

Free Bible Version

First Corinthians

1 ¹This letter comes from Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ according to the will of God, and from Sosthenes, our brother. ²It is sent to the church of God in Corinth, those who are being made right in Christ Jesus, called to live holy lives—and to everyone who worships the Lord Jesus Christ everywhere, the Lord both of them and of us.

³May you have grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴I'm always thanking God for you because of the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus. ⁵Through him you have been made rich in everything, in all that you say and every aspect of what you know. ⁶In fact the testimony of Christ was proved valid in your experience, ⁷so that you're not missing any spiritual gift as you wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸He will also keep you strong to the very end, so you will be kept right until the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is trustworthy who called you to share together in fellowship with his son Jesus Christ our Lord.

¹⁰Brothers and sisters, I plead with you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you all agree and that you're not divided. Instead develop a united attitude and purpose. ¹¹For I have been told things about you, my brothers and sisters, by some of Chloe's people—that you are quarreling among yourselves. ¹²Let me explain what I mean. You're all making different claims: "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Peter," or "I follow Christ." ¹³Is Christ divided? Did Paul die on a cross for you? Was it in the name of Paul that you were baptized?

¹⁴I'm grateful to God that I didn't baptize any of you, except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵so nobody can claim they were baptized in my name. ¹⁶(Oh, and I also baptized the Stephanas family—I can't think of anyone else). ¹⁷For Christ didn't send me out to baptize, but to spread the good news, and not with eloquent human wisdom, otherwise the cross of Christ would be made powerless.^a

^a 1:17. Or "ineffectual." Literally, "emptied."

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¹⁸For the message of the cross is nonsense to those who are lost, but it's the power of God to those of us who are saved. ¹⁹As Scripture says, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and I will wipe out the cleverness of the clever."^a

²⁰So how about the wise, the writers, and the philosophers of this age? Hasn't God turned the wisdom of this world into foolishness? ²¹Since God in his wisdom allowed the world in its wisdom not to know God, it was God's gracious plan that by the foolishness of the good news those who trusted in him would be saved. ²²The Jews ask for miraculous signs, and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³but our message is of Christ killed on a cross—offensive to the Jews, and foolishness to the foreigners.

²⁴However for those who are called by God, both Jews and foreigners, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

²⁵For the foolishness of God is wiser than we are; and the weakness of God is stronger than we are.

²⁶Brothers and sisters, remember your calling—and that this did not include many who are wise, humanly speaking; not many who are powerful; not many who are important. ²⁷Instead God chose the things the world considers foolish to humiliate those who think they are wise. He chose the things the world considers weak to humiliate those who think they are strong. ²⁸He chose the things that are unimportant and despised by the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,^b ²⁹so that nobody should boast in God's presence.

³⁰It's because of him that you live in Christ Jesus, who God made to be wisdom for us. He sets us right, keeps us right, and frees us. ³¹So as Scripture says, "Whoever wants to boast, let them boast in the Lord."^c

2 ¹Brothers and sisters, when I came to you I didn't try to impress you with wonderful words or great wisdom when I told you what God had to say to you. ²I decided that while I was with you I didn't want to concentrate on anything except Jesus Christ, and that he was crucified. ³I came to you in weakness, fearful

^a 1:19. Probably referencing Isaiah 29:14.

^b 1:28. This complicated verse is really saying that God uses things and people not viewed as important by this world to demonstrate what really is important.

^c 1:31. Referencing Jer. 9:23.

and trembling. ⁴I didn't speak to you with persuasive words of wisdom to convince you. I just explained it all to you through the evidence and power of the Spirit. ⁵That way your trust in God wouldn't rely on human wisdom but on the power of God.

⁶However we do use words of wisdom when we speak to those who are spiritually mature, but this isn't wisdom that comes from this world, or from the rulers of this world who soon fade from the scene. ⁷On the contrary we explain God's wisdom in terms of a revealed mystery^a that was previously hidden which God planned for our glory before the creation of the worlds.

⁸None of the rulers of this world understood anything about this—for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹But as Scripture says, “No one has ever seen, and no one has ever heard, and no one has ever imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.”^b ¹⁰But God has revealed this to us through the Spirit, because the Spirit delves into the depths of God. ¹¹Who knows anyone's thoughts except the actual person?^c In the same way no one knows God's thoughts except the Spirit of God. ¹²For we have received the Spirit from God, not the spirit of this world, so that we could understand what God so generously gave us. ¹³That's what we speak about—not using words taught by human wisdom, but what the Spirit teaches. We explain what is spiritual using spiritual terms. ¹⁴Of course people who are not spiritual don't accept what comes from God's Spirit. It's just foolish nonsense to them, and they can't understand it, because what is spiritual has to be properly examined. ¹⁵People who are spiritual investigate everything, but are not placed under investigation themselves.^d ¹⁶For “Who

^a 2:7. When the word mystery is used in the New Testament it is normally referring to a *revealed* mystery—particularly in reference to God becoming human in the person of Jesus Christ.

^b 2:9. From Is. 64 and 65.

^c 2:11. Literally, “who among men knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man that is in him?”

^d 2:15. “Investigate/investigation”—the same word is used in the original, and can also mean to examine or to judge. It is also related to the word translated “examined” in verse 14. English does not capture the subtlety of the original.

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understands the Lord's mind, and would think to instruct him?"^a
But we *do* have Christ's mind!

3 ¹My brothers and sisters, I couldn't talk^b with you as spiritual believers, but as worldly people—like baby Christians. ²I gave you milk—I couldn't give you solid food to eat, because you weren't ready for it. ³Even now you're not ready for it, because you're still worldly. Since you're still jealous and argumentative, doesn't that show you're worldly, behaving just like ordinary people do? ⁴When one of you says, "I follow Paul," while another says, "I follow Apollos," doesn't that show you're being so very human?

⁵Who is Apollos, anyway? And who is Paul? We're just servants through whom you believed. Each of us does the work God gave us to do. ⁶I did the planting, Apollos did the watering—but it was God who made you grow!

⁷So the one who does the planting doesn't count for anything, any more than the one who does the watering. The only one who matters is God who is growing you! ⁸The one planting and the one watering have the same goal, and both will be rewarded according to what they've done.

⁹We are workers together with God—and you are God's field, his building. ¹⁰Through the grace of God that he gave to me, I laid down the foundation like a skilled building supervisor. Now someone else is building on it. Whoever does the building needs to watch what they're doing. ¹¹For no one can lay any other foundation than what's already laid—that is Jesus Christ. ¹²Those who build on that foundation may use gold, silver, precious stone, wood, hay, or straw—¹³but whatever is used to build with will be exposed. For on the Day of Judgment fire will reveal it and test it. Everyone's work will be shown for what it is. ¹⁴Those whose building survives will be rewarded. ¹⁵Those whose building is burned up will lose out. They will still be saved, but it will be like passing through fire! ¹⁶Don't you know you are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?

^a 2:16. Isaiah 40:13.

^b 3:1. Presumably while he was visiting them previously.

¹⁷Anyone who destroys God’s temple will be destroyed by God, for God’s temple is holy, and you are the temple.

¹⁸Don’t deceive yourselves. If there’s anyone of you who thinks they’re worldly wise, they should become fools so they can become truly wise! ¹⁹This world’s wisdom is plain foolishness to God. As Scripture says, “He uses the cleverness of the wise to catch them out,”^a ²⁰and “The Lord knows the arguments of the wise are pointless.”^b ²¹So don’t boast about people. For you have everything, ²²whether it’s Paul or Apollos or Peter—or the world, or life, or death, or the present, or the future. You have everything—²³and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.

4 ¹So think of us as Christ’s servants given the responsibility for “the mysteries of God.”^c ²More than this, those who have such responsibilities are required to be trustworthy. ³Personally it hardly matters to me if you or anyone else judges me—in fact I don’t even judge myself. ⁴I don’t know of anything I’ve done wrong, but that doesn’t make me right. It’s the Lord who judges me. ⁵So don’t judge anything before the right time—when the Lord comes. He will bring to light all the darkest secrets that are hidden, and he will reveal people’s motives. God will give everyone whatever praise they deserve.

⁶Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied this to Apollos and myself as an example for you. That way you will learn not to go beyond what has been written, and not in arrogance prefer one over the other.^d ⁷Who made you so special? What do you have that you weren’t given? Since you were given it, why do you proudly claim you weren’t? ⁸You think you have all you need. You think you’re so wealthy. You think you’re kings already, and don’t need us.^e I wish you were really ruling as kings, so we could rule with you! ⁹The way I see it, God has put us apostles on display as the last in the line, condemned to die.

^a 3:19. Job 5:13.

^b 3:20. Psalm 94:11.

^c 4:1. Again, in the NT mysteries are the revealed truths of God.

^d 4:6. The meaning of original is debated. This is shown in the many differences in translations.

^e 4:8. Literally, “without us.”

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We have been made a public show before the entire universe, to angels and to human beings. ¹⁰We're Christ's fools, but you are so wise in Christ! We're the weak ones, but you are so strong! You have the glory, but we are despised!^a ¹¹Right up till now we're hungry and thirsty. We have no clothes. We're badly beaten up, and we have no place to call home. ¹²We struggle on doing manual work. When people curse us, we bless them. When they persecute us, we put up with it. ¹³When they insult us, we respond with kindness. Even now we are treated like dirt, the worst trash in the whole world.

¹⁴I'm not writing like this to make you feel ashamed, but to caution you as my children whom I love so much. ¹⁵Even though you may have thousands of Christian instructors, you don't have many fathers—it was in Christ Jesus that I became your father when I shared the good news with you. ¹⁶So I'm pleading with you to imitate me!

¹⁷That's why I sent Timothy to you, my trustworthy son in the Lord who I love so much. He will remind you about the way I follow Christ, just as I always teach in every church I visit.

¹⁸Some among you have become arrogant, thinking I wouldn't bother coming to see you. ¹⁹But I am coming to visit you soon, if that's what the Lord wants. Then I'll find out what these arrogant people are saying, and what kind of power they have. ²⁰For the kingdom of God is not about mere words, but about power. ²¹So what do you want? Shall I come with a stick to beat you, or in love and a gentle spirit?

5 ¹I hear reports that sexual immorality is happening among you, immorality that even the foreigners don't practice. A man is living with his father's wife! ²You are so proud of yourselves! Shouldn't you have wept with sadness, and excluded the man who did this? ³Even though I'm not physically present there, I am there in spirit and just as if I were there I've already made my judgment of the one who has done this. ⁴When you meet together in the name of the Lord Jesus I'll be there with you in spirit and with the power of our Lord Jesus. ⁵Hand over this man to Satan

^a 4:10. From the context Paul appears to be speaking rather ironically.

so his sinful nature may be destroyed and he himself be saved on the day of the Lord^a.

⁶You shouldn't be proud about this. Don't you know that it only takes a little yeast to make the whole batch of dough rise?^b
⁷Get rid of this old yeast so that you can be a new batch of dough to make bread without yeast. Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed. ⁸So let us celebrate this festival^c, not with old yeast or the yeast of evil and wickedness, but with the bread made without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

⁹In my previous letter I wrote that you should not associate with immoral people. ¹⁰I wasn't referring to the immoral people of this world, those who are greedy and cheat others, or those who worship idols, otherwise you'd have to leave this world!

¹¹What I meant when I wrote was that you shouldn't associate with anyone who is called a Christian who is immoral or greedy or worships idols; or who is abusive or a drunkard or who cheats others. Don't even share a meal with anyone like that! ¹²It's not my place to judge those outside the church. But shouldn't you judge those who are inside the church? ¹³God judges those that are outside the church. "Expel the wicked from among you."^d

6 ¹How dare any of you file a lawsuit before pagan judges if you have a dispute with your neighbor! Instead you should bring this before other believers. ²Don't you know that Christian believers will judge the world? If you're going to judge the world, are you not fit to judge in the most minor cases? ³Don't you know we are going to judge angels? How much more those things that relate to this life! ⁴So if you have to judge things that relate to this life,

^a 5:5. This is not to suggest that Satan "cooperates" in the salvation process. This "handing over to Satan" is figurative language that is meant to indicate that the one involved is allowed to experience the consequences of his sin so that he may choose to return and be saved.

^b 5:6. In other words, it only takes a small amount of sin to infect the whole church.

^c 5:7. At the time of the Passover the Jews ate bread made without yeast, and threw out all the yeast from their homes. Paul is using this imagery to say that the yeast of sin needs to be removed just as the symbol of sin (yeast) was removed at the time of the sacrifice of the Passover.

^d 5:13. This is a quotation from Deuteronomy, repeated in several places: Deut 13:5, 17:7, 19:19, 22:24, 24:7.

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how can you go to judges that are not respected by the church?^a
⁵I'm trying to shame you by saying this. What? You can't find one wise person among you who can settle a dispute that you have? ⁶Instead one believer takes another believer to court, and places the issue before unbelievers! ⁷The very fact you have lawsuits against each other already is a complete disaster. Wouldn't it be better to accept the injustice? Why not let yourselves be defrauded? ⁸But you would rather cause injustice and defraud even your fellow-believers in church.

⁹Don't you know those who are unjust will not inherit the kingdom of God? Don't be fooled! People who are immoral, worship idols, commit adultery, sexual perverts, homosexuals, ¹⁰thieves, greedy, drunkards, abusers, or cheats, will not inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹Some of you were once like that, but you have been made clean and holy. You have been made right in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

¹²People say, "I'm free to do anything"—but not everything is appropriate! "I'm free to do anything"—but I will not let anything control me! People say, ¹³"Food for the stomach, and the stomach for food"—but God will destroy both of them. Also, the body is not meant to be used for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us up the same way^b. ¹⁵Don't know your bodies are parts of Christ's body? Should I take the parts of Christ's body and join them to a prostitute? Absolutely not! ¹⁶Don't you realize that anyone who has sex with a prostitute becomes "one body" with her? Remember that Scripture says, "The two will become one body."^c ¹⁷But whoever is joined to the Lord is one with him in spirit! ¹⁸Stay away from sexual immorality! All other sins that people commit are outside of the body, but sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. ¹⁹ Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit that is within you, that you received from God? ²⁰You

^a 6:4. Or "why not choose judges from the least respected members of the church?"

^b 6:14. Referring to raising up the body, continuing the subject of the discussion.

^c 6:16. Gen. 2:24.

don't belong to yourself—a price was paid for you! So glorify God in your body!

⁷ ¹Now about what you wrote to me: “It’s good not to marry.”^a
²However, because of the temptation to sexual immorality, it is better that each man have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. ³The husband should meet his wife’s sexual needs, and the wife her husband’s. ⁴The wife’s body doesn’t just belong to her, but her husband; and similarly the husband’s body doesn’t just belong to him but his wife. ⁵So don’t deprive each other, except by mutual consent for a while—for example because you want to spend time in prayer. Afterwards be together again so that Satan won’t tempt you to sin because of your lack of self-control. ⁶I’m telling you this not as a command, but as a concession. ⁷However I wish that everyone was like me, but each person has their own gift from God—one has this gift, one has another. ⁸To those who are not yet married, or who are widowed, I would say it is better if they remain like me. ⁹But if they lack self-control, then they should get married—for it is better to marry than burn with desire.

¹⁰These are my instructions to those who are married—in fact not from me but the Lord: The wife should not leave her husband ¹¹ (or if she does, she should not re-marry, or she should return to her husband); and the husband should not leave his wife^b. ¹²Now, to the rest of you, (and this is me speaking, not the Lord), I would say, “if a Christian man has a non-Christian wife and she is willing to stay with him, he should not leave her. ¹³And if a Christian woman has a non-Christian husband, and he is willing to stay with her, she should not leave her husband.”

¹⁴For a husband who is not a Christian, the marriage relationship is made holy by the Christian wife, and for a wife who is not a Christian, the marriage relationship is made holy by

^a 7:1. It seems that some in Corinth were single and the church was writing to ask if this was permissible.

^b 7:10. One particular problem in the early church was of one spouse becoming Christian, and how then to relate to the non-Christian spouse. This seems to be what is addressed here.

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the Christian husband^a. Otherwise it would mean your children were impure, but now they are holy. ¹⁵However if the non-Christian spouse leaves, let them leave. In such cases the Christian man or woman is not slavishly bound, for God has called us to live in peace. ¹⁶Wives, who knows? You may save your husband! Husbands, who knows? You may save your wife!

¹⁷Apart from such cases, each of you should remain in the situation that the Lord has placed you, and continue to live the life to which God has called you. That's my instruction to all the churches. ¹⁸Were you circumcised when you were converted? Don't become uncircumcised. Were you uncircumcised when you were converted? Don't become circumcised. ¹⁹Circumcision doesn't mean anything, and uncircumcision doesn't mean anything. Keeping the commandments of God is what really matters. ²⁰Everyone should remain in the position they were in when they were called^b. ²¹If you were a slave when you were called, don't worry—though if you have an opportunity to become free, take it. ²²If you were a slave when the Lord called you, you are now free, working for the Lord. In the same way if you were called when you were free, you are now Christ's slave! ²³A price has been paid for you, so don't become a slave to anyone. ²⁴Brothers and sisters, remain in the position you were in when you were called, living with God.

²⁵Now about "people who are not married,"^c I don't have a specific instruction from the Lord, so let me give you my opinion as someone who by the Lord's mercy is considered trustworthy. ²⁶Because of the present difficult situation we are in I think it is best to just stay as you are. ²⁷Are you already married? Don't try to get divorced. Are you unmarried? Don't look to get married. ²⁸If you do get married, you haven't sinned. If an unmarried

^a 7:14. Paul is not saying here that by being married to a Christian the non-Christian spouse therefore becomes a Christian or experiences salvation. He is concerned to address the issue that by being married to a non-Christian spouse in some way "defiles" the marriage or the Christian in the relationship. That this is the real issue is made clear concerning children of such a marriage—they are also not "impure" but they are "holy," and this is not any reference to the actual spiritual state of the children.

^b 7:20. "Called"—in other words, conversion.

^c 7:25. Literally, "virgins." Paul here continues discussing the issues that the Corinthian church has raised. See 7:1.

woman gets married, she hasn't sinned. But you will have many troubles in this current world and I would want to spare you these. ²⁹I'm telling you, brothers and sisters, that time is short, and from now on for those who are married it may seem as if they are not married, ³⁰and those who weep as if they did not weep, and those that celebrated as if they had not celebrated, and those that bought as if they did not own, ³¹and those who are engaged with the world as if it is not fulfilling—for the present world order is passing away^a.

³²I would prefer you to be free from such worries. A man who is not married pays attention to what is important to the Lord, and how he can please the Lord. ³³But a man who is married pays attention to what is important in this world, and how he can please his wife. ³⁴As a result his loyalties are divided. Similarly an unmarried woman or girl pays attention to what is important to the Lord, so she may live a life dedicated both in body and spirit. But a married woman pays attention to what is important in this world, and how she can please her husband. ³⁵I'm telling you this for your benefit. I'm not trying to put a noose around your neck, but to show you the right thing to do so you can serve the Lord without being distracted.

³⁶But if a man thinks he's behaving improperly with the woman he's engaged to, and if he thinks he will give in to his strong sexual desire, and if he thinks he ought to get married, he is not sinning by getting married. ³⁷But if a man stays true to his principles, and there is no obligation to marry, and has the power to keep his feelings under control and stay engaged to her, he does well not to marry. ³⁸So the man who marries the woman he's engaged to does well, while the one who does not get married does better.

³⁹A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies^b, she is free to marry whoever she wants in the

^a 7:31. In this long sentence Paul indicates that even marriage must be related to contemporary events ("time is short"). Living under persecution, expecting the end of all things, means that even marriage is viewed differently, along with everything else.

^b 7:39. The word used here means "to fall asleep," the usual New Testament expression for death.

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Lord^a. ⁴⁰But in my opinion she would be happier if she didn't re-marry—and I think I too have the Spirit of God when I say this.

8 ¹Now about “food sacrificed to idols.”^b So “we all have knowledge” about this subject. Knowledge makes us proud, but love strengthens us. ²If anyone thinks they know anything, they don't know as they really should know! ³But whoever loves God is known by God...

⁴So regarding eating food sacrificed to idols: we know that there are no such things as idols in the world, and that there is only one real God. ⁵Even though there are some things called “gods,” whether in heaven or on earth—in fact there are many “gods” and “lords.” ⁶But for us there is only one God, the Father, from whom everything was made, and he is the goal of our existence; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom everything was made, and he is the means of our existence^c.

⁷But not everyone has this “knowledge.”^d Some who up to now have been so used to idols as a reality that when they eat food sacrificed to an idol, their conscience (which is weak) tells them they have defiled themselves. ⁸But food doesn't gain us God's approval! If we don't eat this food, we're not bad, and if we do eat this food, we're not good. ⁹Just take care not to use this freedom you have to eat food sacrificed to idols to become offensive to those with a weaker attitude. ¹⁰If another believer sees you who have such “better knowledge”^e eating food in an idol temple, won't his weak conscience be convinced to eat food sacrificed to idols?^f ¹¹By your “better knowledge” the weaker believer is destroyed, a believer for whom Christ died. ¹²In this

^a 7:39. Meaning it must be a marriage between two Christians.

^b 8:1. Paul continues answering the issues the Corinthians have raised.

^c 8:6. This is a complex verse the meaning of which is much debated. It is seen as an early “creed” or declaration, identifying God as Creator and Re-creator, the focus of our lives. It literally says, “But to us one God the Father, from whom the all and we into him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the all and we through him.”

^d 8:7. Paul takes issue with this knowledge being misapplied, as seen in verse 10 when it could be seen as being proud and arrogant.

^e 8:10. See under 8:7.

^f 8:10. In other words, deciding to follow another's example, while still believing it is a sin.

way you sin against other believers, wounding their weaker consciences, and you sin against Christ. ¹³So if eating food sacrificed to idols would cause my fellow believer to stumble, I will never eat such meat ever again, so that I don't offend any believer.

9 ¹Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Haven't I seen Jesus our Lord? Aren't you the results of my work in the Lord? ²Even if I'm not an apostle to others, at least I am one to you. The proof of my being an apostle of the Lord is you!

³Here is my reply to those who question me about this:

⁴Don't we have the right to be provided with food and drink?

⁵Don't we have a right to be accompanied by a Christian wife, like the rest of the apostles, the Lord's brothers, and Peter? ⁶Is it only Barnabas and myself who have to work to support ourselves?^a ⁷Which soldier ever had to pay his own salary? Who plants a vineyard and doesn't get to eat its fruits? Who feeds a flock and doesn't consume its milk?

⁸Am I just speaking from a human point of view? Doesn't the law say the same thing? ⁹In the law of Moses it's written, "Don't muzzle the ox when it's threshing out the grain."^b Was God just thinking about oxen? ¹⁰Wasn't he directing this at us? Surely this was written for us—for anyone who plows should plow in hope and anyone who threshes should hope to share in the harvest. ¹¹If we sowed what is spiritual with you, does it really matter if we reap some material benefit? ¹²If others exercise this right over you, don't we deserve it even more? Even so we did not exercise this right. On the contrary we would rather put up with anything than hold back the gospel of Christ.

¹³Don't you know that those who work in temples receive their meals from temple offerings, and those that serve at the altar receive their portion of the sacrifice on the altar? ¹⁴In just the same way the Lord ordered that those who announce the good news should live from supporters of the good news. ¹⁵But I have not made use of any of these provisions, and I'm not

^a 9:6. The original is given in terms of a double negative. The suggestion is that only Paul and Barnabas are not given the privilege of not having to work.

^b 9:9. Deuteronomy 25:4.

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writing about this to suggest it should be done in my case. I'd rather die than to have anyone take away my pride in not having received any benefit.

¹⁶I have nothing to boast about in sharing the good news because it's something I feel compelled to do. In fact it's dreadful for me if I don't share the good news! ¹⁷If I'm doing this work because of my own choice, then I have a reward. But if it wasn't my choice, and an obligation was placed on me, ¹⁸then what reward do I have? It's the opportunity to share the good news without charging for it, not demanding my rights as a worker for the good news.

¹⁹Even though I am free and serve no one, I have placed myself in service to everyone so that I might gain more. ²⁰To the Jews I behave like a Jew so that I might win Jews. To those who are under the law I behave as someone under the law (even though I am not obligated under the law), so that I might win those under the law. ²¹To those who don't operate according to the law,^a I behave like them, (though not disregarding God's law, but operating under the law of Christ), so that I might gain those who don't observe the law.

²²To those who are weak,^b I share in their weakness so that I may win the weak. I have ended up being "everyman" to everyone so that by using every possible means I might win some! ²³I do all this for the sake of the good news so that I too may share in its blessings!

²⁴Wouldn't you agree that there are many runners in a race, but only one gets the prize? So run your best, so you may win!

²⁵Every competitor who participates in the games maintains a strict training discipline. Of course they do so to win a crown that doesn't last. But our crowns will last forever!

²⁶That's why I run straight in the right direction. I fight accurately, not punching the air. ²⁷I also treat my body severely to bring it under my control, for I don't want somehow to be disqualified after sharing the good news with everybody else.

^a 9:21. Meaning those who are not Jews, who do not observe the law of Moses.

^b 9:22. Probably referring to the "weaker believer" issue mentioned in 8:7 and on.

10¹Now I want to explain this to you, brothers and sisters. Our forefathers lived under the cloud, and they all passed through the sea^a. ²Symbolically then they were baptized “into Moses” in the cloud and in the sea. ³They all ate the same spiritual food ⁴and drank the same spiritual drink, for they “drank from a spiritual rock” that accompanied them. That rock was Christ. ⁵However God wasn’t happy with most of them, and they perished in the desert.

⁶Now these experiences are examples to us to show us we should not desire what is evil, as they did. ⁷You must not worship idols, as some of them did, as it’s recorded in Scripture: “The people feasted and drank, and indulged in pagan worship.”^b ⁸We must not commit sexual sins, as some of them did, and as a result 23,000 died in one day. ⁹Nor should we push God to the limit, as some of them did, and were killed by snakes. ¹⁰Don’t complain at God, as some did, and died at the hands of the destroying angel.

¹¹All the things that happened to them are examples to us and were written down to warn us, we who are living close to the end of time. ¹²So if you think you’re strong enough to stay standing—be careful you don’t fall! ¹³You won’t experience any greater temptation than anyone else, and God is trustworthy. He won’t allow you to be tempted more than you can bear, and when you are tempted, he will provide for you a way out so you can stay strong. ¹⁴So my good friends, stay away from idol worship.

¹⁵I’m talking to sensible people, so you decide whether I’m telling the truth. ¹⁶When we give thanks for the cup we use in the Lord’s Supper, don’t we share in the blood of Christ? When we break the communion bread, don’t we share in the body of Christ? ¹⁷By eating from one loaf of bread, we show that even though we are many, we are one body. ¹⁸Look at the people of Israel. Don’t those who eat the sacrifices made on the altar share together? ¹⁹What am I saying then? That anything sacrificed to idols means anything, or that an idol has any real existence? Of course not! ²⁰The pagans are sacrificing to demons, and not to

^a 10:1. The cloud of God’s presence, and the passage through the Red Sea.

^b 10:7. See Exodus 32:6.

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God. I don't want you to have anything to do with demons!

²¹You can't drink the Lord's cup as well as the cup of demons; you can't eat from the Lord's table as well as the table of demons. ²²Are we trying to make the Lord jealous? Are we stronger than he is?

²³Some say, "I'm free to do anything"—but not everything is appropriate! "I'm free to do anything"—but not everything is constructive!^a ²⁴You shouldn't look out for yourself, but for your neighbor. ²⁵Eat whatever is sold in the market without asking questions because of your conscience^b, ²⁶for "the earth and everything in it belong to God."^c

²⁷If a non-Christian invites you to a meal, and you feel like going, eat whatever you are served, without asking questions because of your conscience. ²⁸But if someone tells you, "This food has been sacrificed to idols," don't eat it for the sake of the one who mentioned it and for conscience' sake. ²⁹His conscience I mean, not yours. For why should my freedom be determined by someone else's conscience?^d ³⁰If I choose to eat with thankfulness, why should I be criticized for eating what I'm thankful to God for? ³¹So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, make sure to do everything to the glory of God. ³²Don't cause offense, whether it's to Jews or Greeks or the church of God—³³just as I try to please everybody in all I do. I don't think of what benefits me, but what benefits others, so that they may be saved.

11 ¹You should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ. ²I'm grateful that you always remember me and that you are keeping to the teachings just as I passed them on to you. ³I do want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, the man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ^e. ⁴A man's

^a 10:23. See 6:12.

^b 10:25. This refers back to the issue of food sacrificed to idols

^c 10:26. Ps. 24:1

^d 10:29. This question seems to be at odds with the previous verse. Paul is arguing for tolerance—both of the one who is offended at eating meat sacrificed to idols, and the other who sees no problem with it since the "gods" of idols do not exist.

^e 11:3. The meaning of "head" in this context is much discussed. In Scripture "head" can have to do with "origin," "source," or "authority."

head is dishonored if he prays or prophesies with his head covered.⁵ A woman's head is dishonored if she prays or prophesies with her head uncovered—it's just as if she had her hair shaved off.⁶ If a woman's head is not covered, then she should have her head shaved. If it's scandalous for a woman to be shorn or shaven, then she should have her head covered.⁷ A man shouldn't cover his head, because he is the image and glory of God, while the woman is the glory of the man.⁸ Man didn't come from woman, but woman came from man;⁹ and man was not created for the woman, but the woman was created for the man.¹⁰ That's why the woman should have this sign of authority on her head out of respect for the watching angels^a.¹¹ Even so, from the Lord's perspective, the woman is as essential as the man, and the man as essential as the woman^b.¹² As the woman came from the man, so the man comes from the woman^c—but more importantly everything comes from God.¹³ Judge for yourselves: is it appropriate for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?¹⁴ Doesn't nature itself indicate that a man with long hair disgraces himself?¹⁵ However a woman with long hair brings herself glory, because her hair is given to her as a covering.¹⁶ But if anyone wants to argue about this, we don't have any other custom than this, and neither do any other of God's churches^d.

¹⁷Now in giving you the instructions that follow I can't commend you, because when you meet together you cause more harm than good!¹⁸First of all, I hear that when you have church

^a 11:10. As many commentators note, this is one of the most difficult verses in the New Testament to understand and translate. Some understand the "authority" as the head covering demonstrating the woman is respectable and has a position in relationship to man. Others see this as an "authority" to speak and prophesy, since this would not normally be a woman's role in this society. There are many other interpretations of this, as well as of the phrase literally translated "because of the angels."

^b 11:11. Literally, "nevertheless neither woman without man nor man without woman in the Lord."

^c 11:12. Referring back to Creation, where Eve is made from Adam, but from then on women gave birth to men.

^d 11:16. Paul clearly indicates this is simply the way things work in practice in the church by using the word "custom" or "habit" rather than the word "rule" or "command."

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meetings that you are split into different factions, and I believe there's some truth to this. ¹⁹Of course such splits among you must happen so those who are genuine can prove themselves by their evidence! ²⁰When you meet together you're not really celebrating the Lord's Supper at all. ²¹Some want to eat first before everyone else, leaving others hungry. Still others get drunk. ²²Don't you have your own houses to eat and drink in? Do you look down on God's church, and humiliate those who are poor? What should I tell you? That you're doing really well? I have nothing good to say about you for doing this!

²³For I received from the Lord what I passed on to you: the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took some bread. ²⁴After giving thanks, he broke the bread into pieces and said, "This bread is my body, which is given for you. Remember me by doing this." ²⁵In the same way he took the cup, after the meal, and said, "This cup is the new agreement^a sealed with my blood. Remember me when you drink it. ²⁶For every time you eat this bread and drink from this cup you announce the Lord's death, until he returns."

²⁷So anyone who eats the bread or drinks from the Lord's cup in a dishonorable way will be guilty of doing wrong against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸Let each person examine themselves, and then let them eat the bread and drink from the cup. ²⁹Those who eat and drink bring judgment on themselves if they don't recognize their relationship with the body of the Lord. ³⁰That's the reason why many of you are weak and sick, and some even have died. ³¹However, if we really examined ourselves, we would not be judged like this. ³²But when we are judged, we are being disciplined by the Lord so that we won't be condemned along with the world. ³³So my brothers and sisters, when you meet together to eat the Lord's Supper, wait for each other. ³⁴If anyone is hungry, then eat at home so that when you meet together you won't bring condemnation on yourselves. I'll give you more directions when I visit.

^a 11:25. This translates the word often rendered as "covenant" which has limited use in modern English. The idea is of an agreement between two parties. In this case it is the relationship between God and human beings.

12 ¹Now about “spiritual gifts.”^a My brothers and sisters, I want to explain this to you. ²You know that when you were pagans, you were deceived, being led astray by worshiping idols who couldn’t even speak. ³Let me make it clear to you: no one who speaks in the Spirit of God says, “Curse Jesus!” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord!” except by the Holy Spirit. ⁴Now there are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but they come from the same Spirit. ⁵There are different kinds of ministries^b, but they come from the same Lord. ⁶There are different ways of working, but they come from the same God, who is at work in all of them. ⁷The Spirit is given to each of us and is revealed for the good of all. ⁸One person is given by the Spirit the ability to speak words of wisdom. Another is given a message of knowledge by the same Spirit. ⁹Another receives the gift of strongly trusting in God by the same Spirit. Another receives gifts of healing from that one Spirit. ¹⁰Another is given the ability to perform miracles. Another receives the gift of prophecy. Another is given the gift of spiritual discernment. Another receives the ability to speak different languages while another is given the gift of interpreting languages. ¹¹But all of these gifts are the work of the one and the same Spirit, sharing with each person as he alone chooses.

¹²Just like the human body is one unit but has many parts—all the parts of the body even though there are many of them, make up one body—so is Christ. ¹³For it was through one Spirit that we were all baptized into one body. It doesn’t matter whether we are Jews or Greeks, slave or free—we all were given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴The body is not made of one part, but many parts. ¹⁵If the foot were to say, “Because I’m not a hand, I’m not part of the body,” would that make it not part of the body? ¹⁶If the ear were to say, “Because I’m not an eye, I’m not part of the body,” would that make it not part of the body? ¹⁷If the whole body was an eye, how could you hear anything? If the whole body was an ear, how could you smell anything?

¹⁸But God has arranged each part in the body, every last one of them, placing them just as he wanted. ¹⁹If they were all the same part, what would happen to the body? ²⁰However, since

^a 12:1. Paul takes up another issue that the Corinthians have asked him about.

^b 12:5. Or “service.”

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there are many parts, they make up the body. ²¹The eye can't tell the hand, "I don't need you," or the head tell the feet, "I don't need you." ²²Quite the opposite: some of those parts of the body that seem the most insignificant are the most essential. ²³In fact those parts of the body we do not consider to be decent to reveal we "honor" more by covering them up—what is indecent we treat with greater modesty! ²⁴What's presentable doesn't need such covering up. God has so arranged the body that more honor is given to the parts that are less presentable. ²⁵This is so there wouldn't be any conflict within the body—the different parts should care equally for each other. ²⁶So when one part is suffering, all the other parts of the body suffer with it, and when one part is treated well, then all the other parts of the body are happy too!^a

²⁷Now you are the body of Christ, and each one makes up a part of it. ²⁸In the church, God has arranged first for some to be apostles, secondly for some to be prophets, thirdly teachers. Then there are those who perform miracles, those with healing gifts, those who can help others, those good at administration, and those who can speak different languages. ²⁹Not everyone is an apostle, or a prophet, or a teacher, or able to perform miracles. ³⁰Not all have healing gifts, or the ability to speak languages, or to interpret languages. ³¹But you should set your hearts on the most significant gifts^b. So now I will show you a far better way.

13 ¹If I were to have eloquence in human languages—even the language of angels—but have no love, then I would only be an echoing gong or a clashing cymbal. ²If I were to speak prophecies, to know every secret mystery and be completely knowledgeable, and if I were able to have so much faith I could move mountains, but have no love, then I am nothing. ³If I were to donate everything I own to the poor, or if I were to sacrifice

^a 12:26. Here Paul seems to be thinking far more of the body of the church than a physical body.

^b 12:31. Having discussed the different spiritual gifts, Paul states that believers should desire the most important ones. Of course which these are would be a matter of much debate. What he really is doing is setting the scene for the next chapter, for without love none of these gifts, even those considered the most significant, are worth anything.

myself to be burned as a martyr, and have no love, then I gain nothing.

⁴Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous. Love is not boastful. Love is not proud. ⁵Love does not act improperly, or insist on having its own way. Love is not argumentative and doesn't keep a record of wrongs. ⁶Love takes no delight in evil but celebrates the truth. ⁷Love never gives up, keeps on trusting, stays confident, and remains patient whatever happens.

⁸Love never fails. Prophecies will come to an end. Tongues will become silent. Knowledge will become useless. ⁹For our knowledge and our prophetic understanding are incomplete. ¹⁰But when completeness comes, then what is incomplete disappears. ¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I grew up I left behind such child-like ways. ¹²At the moment we peer into a mirror's dim reflection, but then we shall see face to face. For now I only have partial knowledge, but then I shall know completely, just as I am completely known. ¹³Trust, hope, and love last forever—but the most important is love.

14 ¹Make love your most important objective! But also do your best to gain spiritual gifts, especially the ability to speak God's message^a. ²Those who speak in a tongue^b are not talking to people, but to God, because nobody can understand them as they speak mysteries in the Spirit. ³However the words of those who speak for God build people up—they provide encouragement and comfort. ⁴Those that speak in a tongue only build themselves up, but those who speak God's message build up the church. I would like it if you all spoke in tongues, but I'd prefer if you could speak God's message. ⁵Those who speak for God are more

^a 14:1. Literally "prophesy," but in the sense of telling the good news rather than foretelling the future. The terms "speaks God's message," "God's prophetic message," or "speaks for God" are used here.

^b 14:2. This is clearly not the use of normal human language. There is much debate over this phenomenon. Clearly the early church was gifted with the ability to speak and be understood in different human languages as Acts 2 makes clear. However some kind of "ecstatic utterance" appears to be in view here. Its practice in Corinth was being abused, and so Paul has to counteract the problem here.

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important than those who speak in tongues, unless they interpret what's been said, so that the church can be built up.

⁶Brothers and sisters, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what benefit would I be to you unless I bring you some revelation, or knowledge, or prophetic message, or teaching?

⁷Even when it comes to something non-living such as musical instruments like a flute or a harp: if they don't produce clear notes, how will you know what tune is being played? ⁸Similarly, if the trumpet doesn't give a clear sound, who will get ready for battle? ⁹It's the same situation for you—unless you speak using words that are easy to understand, who will know what you're saying? What you say will be lost on the wind. ¹⁰There are surely many languages in this world, and there is meaning in every one of them. ¹¹If I don't understand the language, those who speak make no sense, and I make no sense to them^a. ¹²It's the same for you—if you are keen to have spiritual gifts, try to have many of those that will build up the church. ¹³Anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that they're able to translate what they say. ¹⁴For if I pray out loud in a tongue, my spirit is praying, but it does nothing for my understanding!

¹⁵So then, what should I do? I will pray “in the Spirit,” but I will pray with my mind too. I will sing “in the Spirit,” but I will sing with my mind too^b. ¹⁶For if you only pray “in the Spirit,” how can ordinary people that don't have understanding say “Amen” after your prayer of thanks, since they haven't a clue what you said? ¹⁷You might have said a great prayer of thanks, but the other hasn't been helped! ¹⁸I thank God that I can speak in tongues more than all of you. ¹⁹But in church I would rather speak five understandable words to teach others than ten thousand words in a tongue nobody understands. ²⁰Brothers and sisters, don't think like children. Be as innocent as babies in regard to evil, but be grown up in your understanding. ²¹As

^a 14:11. Literally, I am a barbarian to the one who speaks, and the one who speaks is a barbarian to me. The very word “barbarian” comes from the idea that sounds being made make no sense—“baa-baa” etc.

^b 14:15. Paul here seems to be using the phraseology of some of those in Corinth who were proud of being “in the Spirit” as if that was superior to anything else. Paul points out that being “in the Spirit” is not helpful unless it produces understanding.

Scripture records, “‘I will speak to my people through other languages and the lips of foreigners, but even then they won’t listen to me,’ says the Lord.”^a

²²Speaking in tongues is a sign, not to believers, but those who don’t believe. Speaking God’s prophetic message is the opposite: it is not for those who don’t believe, but for believers.

²³If the whole church is meeting together and you are all speaking in tongues, and some people come in who don’t understand, or people who don’t believe, won’t they say that you are insane? ²⁴But if everyone is speaking God’s message, and someone comes in who isn’t a believer, or someone who doesn’t understand, they will be convinced and called to account by everyone’s words. ²⁵The secrets of their heart will be laid bare, so they will fall to their knees^b and worship God, affirming that God is truly among you.

²⁶So then, brothers and sisters, what should you do? When you meet together, different people will sing, or teach, or share a special message, or speak in a tongue, or give an interpretation. But everything should be done to build up and encourage the church. ²⁷If anyone wants to speak in a tongue, make it just two, or three at the most, taking turns, and someone should interpret what is said. ²⁸If there’s no one there to interpret, those who speak in tongues should keep quiet in church and only speak to themselves, and God. ²⁹Similarly, have two or three of those who give God’s prophetic message speak, and let everyone else think about what was said. ³⁰However if a special revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, then the first speaker should give way to them. ³¹You can all speak for God, one at a time, so that everyone can learn and be encouraged. ³²It is for those who speak for God to control their prophetic inspiration, ³³for God is not a God of disorder but of peace and quiet^c. This is the way it should be in all the churches of God’s people. ³⁴“Women should stay quiet in the churches—they shouldn’t speak. They should respect their situation, as the laws states. ³⁵If they want to learn

^a 14:21. Isaiah 28:11, 12.

^b 14:25. Literally, “fall on his face.”

^c 14:33. This statement is to deal with the situation where people are claiming special revelation/inspiration and therefore wanting precedence—with the obvious arguments that would result.

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they can do so at home, asking their husbands. It is not proper^a for women to speak in church.”^b ³⁶What? Did the word of God begin with you? Are you the only ones it came to? ³⁷Anyone who thinks they are a prophet, or that they have some spiritual gift, should be aware that what I’m writing to you is a command of the Lord. ³⁸Those who ignore this will themselves be ignored. ³⁹So my brothers and sisters, make it your aim to speak for God. Don’t prohibit speaking in tongues. ⁴⁰Just make sure everything done is done properly and in an orderly manner.

15 ¹Now I want to remind you about the good news I announced to you. You accepted it, and you have stood firm for it. ²It is through this good news that you are saved if you hold on to the message that I gave you. Otherwise you trusted for nothing! ³I passed on to you what I myself had also received, a message of vital importance: that Christ died for our sins, according to Scripture; ⁴he was buried and was raised from the dead on the third day, again in accordance with Scripture. ⁵He appeared to Peter, then to the Twelve. ⁶After that he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still alive today, though some have died. ⁷He appeared to James, then all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, he also appeared to me, someone born as it were at the wrong time. ⁹For I’m the least important apostle of all, not even fit to be called an apostle since I persecuted God’s church. ¹⁰But by God’s grace I am what I am, and his grace given to me wasn’t wasted. On the contrary I’ve worked harder than all of them—though not me, but God’s grace working through me. ¹¹So whether it’s I or them, this is the message we shared with you that brought you to trust in God.

^a 14:35. “Not proper.” By using this term (which also can mean shameful or disgraceful) Paul reveals this is related to the cultural context.

^b 14:35. The reason for placing 14:34-35 in quote marks is the understanding that this is the position outlined in the letter from Corinth, and Paul is quoting them before refuting their argument. The fact that just 3 chapters earlier in 11:5 Paul refers to women praying and prophesying indicates that this statement cannot be read as a blanket ban on women speaking in church. From the context it appears possible that women in the church at Corinth were questioning and arguing, being part of the disorder he mentions, and this suggested solution in the letter from the church at Corinth is what Paul is addressing here.

¹²Now if the message declares that Christ has been raised from the dead, how is it that some of you say there's no resurrection of the dead? ¹³If there's no resurrection of the dead then Christ hasn't been raised either. ¹⁴And if Christ isn't raised, then our message we shared with you is pointless, and your trust in God is pointless too. ¹⁵In addition, we would be shown to be false witnesses of God when we testified that God raised Christ from the dead. But God didn't raise Christ from the dead if it's true that there's no resurrection. ¹⁶If the dead are not raised, then Christ hasn't been raised either, ¹⁷and if Christ hasn't been raised, then your trust in God is useless, and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸This also means that those who died in Christ are lost. ¹⁹If our hope in Christ is only for this life, we're the most pitiful people of all!

²⁰But Christ *has* been raised from the dead, the firstfruits^a of the harvest from those who have died. ²¹Just as death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead came through a man. ²²Just as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³But each in their own turn: Christ the firstfruits, then those who belong to Christ when he comes. ²⁴After this comes the end, when Christ hands over the kingdom to God the Father, having destroyed^b all rulers, authorities, and powers. ²⁵Christ has to rule until he has put all his enemies under his feet^c. ²⁶The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. ²⁷As Scripture says, "He put everything under his feet." (Of course when it says "everything" is put under him it's obvious this doesn't refer to God who placed everything under Christ's authority.) ²⁸When everything has been placed under Christ's authority, then the Son will also place himself under God's authority, so that God who gave the Son authority over everything may be all in all^d.

^a 15:20. The word "firstfruits" refers to the first sample of a harvest that was given as an offering to God, also seen as a guarantee of a successful harvest. Christ as the firstfruits therefore means he is both the initial harvest from the dead and the guarantee of their resurrection.

^b 15:24. Destroyed in the sense of ending their power.

^c 15:25. Meaning they have been conquered and humbled.

^d 15:28. "All in all." Various explanations have been given for this phrase. It is obviously referring to the completeness of God's rulership in the Universe, and is perhaps best translated literally from the original as "all in all."

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²⁹Otherwise what will those people do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then would people be baptized for them?^a ³⁰As for us, why do we place ourselves in danger hour after hour? ³¹I die every day—let me say it bluntly, my brothers and sisters. This is just as sure as the pride I have for what Christ Jesus has done in you. ³²Humanly speaking, what would I gain by fighting with those people in Ephesus who were like wild animals, if the dead are not raised? If the dead are not raised, “let’s eat and drink, for tomorrow we die”!

³³Don’t be fooled: “bad company ruins good character.”

³⁴Come to your senses as you should, and stop sinning! Some of you don’t know God. I tell you this to shame you.

³⁵Of course somebody will ask, “How exactly are the dead raised? What kind of body will they have?” ³⁶What a foolish question! What you sow doesn’t sprout into life unless it dies.

³⁷When you sow, you don’t sow the plant it will grow into, just the bare seed, whether wheat or whatever you’re planting. ³⁸God makes the plant grow into the form he has chosen, and different seeds produce different plants with different forms. ³⁹What living things are made from is not the same. Human beings have one kind of body tissue, while animals have another, birds another, and fish another. ⁴⁰There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. Heavenly bodies have one kind of beauty, earthly bodies another. ⁴¹The sun shines in one way, and the moon another, while the stars are different again, with each one shining in a different way.

⁴²It’s the same with the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in decay; it is raised to last forever. ⁴³It is sown in shame; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. ⁴⁴It is sown as a natural body; it is raised as a spiritual body. Just as there are natural bodies there are spiritual bodies. ⁴⁵As Scripture says, “The first man, Adam, became a living being;”^b but the last Adam a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶The spiritual did not come first, but the natural—the spiritual came after that. ⁴⁷The first man is from the dust of the earth; the second man is from

^a 15:29. The theological meaning of this verse is much debated. However, the actual words are translated simply enough.

^b 15:45. Genesis 2:7.

heaven. ⁴⁸Earthly people are like the man made from the earth; heavenly people are like the man from heaven. ⁴⁹Just as we bore the likeness of the earthly man so we shall bear the likeness of the man from heaven. ⁵⁰However I tell you this, my brothers and sisters: our present bodies^a cannot inherit the kingdom of God. These decaying bodies cannot inherit what lasts forever.

⁵¹Listen, I'm going to reveal a mystery! Not all of us will die—but we will all be changed, ⁵²in a moment, in the blink of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet. The trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised never to die again, and we will be changed. ⁵³For this perishable body must be clothed with a body that never perishes. This mortal life must be clothed with immortality. ⁵⁴When this perishable body has been clothed with a body that never perishes, and this mortal life has been clothed with immortality, then the Scripture will come true that says, “Death has been totally conquered and destroyed. ⁵⁵Death—where’s your victory? Death—where’s your sting?^b ⁵⁶The sting that causes death is sin; and the power of sin is the law; ⁵⁷but praise God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸So my dear brothers and sisters: be strong, stand firm, doing everything you can for the Lord’s work, since you know that nothing you do in the Lord is wasted.

16 ¹Now about “collecting money for fellow-believers.” I’m giving you the same instructions for you to follow as I did to the churches in Galatia. ²On the first day of the week everybody should set aside some money you’ve earned. I don’t want there to be any collections to have to be made when I’m with you. ³When I get there I will write recommendation letters for whoever you choose, and they will take your donation to Jerusalem. ⁴If it works out for me to go too, they can come with me.

⁵After I’ve been to Macedonia, I plan to come and visit you. I pass that way through Macedonia ⁶and I may stay with you for a while, perhaps spend the winter, and then you can send me on my way to wherever I’m headed. ⁷This time I don’t want to come

^a 15:50. Literally, “flesh and blood.”

^b 15:55. Isaiah 25:8; Hosea 13:14.

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and see you for just a short time. I hope I can stay for a while with you, if that's what the Lord permits. ⁸However I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹because a tremendous door of opportunity has opened up for me there, though there are plenty who oppose me.

¹⁰Now if Timothy arrives, make sure that he has nothing to fear by being with you, for he's working for the Lord just as I am. ¹¹Don't let anyone look down on him. Cheerfully send him on his way so he can come and see me—the brothers and sisters and I are waiting for him. ¹²As for our brother Apollos: I urged him to go and see you together with the other believers, but he wasn't willing to go at the moment. He'll come and visit when he gets the chance.

¹³Stay alert. Stand firm in your trust in God. Take courage. Be strong. ¹⁴Whatever you do, do it in love. ¹⁵You know that Stephanas and his family were among the first converts in Achaia, and they dedicated themselves to helping God's people. I'm pleading with you, my brothers and sisters, ¹⁶to respect their leadership, and everyone who helps the work with such dedication. ¹⁷I'm delighted that Stephanas, Fortunatas, and Achaicus have arrived here, for they did what you weren't able to. ¹⁸They have been a great source of encouragement to me, and to you. People like that deserve your recognition.

¹⁹The churches of Asia^a send their greetings. Aquila and Priscilla, along with the church that meets in their home, send their best wishes. ²⁰All the brothers and sisters here send their greetings. Greet one another affectionately. ²¹I Paul write this greeting with my own hand. ²²Anyone who doesn't love the Lord should be excluded from the church^b. Come Lord! ²³May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. ²⁴My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen.

^a 16:19. Referring to the Roman province of Asia Minor.

^b 16:21. Literally, "let him be accursed."

