it says the same thing as the Bible it is the Bible and is therefore not necessary".

I pray that my approach to this controversial subject will not polarize and divide the people of God. Remember! The greatest of all spiritual gifts is love!

I

GOD IS SOVEREIGN

Let us begin by pointing out the obvious. God is Sovereign and no man or group of men has the right to disregard what God has said simply because they do not like it. Lucifer was the original rebel who sought to elevate himself and disregard the will of God. We should never be like Lucifer.

The very essence of saying "Jesus is Lord" (1 Cor. 12:3) is to indicate by that confession that we are committed to do His will and not our own.

II

THE CHURCH IS DIFFERENT FROM THE SYNAGOGUE

When Paul came to Corinth he began reasoning with the Jews in the synagogue (Acts 18:4). When the Jews opposed him and became abusive he went next door to the house of Titius Justus and began Christian worship. Crispus, the synagogue ruler, became a believer and joined with them (Acts 18:8).

The synagogue was legalistic and frequently beat those whom they considered to be disobedient. Jesus warned His disciples that they would be flogged in the synagogues (Matt. 10:17; Mk. 13:9). Paul himself went from one synagogue to another beating those who believed in Jesus (Acts 22:19). When Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue in Corinth, failed to get Paul convicted before the proconsul of Asia his Jewish brothers beat him publically in front of the court (Acts 18:17).

The church was not to be legalistic like the synagogue, but was a family of faithful believers characterized by their love for one another (Jn. 13:34, 35).

III

INTENTIONS ARE IMPORTANT TO GOD

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Heb 4:12 KJV)

Intentions are always important, but especially when we gather to worship Jesus. Remember Annanias and Sapphira! They sold a piece of property and laid part of the money they received at the apostle’s feet. Both Annanias and Sapphira died because their “intentions” were wrong (Acts 5:1 - 11).

No song, hymn, or lesson should be presented with intentions that do not honor Christ. The Solomon said it like this: **“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” (Prov 4:23).**

IV

MEN AND WOMEN ARE STILL DIFFERENT

There is a sense in which men and women are the same in the eyes of God. Paul wrote: **“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Gal 3:26-29)**

There is also a sense in which sexual differences remain. Consider, for example, 1 Cor. 11:10 where a woman is required to have a sign of authority on her head because of the angels. It seems to me undeniable that there are restrictions given for those who speak in tongues, for those who are prophets, and for those who are women. Just because we are all Christians does not mean that when we assemble together men and women can use the same restroom.

We must also recognize that Christianity erases spiritual differences, other differences remain. Paul admonished Titus to teach “sound” doctrine (Tit. 2:1). The Bible word translated as “sound” is “hugiaino” from which we get our English word “hygiene”. Here is “sound” doctrine as defined by Paul:

“You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be

kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us. Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.” (Titus 2:1-10) Note that while all are believers, age and sexual differences still remain. It is “unsound” or “unhealthy” not to recognize this.

Spiritually speaking slaves and masters are the same in Christ. Philemon was a slave owner, and Onesimus was his slave. Since both of them were believers, they stood before God as equals. In the world, however, Onesimus was to obey his master whether he liked it or not: Paul put it like this to the Colossians: **“Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.”** (Col 3:22-25) It was “sound” or healthy for Titus to teach slaves to be obedient to their own master, but “unsound” or “unhealthy” to teach them not to.

In Eden God told Eve: **“Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you”** (Gen. 3:16). This is precisely what Paul wrote to the Ephesians. **“Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”** (Eph 5:22-24) While there is a sense in which husbands and wives are one, and we are all to be subject to one another (Eph. 5:21), wives are still to be in submission to their own husbands as the church is subject to Christ. There is, of course, a sense in which Jesus and Father are one (Jn. 10:30). This, however, does not mean that Jesus was not subject to the Father. Even though Jesus is “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16) He was still submissive to the Father and said: **“By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.”** (John 5:30)

When a woman becomes a Christian she does not stop being a woman. She still has the privilege of menstruation, pregnancy, and lactation which no man will ever have. Since men and woman are still different after conversion, we should not be surprised that their roles in the congregation are also different.

We must also observe that Christ and Christianity have made life better for women wherever the Bible has been taught. Women have consistently been treated as second class citizens throughout history all over the world. The Christian husband, however, loves his wife as Christ loved the church, and is even willing to give his life for her (Eph. 5:25 - 33). If you are a woman, you must know that this is true. If not, please tell me where on earth you want to live where the Bible has never been

taught?

Here is a brief and only partial list of things women can do, and did do in the early church.

- They can be saved and have an eternal reward equal to or greater than any man.
- They can bear children that will change the world as did Eve, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist.
- They can be like the prophetess Anna, and tell everybody about Jesus (Lk. 2:36 - 38).
- They can help support workers for Jesus like Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and many others (Lk. 8:2, 3)
- They can bring a whole town out to hear Jesus as did the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (Jn. 4:28 - 30).
- They can be famous wherever the Gospel is preach like the generous woman in Bethany (Matt. 26:6 - 13).
- They can receive spiritual gifts and use them for the building up of the Body of Christ.
- They can pray and prophesy (1 Cor. 11:3; Acts 21:9).
- They can be servants of the church as was Phoebe (Rom. 16:1).
- They can raise godly children as did Lois and Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5).
- They can open their homes to believers as did Mary and Lydia (Acts 12:12; 16:15).
- They can teach the younger women to be **“reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.” (Titus 2:3-5)**
- They can work hard for the Lord as did Mary, Tryphena and Tryphosa and others (Rom. 16:6, 12).
- They can do good and help the poor as did Dorcas (Acts 9:36).
- Elder widows without a family can be supported by the church (1 Tim. 5:3 - 8).
- Jesus calls women to His service and there is plenty of work for women to do.

Here is a brief and partial list of some things a woman cannot do.

- She cannot be a man, or father children.
- She cannot be the husband of one wife and consequently cannot be an elder.
- She cannot pray or prophesy with her head uncovered (1 Cor. 11:5).
- She must have a “sign of authority” on her head because of the angels (1 Cor. 11:10).
- Her ability to speak in the assembly is somehow restricted (1 Cor. 14:33 - 35).
- She cannot teach or have authority over a man (1 Tim. 2:12).

Within the last 10 days I have had lengthy conversations with two Bible scholars whom I greatly admire. Unfortunately, they do not agree on what a woman can do in the assembly. Both are very knowledgeable and honest in their desire to do the will of God

One brother gave me a 60 page booklet explaining his position on this controversial subject. Rather than subject you to lengthy arguments, permit me to make some general observations that may be of help.

V

EVERYONE IS TO HAVE A SUBMISSIVE SPIRIT

- Jesus was submissive and we are to have the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5).
- Diotrefes loved to be first (3 Jn. 9). This is the wrong attitude for anyone, whether man, woman or child.
- The submission of women is not based on culture.
 - Women are to be in submission “as the Law says” (1 Cor. 14:34).
 - Women are to be submissive because Adam was first formed, and then Eve (1 Tim. 2:11 - 15).
 - In explaining the relationship between husbands and wives Paul makes reference to the first marriage and a man leaving his father and mother and becoming one flesh with his wife (Eph. 5:31; Gen. 2:24).
 - I Cor. 11 explains that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God.
 - Paul’s teaching was not just for Corinth, but for “all the churches” (1 Cor. 7:17; 14:33).
- The doctrine of submission is for everyone. We are not only to submit to our spiritual leaders (Heb. 13:17), but also to one another. **“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” (Eph 5:21)**

VI

EVERYONE IS TO DO WHAT GOD TELLS THEM TO DO

- God gave a message to the boy Samuel that he was to deliver to Eli the High Priest (1 Sam. 3:10 - 18).
- God gave a message to the prophetess Miriam (Ex. 15:20, 21).
- God gave a message to a wise woman at Abel to keep their city from being destroyed (2 Sam. 20:14 - 22).
- God gave a message to Esther that she was to deliver to the King and save the Jews.
- God gave a message to Elizabeth to encourage Mary, the mother of Jesus (Lk. 1:44, 45).
- God gave a message for Mary the mother of Jesus to sing (Lk. 1:46 - 55).
- God gave a message to the prophetess Anna about the Christ child (Lk. 2:36 - 38)
- God gave Mary Magdalene a message which she was to deliver to the apostles (Jn. 20:17, 18).
- Paul told the brethren in Rome to give Phoebe any help she may have need of (Rom. 16:1, 2).

- Paul pleaded with Euodia and Syntyche to agree with one another in the Lord (Phil. 4:2).
- All believers are members of the One Body and are expected by God to function as He directs.
- Mary, the mother of Jesus, gave this wise advice regarding the words of Jesus: **“Do whatever He tells you” (Jn. 2:5).**
- If Jesus tells you to do something, do it!

VII

THE GOOD EXAMPLE OF RACHEL SAINT

Rachel Saint was born Jan. 2, 1914, and died Nov. 11, 1994. She was a missionary in Ecuador and chose to be buried in the wet soil of the Amazon rain forest where she had spent half of her life. Her home was a mere hut in the village of Tonampade, and her grave is only a few steps away. Her call to be a missionary reflects the humble and submissive spirit that should characterize all Christians.

Rachel was an only daughter but had 7 brothers. Her father jokingly remarked “I have 7 sons and everyone of them has a sister”. As a young girl she was befriended by a wealthy woman named Parmalee. Since Mrs. Parmalee had no children, she seemed to think of Rachel as her daughter and took her on a tour of Great Britain to celebrate her 18th birthday. Rachel was treated like royalty and treated to many expensive luxuries which her own father could never have afforded.

On the way back, Mrs. Parmalee made a startling proposal. If Rachel would promise to take care of her during her declining years, she would be made the heir of her vast fortune. After a sleepless night God gave Rachel a vision as she stood on the deck and faced the sunrise. It was a vision of brown skinned people in the jungle whom she felt called to help. Like Paul at Troaz, she consider this calling to be from God. Consequently, she made the decision to give up the things she could not keep, to gain the things she could not lose. She could have been a rich a powerful debutante, but chose instead to be a humble servant. This courageous decision provides insight into Rachel’s desire to live a selfless and Christ centered life.

Her first missionary assignment was in Peru where she and another woman missionary were working with the fierce head-hunting tribe known as Shapras. These godly women were reducing that tribal dialect to writing for the noble purpose of giving them the Bible in their own language.

One day she dared to ask Chief Tariri why he had allowed them to live in his village. He replied: “If two men had come I would have killed them and taken their heads. If a man and a woman had come I would have speared him and taken her to be my wife. But two women came, calling me brother, what could I do but protect them and allow them to live among us.” These words would later play a significant role in Rachel’s life to move into the midst of another Stone Age tribe. (You can see Chief Tarari on You Tube by searching for Ralph Edward’s program “This is Your Life” honoring Rachel Saint.

In Feb. 1955 Rachel felt called of God to leave Peru and go to Ecuador. Since her younger brother, Nate, was already there she moved into an area very close to the savage tribe with whom she would spend the rest of her life. They were known as “Aucas” and were perhaps the most violent tribe on earth. On Jan. 8, 1956, men from this tribe killed Rachel’s brother, Nate Saint, and four other missionaries. Instead of retaliating against such cruelty, however, God gave Rachel a special love for the Aucas. In 1958, at great personal risk, Rachel and Elizabeth Elliott went to live in the jungle with the Aucas. Rachel’s brother Nate had been killed by the Aucas, and Elizabeth’s husband Jim also died with him and the others. As in the case of Chief Tariri, the Aucas chose not to kill them. After about two years Elizabeth felt called back to America, but Rachel Saint stayed with the Aucas until her death.

The name “Auca” is a derogatory name that means “naked” or “savage”. They prefer to be called “Huaorani”, which means “The people”. Over the years Rachel learned their language and translated the Scriptures into words they could understand.

Interestingly enough, the Huaoranis call the Bible “God’s carvings”. Even though these Stone Age people were illiterate, they devised a way of marking a trail with their own unique signature. This enabled them to know whom they were following. If you recognized the carvings of your father, for example, you merely followed those carvings until you found him. How simple! How profound”. The Huaoranis came to understand that if they wanted to find their Heavenly Father, they also had to follow His Carvings.

Kimo was one of the men who killed Rachel’s brother. He became a believer and also a leader in the Huaorani church. At Rachel’s funeral he said: “Waengongi Toado ante odomoncaete ante Nemo pongantapa~~~” This means: “~Teaching us to walk God's trail, Star came.~~” The Huaorani had given Rachel the name Nemo, which is their word for “Star”.

Rachel always felt blessed to have the privilege of serving these people. Before her death she said: “Isn't it something, that the Lord Jesus would have used someone like me to do his work in this special place”. Rachel had the heart of a servant. She was not seeking to exalt herself or usurp the authority of any man. She would have been happy to have her brother teach and preach to the natives, but when he tried to do so they killed him. Any woman with such a servant’s heart is never a problem in any true church.

*** 1 Cor 14:36-38 - “Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored.”**

As if anticipating that his words would be ignored, Paul challenges his readers to present their credentials. If anyone thought himself to be a prophet or spiritual, that person should reconsider the facts and recognize that what Paul was writing were the commandments of the Lord.

It is totally irrational for someone to call Jesus “Lord” and then not do what He commands (Lk. 6:46). Remember that Jesus taught us to pray: **“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” (Matt. 6:10)**. When God gives a command, we need to obey Him immediately, just like the angels do. Please consider these examples of how immediate obedience brought blessings.

- Noah obeyed God and built an ark. He gathered living creatures to put in it. It seems that the project took 120 years (Gen. 6:3). Noah completed the project just one week before the flood came (Gen. 7:4). If Noah had procrastinated, the flood might have come before the ark was completed.
- When God commanded Abraham to offer his son Isaac upon one of the mountains of Moriah, he left early the next morning (Gen. 22:3). It was a three day journey (Gen. 22:4). At exactly the right time Abraham saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. If Abraham had waited, the ram might have been gone.
- God told His people exactly when to offer the Passover lamb and put it’s blood on the door posts of their homes (Ex. 12:1 - 30). If they had waited one more day their firstborn would have died.
- When Jerusalem was surrounded by the Assyrian army the angel of God killed 185,000 enemy soldiers in a single night (2 Ki. 19:35).
- When Daniel was thrown into the lion’s den God sent an angel, and shut the lion’s mouths (Dan. 6:21).
- When Herod wanted to kill the baby Jesus God sent His angel to warn Joseph to flee into Egypt (Matt. 2:13).
- When Jesus wanted to observe the Passover He sent two of His disciples into Jerusalem. He told them they would meet a man carrying a pitcher of water and they were to follow him (Mk. 14:13). If the disciples had not gone immediately they would have missed him.
- When the angel of God commanded Philip to go south to a deserted road between Jerusalem and Gaza, he did so immediately. The timing was perfect. Philip arrived just in time to hear the eunuch read from Isaiah the prophet (Acts 8:26 - 39).
- When an angel told Cornelius to send for Peter he did so immediately. Again, the timing was perfect. The messengers arrived at just the time God gave Peter a series of visions (Acts 10:1 - 23).
- It is inconceivable that God would command an angel to do something and the angel would not do it immediately. If the will of God is to be done on earth as it is in heaven, we too must obey immediately.
- Remember the story of the man born blind (John 9:1 - 34). Jesus spat on the ground, made some mud, and put in on the man’s eyes. He then told the man to “go wash in the Pool of Siloam” (John 9:7). When he did so God blessed him by giving him the ability to see. God can also give us blessings when we “do” what He commands. God will remember of our work of faith and labor of love.

It would be wonderful if everyone in the world was rational, and ready to obey God. Unfortunately, however, this is not the case. Many people will not respond to logic and reason. Perhaps, at some future time, God will give them repentance (2 Tim. 2:25, 26), but for the present time Paul recommends that ignorant people be ignored.

* **1 Cor 14:39-40 - “Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.”**

As we have said before, the prophet speaks the Word of God.

- We are told to desire spiritual gifts, but especially the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 14:1).
- All can prophesy (1 Cor. 14:5)
- Everyone can prophesy in turn (1 Cor. 14:31).
- We are to be eager to prophesy (1 Cor. 14:39).
- Peter quoted the prophet Joel regarding sons and daughters prophesying in the last days (Acts 2:17 - 21).
- John the Baptist never worked a miracle (Jn. 10:41), yet he was the greatest prophet every born of a woman (Matt. 11:11).
- Jesus was a Prophet like Moses (Acts 3:22)
- The prophet Agabus correctly predicted a famine (Acts 11:27 - 30).
- When Paul laid his hands on 12 men at Ephesus they spoke in tongues and prophesied (Acts 19:6).
- The prophet Agabus corrected predicted that Paul would be imprisoned (Acts 21:10).
- When Barnabas and Saul were set apart to their work it came from a group of prophets and teachers (Acts 13:1 - 3).
- Philip, the evangelist, had four unmarried daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:8, 9).
- If you spiritual gift is prophesying, prophesy according to the proportion of your faith (Rom. 12:6).
- The household of God is built upon a foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20).
- God gave apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors and teachers to perfect the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:11).
- We are not to treat prophecies with contempt, but are to test everything (I Thess. 5:19 - 22).
- We are to test the spirits because many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 Jn. 4:1).

These are just a few Scriptures regarding prophets. As we have said before, this is an important spiritual gift that God uses to strengthen, encourage, and comfort believers (1 Cor. 14:3). As great as it is, however, it is not as great as love. Remember! **“If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.” (1 Cor 13:2).**

Neither are we to forbid speaking in tongues. Paul wrote that **“he who speaks in a tongue edifies himself” (1 Cor. 14:4).** How a brother or sister speaks to God in private is between them and God (1 Cor. 14:2). We have no right to intrude on the way that someone prays in private. To their own master they will stand or fall (Rom. 14:4).

If someone wants to exercise the gift of tongues in the assembly, however, then, as we have previously pointed out, there are certain restrictions and limitations. Since the gift of tongues was a

problem in Corinth, and also in many churches today, let us be reminded that:

- The gift of prophecy is to be preferred over the gift of tongues (1 Cor. 14:5).
- Spiritual gifts are to build up the church not a matter of personal pride (1 Cor. 14:12).
- Paul spoke with tongues more than anyone, but would rather speak five intelligible words than 10,000 words in a tongue (1 Cor. 14:18, 19).
- Only two or three people are to speak in tongues, and they must take turns (1 Cor. 14:26)
- All spiritual gifts are to be used for building up the church (1 Cor. 14:26).
- No one is to speak in a tongue in church without an interpreter. If there is no interpreter, that person should keep quiet and speak to himself and to God (1 Cor. 14:28).

In conclusion, **“everything is to be done in a fitting and orderly way”**. As we learned earlier, “God is not a God of disorder” (v. 33). The Greek noun “poiema” is only found two times in the Bible. It is the basis of our English word “poem”. The following verses describe two poems.

The first poem is mentioned in Romans 1:20 where it is translated as “made”. **“For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”**

The second poem is mentioned in Ephesians 2:10 where it is translated as “workmanship”. **“For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”**

The first “poem” is the physical creation. It functions like a gigantic clock and is a crystal clear manifestation of God’s nature. God is a God of order and His physical creation proves it.

The second poem involves His “new creation”. If any man is in Christ he is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). We are His “workmanship” created in Christ Jesus to do good works. This new creation is described as a “Body” of which Christ is the “Head” (Col. 1:18). Members of this Body walk in obedience to Christ no matter where they live in the world. This too manifests the orderly nature of God.

THANK YOU FOR TAKING TIME TO CONSIDER THIS BRIEF STUDY. AS I HAVE SAID BEFORE, THE WHOLE BIBLE IS INSPIRED BY GOD. PLEASE DO NOT LIMIT YOUR STUDY TO ONLY CERTAIN SECTIONS OF THE BIBLE. JESUS SAID: “MAN DOES NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT COMES FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD” (MATT. 4:4)