

1 CORINTHIANS

God's holy people (1:1-3)

1 From Paul, who by God's will was called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from our brother Sosthenes.

²To God's church in Corinth; to those who have been made holy in Christ Jesus, set apart by Him for God and consecrated to His purposes. Since He has made you holy you are called to be holy, together with all the other believers in every place, those who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; for He is their Lord and ours also.

³May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ impart both His grace and peace to you.

Living in Christ (1:4-9)

⁴I am always thankful to God for you because He has shown you so much grace through your union with Christ Jesus. ⁵Because you live in Christ you have been blessed with all His riches. He has blessed you in every conceivable way. You know that all His riches are yours and you are able to speak His many blessings over your lives. ⁶This is possible because all we taught you about Christ was imparted to you when you believed in Him. ⁷For this reason, you do not lack any of His spiritual gifts. They are yours to enable you to persevere in faith as you look with eager expectation for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed in His full majesty and glory.

⁸He will keep you strong to the very end so that on that glorious day, when you come before our Lord Jesus Christ, you will be without any blame or guilt. ⁹God is faithful and He is able to do this because He has called you to live at one with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Live in unity with one another (1:10-17)

¹⁰I urge you strongly in His name to be in agreement with one another. There should not be any divisions among you. You should be united perfectly, even agreeing together in the way you think.

¹¹Yet, my brothers, I have heard from some who belong to Chloe's household that there are disputes among you. ¹²One person says, "I

am one of Paul's followers," while another says, "I follow Apollos." Still others claim, "I follow Cephas," and others say, "I am a follower of Christ." Such claims cause divisions among you.

¹³Is Christ divided into such party factions? Was Paul crucified on your behalf? Or were you baptised in Paul's name? ¹⁴⁻¹⁵If such things are being said, I am only thankful that I baptised none of you except for Crispus and Gaius, so that none can claim to be baptised in my name. ¹⁶⁻¹⁷Yes, I did baptise the household of Stephanas also, but I cannot remember baptising anyone else, for Christ did not send me to baptise you but to preach the gospel. And I did not do this in words that come from my own human wisdom, or you would not have seen the power of the cross of Christ.

Christ is God's power and wisdom (1:18-29)

¹⁸The revelation of what Jesus accomplished on the cross seems foolish nonsense to those who will perish, but it is God's power at work in all of us who are being saved. ¹⁹This is why God has written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of those who consider themselves wise; and I will frustrate the intelligence of those who think themselves clever.'

²⁰Where is the man who has been saved by his own wisdom? Where is the scholar who has received God's life through studying? Where is the philosopher who understands what God is doing at this time? Is it not true that God has made all such worldly wisdom appear utterly foolish?

²¹It was wise of God to ensure that nobody could come to know Him through his or her worldly wisdom. Rather, it pleased Him to save those who believe what was preached to them, even though it appeared foolish to their natural thinking.

²²⁻²³Jews are always looking for miraculous signs and Greeks trust in their own wisdom; but we preach that salvation is only possible because of Christ's crucifixion. This is a stumbling block to those Jews who cannot understand why the Messiah had to be crucified; and it seems utterly foolish to those others who trust in their own intellectual understanding.

²⁴To those who God has called to belong to Him, whether they are Jews or not, Christ is both God's power and God's wisdom. ²⁵People may regard God's purpose as being foolish, but His so-called foolishness is wiser than all man's wisdom put together. Those who consider God to be weak should realise He is more powerful than all the strength that men could muster between them!

²⁶My brothers, pause and think for a moment of the condition you were in when God first called you to belong to Christ. Not many of you were renowned for what the world regards as intellectual prowess; and few of you could claim to be of noble birth. ²⁷So you can see that God chose those whom worldly people call foolish to have a wisdom greater than they possess. He chose those whom others call weak to have a greater power than any human power. ²⁸⁻²⁹He chose those whom the world regards as worthless and useless, of absolutely no account, to show the futility of human wisdom, so that no-one would be able to boast before God because of his intellectual ability or human strength.

Boast only in the Lord (1:30-2:10)

³⁰It is only through God's own work of grace that you now live in Christ Jesus, at one with Him. Jesus Himself has become for us who believe the true wisdom that God has supplied. He is our righteousness. He is our holiness. He is our redemption, the one who has made it possible for us to be God's children. ³¹This is why it is written that if anyone wants to boast, let him boast about what the Lord has done!

2 My brothers, when I first came to you it was not with eloquent language, neither did I claim to have superior wisdom. My purpose was to tell you clearly the truth about God. ²I was determined to focus only on Jesus Christ and the meaning of His crucifixion. ³In myself I felt very weak and even fearful when I came to you; I was actually trembling with apprehension. ⁴The way I preached and presented my message was not by using wise or persuasive words; rather I wanted to give you a demonstration of the Spirit's power. ⁵Then your faith would not be based on any man's wisdom, but on God's power.

⁶However, it is true to say that our message is one of wisdom, as the mature among you realise. But I do not mean the wisdom of contemporary natural thinkers, nor what passes as wisdom by those who rule over us, a wisdom that is futile before God. ⁷No, we speak the wisdom that comes from God, a secret wisdom that has been hidden since before time began, but has now been revealed by God to enable us to know His glory and even be partakers of that glory ourselves.

⁸None of the present political rulers understand this wisdom. If they had they certainly would not have crucified Christ, the Lord of

glory.⁹ However, it has been written, “Nobody has seen, nor heard, nor understood what God has prepared for those who love Him.”¹⁰ Yet God has now revealed this to us by His Spirit.

Spiritual wisdom and understanding (2:11-16)

Only the Spirit is able to understand all things, including the deep things about God.¹¹ Nobody can know the thoughts of another person, but each knows his or her own thoughts. Similarly, nobody knows God’s thoughts except His own Spirit.¹² And we who believe in Jesus have not been given the spirit of this world but God’s own Spirit, whom He sent to us so that we can understand all that He has given us.

¹³ So we do not speak in words of worldly wisdom, but the Spirit gives us the words to speak, and He enables us to express spiritual truths in spiritual words.¹⁴ Someone who does not have the Spirit does not believe the truths that come from God’s Spirit. They seem foolish to him and he does not understand, because these truths only make sense to those who possess God’s Spirit.

¹⁵ The man who has been blessed by receiving the Spirit is able to make correct judgments about everything; he can discern what is right or wrong. And no-one can judge him for the wisdom given him by God.¹⁶ “For who can out-think God and instruct Him?”

However, we have been given the mind of Christ, so we know how He views things!

Warning against divisions (3:1-15)

3 My brothers, I want to speak to you as spiritual people, but you are still so worldly in your thinking, like little babes in Christ.² This is why I had to feed you with milk rather than the solid food for which you were not ready. And this is still the case.³ You are still worldly in your attitudes. This is proved by the fact that you are jealous of one another and quarrel among yourselves. This is to act as mere men, isn’t it? ⁴ For when you say such things as, “I follow Paul,” or “I follow Apollos,” you act as worldly people.

⁵ Who is Apollos really, or Paul come to that? We are only servants used by God to bring you to faith in the gospel. The Lord Himself assigned us our tasks, as He does with everyone.⁶ He used me to plant the seed of the gospel in your hearts and Apollos watered that seed; but it was God who made it grow.⁷ Neither the one who plants

2:9 *Isaiah 64:4*

2:16 *Isaiah 40:13*

nor the one who waters is of any significance, but only God who caused that seed of truth to grow in you. ⁸Both he who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose and each will be rewarded by God for faithfulness to his calling. ⁹We simply work together with God. And you are God's field, God's building.

¹⁰It was only through the grace given me by God that I was able to lay a foundation among you as a skilful builder; but it was left to someone else to build on that foundation of truth. However, everyone must be careful how he builds.

¹¹No-one can change the foundation that has already been laid, for that is the truth of Jesus Christ. He personally is the foundation. ¹²So if someone builds on this foundation using spiritual gold, silver or precious stones, his work will survive. But if someone uses only wood, hay or stubble, his work will be burned up on the Day of Judgment. ¹³For then the value of each man's work will be seen clearly because the testing of God's fire will prove the quality of what each person has produced. ¹⁴⁻¹⁵For those whose work survives there will be a reward; but for the one whose work is burned up there will be loss. He will be saved, but only like someone who has escaped from the flames.

You are God's temple (3:16-23)

¹⁶Surely you understand that you are God's temple, His dwelling place, because His Spirit lives in you? ¹⁷God will destroy anyone who destroys His temple, because He regards His temple as sacred; and you are that temple!

¹⁸There is no point in deceiving yourselves. If any of you regards himself as wise because of his powers of reason, he had better realise that he is no better than a fool, for then he will seek to become truly wise. ¹⁹Worldly wisdom is utter foolishness to God. It has been said, "God catches out the wise through their own craftiness." ²⁰It was also written that, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of those who consider themselves wise are, in reality, futile."

²¹⁻²³So then, stop boasting about men! You inherit all that God gives, whether you receive revelation from Paul, Apollos or Peter. Yes, everything is yours, the things of this present world, that which you receive through the life of Christ and that which will be yours beyond death. Everything God has for you in the present or the future is yours because you belong to Christ, and He is God's Son!

3:19 *Job 5:13*

3:20 *Psalms 94:11*

Never go beyond what is written (4:1-7)

4 In view of all this, others should realise that we are Christ's servants, entrusted by God with those things that were formerly hidden. ^{2,3}It is necessary for those given such trust to prove faithful; so it does not concern me if I am judged by you or any human court; I do not even judge myself. ⁴Although my conscience is clear, this does not mean I am innocent. I know that the Lord judges me; that is what matters!

⁵So do not rush to any hasty judgments; when the Lord comes you will see the truth about everything. He will bring into the light those things that were hidden in darkness and then the motives of all our hearts will be exposed, and each will receive whatever praise is right!

⁶My dear brothers, I have used Apollos and myself as examples only for your instruction, so that you may gain understanding from us as to the meaning of the saying, "Never go beyond what is written." Apply that and you will not follow one man as opposed to another. ⁷After all, what is unique about you? And what do you have apart from that which you received through God's grace? If you received it as a gift, why boast as if you achieved it by your own efforts or goodness?

Christ's apostles (4:8-13)

⁸You boast that you have already all you want, that you have become rich! You make it sound as if you were kings, and all of your own making without any reference to us. I wish you really were kings for then we would also be kings with you! ⁹That is far from the case, for it appears to me that God has appointed us apostles to be at the very end of the procession, the position given to those who have been condemned to die in the arena. It seems we are a spectacle to everyone, to angels as well as men. ¹⁰Yes, we appear to be fools, but for the sake of Christ. Yet you make it appear that you are so wise in Christ! We appear weak, you claim to be strong! While you are honoured, we are dishonoured!

¹¹Even now we hunger and thirst, we are dressed in rags, are brutally treated and homeless. ¹²We work hard with our hands to support ourselves. But when we are cursed we do not retaliate; we bless instead. We endure the persecution we have to face. ¹³When people slander us we answer with kind words. Yes, until now we have been treated like the scum of the earth, the very lowest form of human being in the world.

Spiritual fathers (4:14-17)

¹⁴My purpose in writing like this is not to put you to shame, but to warn you because you are my dear children. ¹⁵You may think that you have ten thousand to protect you because you are in Christ, but you do not have many spiritual fathers. And this is what I became, your spiritual father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. ¹⁶So instead of standing on your pride, I beg you to follow my example. ¹⁷This is why I am sending Timothy to you. He is both like a son whom I love and someone who is faithful to the Lord. He will remind you of the way I live in Christ Jesus, a way of life that reflects what I teach in all the churches.

Kingdom of power (4:18-21)

¹⁸Some of you have become so arrogant, acting as if I will never return to you. ¹⁹But I will be arriving shortly, if the Lord so allows, and then I will see for myself not only what the proud people say, but whether they demonstrate any power of the Spirit! ²⁰For God's Kingdom is not about empty talk, but revealing God's power.

²¹Which would you prefer, for me to come and scold you, or to come in love with a spirit of gentleness?

Don't allow immoral behaviour (5:1-8)

5 I have heard that there are some among you guilty of sexual immorality, and of a particularly evil kind that even the ungodly would condemn. A man is actually living with his father's wife! ²How can you be proud when you allow such things? Don't you think that such outrageous behaviour should cause you so much grief that you would expel this man from the fellowship? ³I may not be with you physically, but I certainly am present in spirit, and I have already decided as if I was there with you, that this is definitely the right decision for this man.

⁴This is what you are to do when assembled together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not only will I be with you in spirit, but the Lord Jesus will also be present in power. ⁵You are to hand this man over to Satan. It is better for his flesh life to be destroyed so that his spirit will be saved when Jesus comes on that great and terrible Day of the Lord.

⁶You can see that your boasting is not good! You should know by now that a little yeast can work through the whole lump of dough! ⁷So be rid of this old corrupt yeast so that you may become a new lump without any such corruption in your midst. It was to make

you pure and holy that Christ became our sacrificial Passover Lamb; and this is what God has called you to be.

⁸So when you keep this Feast, do so without the old yeast of malice and wickedness. Instead be the bread of sincerity and truth, without any such yeast.

Expel the rebellious (5:9-13)

⁹I have written to you previously not to have fellowship with those who are sexually immoral. ¹⁰I refer to those who claim to be your brothers, not those who still belong to this world. For the world is full of immoral or greedy people, as well as confidence tricksters and those who worship idols, whether these idols be people, possessions or false gods. You would have to depart from this world altogether to avoid all such people.

¹¹What I write now should make it clear that you are not to have fellowship with anyone who claims to be in Christ, but is sexually immoral or greedy, someone who has his own idols or slanders others, a drunkard or someone who manipulates and swindles others. You should not think of eating with such a person.

¹²What concern do I have in judging those outside the church? But are you not to weigh the actions of those who belong to the church? ¹³Leave God to judge those outside. Remember this principle: "Expel from among you the wicked man who refuses to repent."

Settle disputes with propriety (6:1-8)

6 So if you have some kind of disagreement with another brother, surely you would not think of taking the matter before ungodly people, would you? Instead, bring it before the saints, your fellow believers in Christ. ²Do you not realise that ultimately the saints will judge the world? If you are among those who will do that, surely you are now able to settle cases that are trivial by comparison! ³Why, we will even judge angels! Do you know that? That being the case, surely we are competent to judge the things of this present life!

⁴So if there are disputes among you, appoint your own judges in the church, men who are fair even though they may have no leadership status. ⁵It is shameful that I should even have to suggest such a thing. Do you really think that there is no-one among you wise enough to judge differences between your church members? ⁶For what happens now? One brother takes another to court, and wants the matter settled by unbelievers. What kind of a witness is that?

⁷By even having lawsuits against one another, you appear as those already defeated. Would it not be better to let the matter go, even if you have been wronged in some way? Would you not rather be cheated than to be a poor witness to unbelievers? ⁸Yet instead of having such attitudes, you are cheating one another, doing wrong even to your own brothers!

No inheritance for the wicked (6:9-11)

⁹You know that the wicked have no inheritance in God's Kingdom, don't you? Don't be deceived about this. The sexually immoral, those who love their idols and those guilty of adultery will not inherit God's Kingdom. ¹⁰Neither will male prostitutes, nor homosexuals who live in sin, nor others who sin sexually. Neither will thieves, nor greedy people, nor drunkards, nor those who slander others or swindle them. None of these people will inherit God's Kingdom unless they repent.

¹¹In your former way of life you yourselves would have been numbered among such people. But look what Christ has done for you! Now you have been washed of your sins and have been made holy before God, fully accepted by Him because you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ and have received God's Spirit.

Don't indulge the flesh (6:12-18)

¹²You hear some people say, "Everything is possible for me." However not everything is beneficial for you. You may say, "Everything is permissible for me;" but I will not allow any fleshly desire to be my master.

¹³Others say, "Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food." Yes, but both food and stomach will be destroyed by God. He has given you your body to be used for His purposes, not for sexual immorality. That is why the Lord has come to live in your body.

¹⁴God used His power to raise the Lord Jesus from the dead and by that same power He will raise us as well. ¹⁵Do you not realise that your bodies are members of Christ Himself because you belong to His Body? Would you expect me to take members of Christ and make them one with prostitutes? Of course not! ¹⁶You know that anyone who unites himself with a prostitute has made himself of one body with her, don't you? God has said, "The two become one flesh," when they have sexual relations. ¹⁷How much better for the believer to unite himself with the Lord, so He will be one with Him in Spirit!

¹⁸Turn your back completely on sexual immorality. All the other sins a man can be guilty of do not involve his body in the same way. But the man who sins sexually actually commits sin against his own body!

Temples of the Holy Spirit (6:19-20)

¹⁹Surely you realise that God has made your body a temple of the Holy Spirit, who now lives in you? This is God's doing; and so you do not belong to yourself, to do as you please. ²⁰God has purchased you for Himself; He has paid the price for you with His Son's blood. So honour Him in the way you use your body!

Marriage principles (7:1-16)

7 Now I have to address the matters you raised when you wrote to me. Yes, it is good if a man decides not to marry. However, this is not the norm. ²Because there is so much immorality about, it is advisable for each man to have his own wife and every woman her own husband. ³The husband should fulfil his marital responsibilities towards his wife, and the wife likewise towards her husband. ⁴The wife is no longer sole owner of her body, for now she is united with her husband. In the same way, the husband is no longer the sole owner of his body because he has given himself to his wife.

⁵Do not deprive each other of sexual pleasure, unless you do so for a period of time by mutual consent so that together you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then be joined together again so that you are not tempted by Satan to have any sexual relationships outside of your marriage because you lack self-control.

⁶All this I say as a concession because of the circumstances in which we find ourselves. I am not ordering anyone to be married. ⁷Actually, I would prefer all men to be as I am, 'married' to the work of the gospel. But God gives different forms of grace to each one; one has the gift of celibacy, others have different gifts.

⁸So to those not yet married or who have been widowed I give this advice: It is good for you to remain unmarried as I am myself. ⁹However, if you feel you must marry, for you cannot control your feelings, then you should do so; for it is better to marry than to burn with unfulfilled passion for someone you love.

¹⁰To those who are married, I can speak with the Lord's authority, not my own. His command is clear: a wife must not divorce her husband. ¹¹If she does, she must remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. Likewise a man is not to divorce his wife.

¹²This is my advice to others, not a word from the Lord: if a brother has a wife who does not believe, yet she still wants to live with him, he must not divorce her. ¹³Likewise if a woman has an unbelieving husband and he still wants to live with her, she must not divorce him. ¹⁴You see, the unbelieving husband has been sanctified by his wife, so he too is regarded as holy. And the unbelieving wife has been made holy through her husband who is a believer. If this was not the case, then your children would be unclean in God's sight; yet God regards them as holy, set apart for Him.

¹⁵However, if the one who is not a believer decides to leave, you should not prevent him or her from doing so. The believing man or woman should not feel condemned in such circumstances. God wants us to live in peace and harmony.

¹⁶Wife, do not give up on your husband, but believe for his salvation. Husband, do not abandon your wife, but believe that you will see her saved.

Contentment in life (7:17-28)

¹⁷The principle is this: everyone should be content to remain in the circumstances to which God has assigned him and to which He has called him. And this is the guiding principle I teach in all the churches.

¹⁸If a man was circumcised when called to belong to Christ, he should remain circumcised. If he was not circumcised when he became a believer, he must not seek to be circumcised. ¹⁹It is of no significance whether you are circumcised or not. Obedience to God's command is what matters. ²⁰Every believer should remain as he was when God called him.

²¹Were you a slave when you became a believer? Do not be concerned about that, although if you are able to gain your freedom, do so. ²²Even if you were a slave when you were called, you are free in Christ. In like manner, the one who was free when called is now Christ's slave. ²³It cost His blood to purchase you for God; so don't put yourselves in slavery to men. ²⁴Everyone should be content to serve God in the position he was when called.

²⁵I do not have any word from the Lord for virgins; but by the Lord's mercy I can speak as one who is considered trustworthy. ²⁶I think the present circumstances indicate that it is best for you to remain as you are!

²⁷If you are married, do not contemplate divorce. If you are not married this is not the time to think about finding a wife. ²⁸How-

ever, you would not sin by getting married; neither would it be sinful for a virgin to marry. You must realise that to be married brings you added responsibilities and I want to spare you from any unnecessary pressure.

Maintain focus on God (7:29-40)

²⁹I speak in this way because in this present climate life could be very short. In view of this, those who have wives must keep their focus on the truth as an unmarried person would. ³⁰Those who would naturally mourn are to live as if they had no grief. When you buy things, understand that you might not have them for long. ³¹Do not become infatuated with the things of this world even though you have to use them, for this present world as we know it is passing away.

³²I want you to be free of unnecessary concerns. A person who is unmarried can be totally devoted to the Lord's business and focus on living to please Him alone. ³³However, a married man has to be concerned about practical issues of this world and naturally wants to please his wife also. So he has divided interests.

³⁴An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned solely with the Lord's business. Her desire is to be devoted to the Lord completely, both in body and spirit. However, a married woman has to be involved with worldly affairs and she also wants to please her husband.

³⁵I am trying to be helpful, not restrictive; it would be for your own good to live completely devoted to the Lord.

³⁶If someone thinks he is not doing the right thing by his fiancée and he feels he should marry her, he should do as he thinks best, especially if she is getting older. He does not sin by marrying her; they should be married.

³⁷Another man may not feel under this pressure and is at peace about the present situation. He does not feel compelled to be married, for he has the will-power to keep his emotions under control. So he makes the right decision in choosing not to marry immediately.

³⁸My conclusion is this then: the man who decides to marry his fiancée does the right thing, but the man who decides not to marry does even better.

³⁹In marriage, a wife is committed to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry whoever she wishes, so long as he also belongs to the Lord. ⁴⁰My judgment is that she will be happier to remain a widow, and I think this is the leading of God's Spirit in the present circumstances.

Proper use of freedom (8:1-13)

8 You raise the matter of what to do about food that has been sacrificed to idols. Although we all have knowledge, we must beware of being puffed up with pride, for we are called to love in ways that build others up. ²Even the person who is convinced of what he knows, does not yet know everything. ³Remember, God knows all about every person who loves Him.

⁴Bearing this in mind, what should our attitude be towards eating food offered to idols? We are certain that any worldly idol is absolutely nothing, and there is only one God. ⁵⁻⁶Even if so-called gods existed, either in the heavens or on the earth, for us there is only one God, the Father who created all things. We live for Him and for Jesus Christ who is our only Lord, even though in the world there are many so called 'gods' and 'lords'. It is through Christ alone that all creation came into being and we have life through Him alone.

⁷Not everyone knows or believes this. Some people are still so conscious of the idols they once worshipped that their weak consciences are troubled if they are asked to eat food that was once sacrificed to idols. ⁸However, food has no ability to influence our relationship with God; so it does not matter whether we choose to eat such food or not. If we eat, we are neither the worse nor the better for doing so!

⁹However, you should be careful that in exercising your freedom to eat such food, you do not cause problems for those with weak consciences. ¹⁰Perhaps you think that if someone with a weak conscience saw you eating temple food, he would be encouraged to eat what has been offered to idols. ¹¹But if this weaker brother, for whom Christ died, follows you against the dictates of his conscience, he might then feel devastated as a result of your exhibition of freedom. ¹²In this case you would be guilty of sin against such brothers because you have wounded their consciences; and so you have sinned also against Christ. ¹³If eating meat caused my brother to sin, I would never eat it again, for I do not want to be the means of causing anyone to fall into sin.

Paul's apostolic validity (9:1-27)

9 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not had the wonderful privilege of seeing Jesus our Lord? And are you not the fruit of my work in the Lord? ²Not everyone wants to regard me as their apostle, but surely you recognise me as your apostle! For you are the very evidence of my apostolic calling from the Lord.

³I say this to defend myself from those who sit in judgment on me. ⁴Don't we apostles have the right to receive food and drink? ⁵Surely those of us with wives can bring them with us? After all, other apostles, the Lord's brothers and Peter also do this. ⁶Or should Barnabas and I be the only apostles who have to work to support ourselves?

⁷Does a soldier serve in the army at his own expense? The one who plants a vineyard is allowed to eat some of the grapes, isn't he? And the one who shepherds a flock is allowed to drink some of the milk, surely? ⁸Am I speaking from a purely human perspective? ⁹What does the Law of Moses say about this? It is written, "Do not put a muzzle on the ox while it is treading out the grain." Is God only concerned about oxen? ¹⁰Surely this is a principle from which we are to learn! Yes, this applies also to us because both the ploughman and the one who threshes the crop expect to share in the profits from the harvest.

¹¹So if we have sown good spiritual seed among you, should we not expect to reap a material harvest from you? Surely that is not too much to expect! ¹²If others claim the right to your support, is not our claim even greater?

We have not used this right in the past. In fact, we were so concerned not to hinder people from receiving the gospel of Christ that we were prepared to suffer any necessary sacrifice. ¹³Yet surely you are aware that those who work in the temple are provided for by the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the offerings made at the altar? ¹⁴Well, in the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should be supported by those who receive the gospel!

¹⁵So far I have not claimed any of these rights. I am not writing about these things in the hope that you will now decide to support me. I would rather die than be deprived of my boast that I preach the gospel free of charge. ¹⁶Not that I can really boast about this, for I feel compelled to preach. I would feel condemned if I was not to preach the gospel. ¹⁷If I preach free of charge, I still have a reward. If I preach under compulsion, I would only be discharging the trust I have been given. ¹⁸What is my reward? Simply this: that when I preach I offer the gospel free of charge and therefore do not use my right to be supported by those to whom I preach.

¹⁹I am free and am not indebted to anyone. Yet I make myself a slave to everyone so that I can win as many as possible for the Lord.

²⁰When with Jewish people, I act as one of them to win them over to the gospel. Even though I am no longer under the law I act as one who is when I am with those who still live under the law, to win as many as possible to the truth that sets them free from the religious law.

²¹When with those who do not live by the law, I live as one who is no longer governed by religious rules and regulations, although I continue to live willingly under the law of Christ. My purpose is to win those who have no such legalistic framework to their lives.

²²To weak people I share my own weakness, so I can also win the weak for Christ. I am ready to be adaptable and to use every possible means to influence people so that at least some will be saved. ²³I act like this for the sake of the gospel, for it blesses me to see others receive Christ.

²⁴In a race, everyone competes but only one wins the trophy for coming first. You know this well. Run as if you are determined to win that trophy. ²⁵Every competitor has to go into strict training if he expects to win the crown, even though such an honour has no lasting value. But we run to receive a crown of eternal significance. ²⁶So I do not run in an aimless fashion; I am not like a boxer beating the air. ²⁷No, I discipline my body so that it stays under my control; for when I have preached to others, I do not want to be disqualified myself from winning the prize.

Lessons from Israel's history (10:1-33)

10 My brothers, I don't want you to be uninformed about our forefathers; they were under the cloud of God's glory and all passed miraculously through the Red Sea. ²They were made one with Moses in both the cloud and the sea. ³⁻⁴They all ate the same spiritual food that God provided in the wilderness, and they all drank the same spiritual drink from the spiritual rock that accompanied them on their journey. That Rock was Christ Himself!

⁵Despite this, most of them displeased God and their dead bodies lay scattered in the desert. ⁶These things are an example and a warning for us, so that we will not set our hearts on doing what is evil in God's sight, as they did. ⁷Do not fall into idolatry as some of them did, for we read: "The people sat to eat and drink and then rose up to indulge themselves in pagan activities." ⁸We should not follow their example by committing sexual immorality; in judgment twenty-three thousand of them died in one day. ⁹Neither should we

follow the example of those who put the Lord to the test and were killed by snakes. ¹⁰And do not murmur and grumble against the Lord like some of them did; God sent an angel to destroy them.

¹¹These awesome events are examples for us of what happens when you turn away from the Lord, and they have been written down to warn us not to behave in similar fashion. We have the important task of fulfilling God's purposes in this present age.

¹²You may think you are standing firm in your faith; but be careful that you don't become complacent and fall from God's grace!

¹³Temptation is always around, although you have not suffered any greater temptation than others experience. In His faithfulness to you, God will not allow you to be tempted in ways impossible for you to resist. When you are tempted, He provides the escape route so that you are able to overcome the temptation.

Do what benefits others (10:14-32)

¹⁴So, my dear friends, shun all forms of idolatry. ¹⁵I am sure you will be sensible about this, and you can then judge for yourselves the wisdom with which I speak.

¹⁶Think of the cup of thanksgiving we share and over which we give thanks together. Is this not a way of participating in the blood of Christ? And when we break bread together, are we not sharing in the body of Christ? ¹⁷Although we are many, we all share in the one loaf, showing that we are all part of the one body of Christ.

¹⁸⁻²⁰Think for a moment about the people of Israel; those who offer the sacrifices at the altar also eat of those sacrifices, don't they? ¹⁹⁻²⁰A sacrifice offered to a pagan idol means nothing at all, for such sacrifices are offered to demons. ²¹It makes no sense to think that you can share in the cup of the Lord one moment and then the cup of demons at another time. You cannot share in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.

²²Should we do anything to make the Lord jealous? Do we claim to be stronger than He is? ²³"I can do whatever I choose," you say. Yes, but is everything you do beneficial? "I am free to do what I want," you say; but is everything you do serving God's purposes? ²⁴You are not to live to please yourself, but to do what would benefit others!

²⁵⁻²⁶Yes, you can eat any meat sold in the market without having any qualms of conscience because the earth belongs to the Lord, together with everything in it. ²⁷⁻³⁰If you want to accept an invitation to a meal with an unbeliever, you are free to eat whatever he places before you without wondering whether you are doing the right

thing. Why should I be condemned by another for the freedom I have? So long as I partake of the meal with thanksgiving to God, I should not be criticised for eating it! However, if someone tells you that the food has been dedicated to an idol, then do not eat it. This will be a witness to the one who has provided the meal and will also enable him to have a clear conscience.

³¹The guiding principle in this matter is simple: In everything you do, including what you decide to eat or drink, be sure to do it for God's glory. ³²And do nothing to cause others to stumble, whether they are Jewish or not, or fellow members of God's church. ³³I endeavour to do whatever is right no matter who I am with, for I do not focus on my own good, but on the welfare of others so that they may be saved.

Submission to authority (11:1-19)

11 Just as I follow Christ's example, I suggest you follow mine. ²I congratulate you for taking note of whatever I have said to you and for remaining true to the teaching that I passed onto you. ³Now I want you to know that Christ is the authority over every man, and man is the authority over the woman, just as Christ during His humanity submitted to the authority of God.

⁴It is dishonouring to God whenever a man prays or prophesies with his head covered. ⁵But it is dishonouring for a woman to pray or prophesy with her head uncovered; it is as bad as having her head shaved, for you know what kind of women are treated in that way! ⁶For a woman to go about with her head uncovered is a disgrace; she may as well have her hair cut off! Because it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair short or her head shaved, she should cover her head.

⁷⁻⁹However, it is considered different for a man; there is no need for him to cover his head. Man has been made in the image and glory of God and the woman is considered the glory of man, because God first created man, and then the woman for the man. ¹⁰So you can see that the fact that a woman should have her head covered as social convention can also have a spiritual significance, that she submits to the authority she is under. Even the angels would agree with this.

¹¹Because we belong to the Lord, we see that it is not right for women to be independent of men, nor men independent of women. ¹²Yes, the woman was created for man, but man is also born of woman. Both need each other and both are created by God.

¹³⁻¹⁵You can ask yourself: Is it really right for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered, as if she were an immoral woman? Such women flaunt their long hair, but this should not be the case for men. It is equally a disgrace for a man to have long hair as if he were a woman. This should be obvious to you. Yes, a woman's long hair can be her glory. It is her covering, but only to be shown off at the proper time. ¹⁶If anybody wants to argue the point, this is the practice we encourage, and it is the same in God's other churches.

The Lord's Supper (11:17-34)

¹⁷Now I need to speak words of stern correction. Your meetings are doing more harm than good and do you no credit. ¹⁸First, I have been told that when you meet together as a church you are divided among yourselves, and I am prepared to believe at least some of what I have heard. ¹⁹There may well be differences among you, but those who hold to the truth have God's approval.

²⁰When you meet, it is not the Lord's supper you share. ²¹Each of you simply looks after himself without any regard for others. One of you could be hungry, another drunk. ²²Surely you have homes to eat and drink in? Do you despise God's church and humiliate those with nothing? What can I possibly say about such behaviour? Shall I praise you? Definitely not!

²³⁻²⁴I am going to relate to you what I received personally from the Lord. On the night that He was betrayed the Lord Jesus took bread, gave thanks to God, then broke it and said, "This is my Body which is given for you: do this to remember Me." ²⁵After supper He took the cup in like manner and said, "This cup indicates the new covenant that is ratified by the shedding of My blood; whenever you drink of this cup remember My sacrifice for you." ²⁶So whenever you eat this bread and drink of this cup, you are proclaiming all that the Lord's death signifies until He comes again.

²⁷Therefore, anyone eating this bread or drinking the Lord's cup in an unworthy manner will be considered guilty of committing sin against the Lord's body and blood. ²⁸He should instead examine himself before eating the bread and drinking from the cup. ²⁹For anyone who eats and drinks without recognising that he shares in the Lord's body only brings judgment on himself. ³⁰No wonder many among you are weak and sick, and some have even died, if that is how you behave. ³¹But if we judge ourselves and first repent of our sins, then we would not place ourselves under such judgment.

³²To be judged by the Lord is to be disciplined by Him, so that we will not be condemned along with the world. ³³So, brothers, when

you come together for your fellowship meal, wait for one another.
³⁴If you are hungry you should eat at home first, so that when you come together there is no cause for you to be judged for selfish or unruly behaviour. When I next visit you I will teach you further on this subject.

The working of God's Spirit (12:1-11)

12 My brothers, I want you to be well informed about spiritual things. ²You are well aware that you used to be influenced by dumb idols when you were pagans. You were certainly deceived in those days. ³I can tell you for certain that anyone who says "Jesus be cursed", is definitely not speaking under the influence of God's Spirit. On the other hand, no one can say that he believes "Jesus is Lord" unless he has been influenced by the Holy Spirit.

^{4,5}There is only one Holy Spirit of God but He manifests Himself in different ways, just as there are different ministries in the church, but all inspired by the same Lord. ⁶Although God works in different ways, it is still the same God who is doing His work in every believer.

⁷Every manifestation of the Spirit is given for the good of all who meet together. ⁸The Spirit can give to one a word of wisdom, to another a word of knowledge that could only be revealed by the same Holy Spirit. ⁹God inspires a gift of faith in another, and He does this by the same Spirit. Others receive gifts of healings, but it is the same Holy Spirit at work. ¹⁰Another can be used to perform miracles, another be given prophetic words, another the ability to distinguish between true and false spirits, another the ability to speak in a language he has never learned, and to yet another the ability to explain what God was saying through that language. ¹¹Very different gifts, but all the work of the same Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God. And He uses different people in the way that He decides.

The Body of Christ (12:12-31)

¹²The human body consists of many different parts but they all work together as a single unit; many parts, but one body! It is similar with the Body of Christ.

¹³When we were all baptised, the Spirit of God was at work to make us parts of the one Body of Christ, whether we were Jews or not, slaves or free men. And we have all drunk the same Living Water, the one Spirit of God.

¹⁴We have seen that the body has not one part, but many. ¹⁵Imagine the foot saying, "I am not a hand, so I do not belong to the body." To say such a thing would not mean that the foot was not

part of the body. ¹⁶Or suppose the ear said, "I am not an eye so I don't belong to the body." Would that mean that the ear ceased to be part of the body? ¹⁷If the body consisted only of an eye, it would not be able to hear. And if the whole body was an ear, how would it be able to smell anything? ¹⁸But in His wisdom, God has arranged every part of the body precisely according to His plan.

¹⁹If everyone was alike, there could be no body. ²⁰Yet, the facts are clear – we are made of many parts, but have only one body.

²¹So the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you!" Nor can the head say to the feet, "I don't need you!" ²²Quite the opposite, for even what appear to be the weaker parts of the body are indispensable. ²³⁻²⁴We take care even of those parts we think to be less important. Those parts we do not wish to display publicly we treat with modesty, while other parts need no special consideration.

In the Body of Christ God has drawn together diverse members and has given greater honour to those who have never in the past been honoured. ²⁵He wants no division in the Body, but for all to be regarded as important and to have concern for one another. ²⁶When one suffers, every other part shares in that suffering. When one member is honoured, all can rejoice together with him or her.

²⁷Now you are Christ's Body and every one of you a member of it. ²⁸God has appointed certain people in the church to be apostles. They should be regarded as first and essential for they oversee the welfare of the whole Body. Then there are prophets who speak words from God's heart to the hearts of the people. Third in line are those who teach God's Word. Then come those who work miracles, and those through whom others receive gifts of healings. There are those with the ability to help others and those who can organise and handle administrative matters. And there are all those able to speak in different languages given by God.

²⁹Are all apostles? Certainly not! Are all prophets? No! Do all have the ability to explain God's Word to others? No! Do all work miracles? No! ³⁰Do all manifest gifts of healings? No! Do all speak in tongues or interpret their meaning? ³¹What you should do is to desire the greater gifts that will enable you to serve others; and I will now show you the most excellent way in which to live.

Be motivated by love (13:1-3)

13 Even if I speak in many languages, naturally or spiritually, I am only a noisy gong or a crashing cymbal unless I speak in love. ²If God has given me a prophetic gift so that I am able to

understand what are mysteries to others, and even though I have deep spiritual knowledge, I am nothing if the gift is used without love. The same would be true if I used the gift of faith without love; yes, even faith that can move mountains is worthless without love.

³If I give everything I have to the poor and even sacrifice my body for the sake of the gospel, I gain nothing if I am not motivated by love.

Characteristics of love (13:4-13)

⁴These are the qualities of the love God gives us: His love in us enables us to be patient and kind. When motivated by this love we do not envy others, neither do we boast. Nor are we proud!

⁵God's love in us is not rude, nor self seeking. We are not roused to anger quickly, and we certainly do not keep a mental record of the wrongs others have committed. ⁶When God's love works through us, we take no delight in what He regards as evil. Rather, we rejoice in the truth that sets people free from evil. ⁷Those who truly love always protect others, they always trust and are always full of hope. They always persevere, regardless of the circumstances.

⁸So God's love never fails us.

The time to share prophetic words will come to an end. Then there will be no further use for tongues. Even human knowledge will be redundant. ⁹At best, our knowledge is only partial and our prophecies imperfect. ¹⁰When we are made perfect, we will have no need of the imperfect things; they will all disappear.

¹¹All this contrasts with my actions when I was a child. Then I could only think, reason and speak like a child. When I became an adult, I grew out of my childish ways. ¹²Yet still I can see myself only as a poor reflection in a mirror compared with what God intends me to be. But when I see Him face to face I shall be like Him. Now I can only partially understand myself, but then I shall know God fully, and will see how complete is His knowledge of me.

¹³Everything will then pass away, apart from these three things that will remain eternally: faith, hope and love. And I consider that love is the most important of these.

Prophecy and tongues (14:1-25)

14 So walk in the way of love, but at the same time eagerly desire that you will manifest spiritual gifts, especially that of prophecy, so you can tell others what is on God's heart. ²When someone speaks in a language given by the Spirit he speaks to God, not man, and so nobody is able to understand what he says. He is

speaking with his spirit of things that remain a mystery to his understanding and to those who hear him.

³⁻⁵I want all of you to use this gift of tongues, but I urge you to prophesy when with others, for then you will strengthen them by the words you speak; you will encourage and comfort them. But the one who speaks in an unknown language only benefits himself, while the whole church can benefit from words of true prophecy.

In the public context, then, it is more important to prophesy than to speak in tongues, unless someone interprets what is said for the edification of the whole church.

⁶So, my brothers, suppose I come to you and speak only in tongues, how could I possibly be of any use to you? But if I bring you revelation or impart some knowledge of the truth, bringing you a prophetic word from God's heart or a word that shows you how to live your life as a Christian, then I would certainly be of great benefit to you.

⁷Consider musical instruments such as the flute or harp. In themselves they are lifeless yet they make meaningful sounds when someone plays a tune on them, one note following another. ⁸In the same way, if the trumpet does not make a clear sound, how will the soldiers know they must prepare for battle? ⁹This applies to you, doesn't it? Unless you use words others can understand when you speak, how will they know what you want to communicate? Otherwise you may as well talk to yourself!

¹⁰Even though there are many languages in the world, they all have meaning to those who understand them. ¹¹But if I am unable to understand what someone means when he speaks to me, I am a foreigner to him and he to me. ¹²Apply all this to yourselves. It is good to desire eagerly to manifest spiritual gifts, but when together concentrate on those gifts that build up everyone in the church.

¹³So, if someone speaks publicly in a language given by the Spirit, he should pray that God will enable him to interpret what he says. ¹⁴You see, when I pray in such a tongue, my spirit is being strengthened but my mind does not benefit. ¹⁵As this is the case, what should I do? I will certainly pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind, using words I and others can understand. I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with words that are intelligible.

¹⁶If you only praise God with your spirit, how can those among you who do not understand say "Amen" to your thanksgiving, since they have no idea what you are saying? ¹⁷You may well be thanking God, but the others cannot meaningfully join in with you; so they are not encouraged.

¹⁸I thank God that I use the gift of speaking in tongues more than any of you. ¹⁹However, in the church meeting I would prefer to speak five intelligible words to communicate the truth to others than ten thousand words they could not understand.

²⁰So, my brothers, stop thinking like little children. You can be like babies who are ignorant of evil, but you now need to be adult in the way you think. ²¹It is written in God's law, "I will speak to these people through men of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners; even so they will not heed what I say, says the Lord."

²²Tongues can be a sign of the Spirit's presence and power to unbelievers as well as believers. But prophecy is for the benefit of those who believe, not for unbelievers.

²³However, when the whole church comes together, if anyone speaks in tongues without any interpretation, will not unbelievers who come in among you think you are all out of your minds? ²⁴⁻²⁵If, on the other hand, an unbeliever or someone who does not understand the workings of the Spirit, comes in among you while people are prophesying, he may well hear words that will convict him that he is a sinner in danger of judgment because the secrets of his heart are being exposed. If this is the case he will fall on his knees before God and worship Him saying, 'God is real and He is here among you!'

Order in church meetings (14:26-40)

²⁶How then can we sum up, brothers? When you meet together, everyone can have something to contribute, a hymn, a word of instruction, a revelation from God, a word in a language given by the Spirit, or interpretation of that word. But it is important that you use all these in ways that strengthen the whole church. ²⁷You need only two or three to bring a message in tongues, speaking one at a time, but then someone must interpret what has been said. ²⁸If no one present is able to interpret, it would be better that the one who speaks in tongues talks to God and himself, and not to everyone else.

²⁹Likewise, only two or three prophetic utterances are needed, and others present should consider carefully what has been said, to discern if this is truly a word from God and what actions need to be taken in response. ³⁰If another receives a revelation from God while someone is already speaking, the speaker should give way so that the revelation can be heard by all. ³¹You do not need to speak at the

same time; you can all prophesy in turn. Then everyone will hear what is said and receive both instruction and encouragement. ³²No-one should ever be out of control when he prophesies, and he is subject to those with the responsibility to weigh what is being said.

³³There should never be disorder in the meeting, for God is a God of order, not chaos.

³⁴It is the usual practice among the congregation of saints that the women should remain silent. They are not permitted to speak, but must demonstrate their submission as indicated in the law. ³⁵If they have questions they should ask their husbands at home; for in our present society it would be considered a disgrace for a woman to speak publicly in a church meeting.

³⁶Did you decide what should be written in God's Word? Are you the only people who know the truth? ³⁷Let anyone among you who regards himself as a prophet or one spiritually gifted, acknowledge that I write only what the Lord has commanded. ³⁸To ignore this would be a sign of ignorance.

³⁹So, my brothers, it is right to be ready to prophesy and certainly you are not to forbid the speaking in tongues. ⁴⁰But ensure that everything is done in an orderly way which benefits God's saints.

The gospel of Christ (15:1-11)

15 Now, brothers, there are certain aspects of the gospel about which I want to remind you. This is the truth I preached to you and on which you stand firm. ²It is by the gospel that you are saved, so long as you continue to hold on firmly to the Word I preached to you. To give up would be to have believed for nothing!

³What I passed onto you as of primary importance I had first received: that Christ died for our sins to fulfil the scriptures. ⁴He was buried and was raised back to life on the third day, again to fulfil what was promised in scripture. ⁵He appeared to Peter and then to the twelve disciples. ⁶Then He appeared to over five hundred of the brethren at the same time, most of whom are still living, although some have fallen asleep in the Lord. ⁷He next appeared to James and then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, He even appeared to me as well, despite my total unworthiness because of my former opposition.

⁹You see, I consider myself to be the least of the apostles because I persecuted God's church. I do not even deserve to be called an apostle. ¹⁰Yet by God's grace alone I am what I am, and that grace has proved effective. I worked harder than all the other apostles, although not in my own strength but through God's grace working with me.

¹¹No matter who preaches, the other apostles or myself, we agree in what we preach and this is the gospel that you have believed.

Resurrection of the dead (15:12-24)

¹²Now if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how is it possible for some of you to say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³If there is no resurrection of the dead, then even Christ Himself would not have been raised. ¹⁴If that was the case, our preaching is of no value, nor is your faith! ¹⁵Not only that, but we could be accused of being false witnesses in what we say about God, for we have openly and clearly testified that God raised Christ from the dead. If God did not do that, then it would be true to say the dead are not raised. ¹⁶If the dead cannot be raised, then clearly Christ could not have been raised. ¹⁷And if this is the case, your faith is useless and you are still in the bondage of sin. ¹⁸Then we would also conclude that those who were in Christ but have already died, are lost eternally. ¹⁹But if we only have hope in Christ for our time on earth in this life, we are to be pitied more than anyone.

²⁰The truth is, Christ has certainly been raised from the dead, the first to be resurrected of all who have died. ²¹Death entered man's experience through Adam's sin; but the resurrection of the dead has also come through a man – the Lord Jesus Christ. ²²All share in Adam's death, but all those in Christ will be made alive with Him.

²³God has His order in this: Christ was the first to be raised; then when He comes again those who belong to Him will be raised with him. ²⁴Then it will be the end of this age as we know it. Christ Jesus will destroy all the dominion, authority and power of this present order; then He will hand over to God the Father all who belong to His Kingdom.

Christ's authority (15:25-34)

²⁵⁻²⁶He must reign until all His enemies are placed beneath His feet, including death itself, the last enemy to be destroyed. ²⁷This fulfils the scripture that states, "He has placed everything under His feet."

Although it says that 'everything' is placed under Him, clearly this does not include God Himself, for He is the one who placed everything under Christ's authority. ²⁸When all this has taken place, the Son will remain subject to God who placed everything under His authority, so that God is Lord over all.

²⁹Of course, if resurrection does not ever take place, there would be no point in some people thinking they can be baptised on behalf of the dead. If the dead are never raised, this would be a ridiculous thing to do!

³⁰As for ourselves, in what ways can we be in danger? ³¹There is a sense in which I die every day, die to myself I mean. It is worth it so I can give God glory for you, because you are in Christ Jesus and so belong to Him.

³²It is not for my own human reasons that I fight against those in Ephesus who oppose me as if they were wild beasts; for I would gain nothing if that were the case.

Do not be misled by those who think there is no resurrection and so adopt the attitude, "Let us eat and drink as much as we want, for tomorrow we die anyway." ³³If you associate with such bad company, your good character will be affected, for 'bad company corrupts good character.' ³⁴You know it is right to be sensible and to stop every sinful practice. Not to do so shows ignorance of God, and it is really to your shame that I need to say such things to you.

The resurrection (15:35-58)

³⁵You may wonder, "How are the dead raised? What will the resurrection body be like in those who return with Christ?" ³⁶Such speculation is foolish!

What is sown cannot reproduce life unless it first dies. ³⁷You sow only a seed, not the plant that will result, perhaps of wheat or some other crop. ³⁸God gives the 'body' of the plant according to the nature of the seed, just as He has determined in creation.

³⁹All creatures are not the same. Men have one kind of body, animals another and fish are different again. ⁴⁰There are heavenly creatures as well as earthly ones. The glory of those with heavenly bodies is of another order compared with the glory of those with earthly bodies. ⁴¹The sun has its particular radiance, the moon and the stars a different radiance altogether. Even one star can differ from another in brightness.

⁴²So in the resurrection of the dead, the risen body will be different from the natural body. The earthly body will perish; but in its risen state it is imperishable. ⁴³It has no particular honour in its natural state, but is raised in glory. The natural body is weak but it is raised in power. ⁴⁴On earth it is natural; it is raised as a spiritual body and so is supernatural.

So if you have a natural body now, you will have a spiritual body then. ⁴⁵It is written, "The first man Adam was created as a living being." But the last 'Adam', Jesus Christ our Lord, is a life-giving Spirit. ⁴⁶The natural came before the spiritual. ⁴⁷The first man was created from the dust of the earth; but the second Man came from heaven.

⁴⁸All on earth follow after the earthly man, Adam; but those who were born from above are as the One who now reigns in heaven. ⁴⁹We have been like the earthly man, Adam; we shall be like the man who came from heaven, Jesus Christ!

⁵⁰I tell you clearly, my brothers, our natural bodies of flesh and blood cannot inherit the eternal Kingdom of God, nor can that which is perishable inherit the imperishable.

⁵¹⁻⁵²Listen to me carefully, for I am unfolding a mystery to you: All of us will not simply die, but we will be transformed in a moment of time, in the twinkling of an eye, when the last trumpet sounds. Then those of us who have died in Christ will be raised with imperishable bodies, and we will be transformed. ⁵³The time will come when that which was perishable must be clothed with the imperishable, what was mortal will become immortal.

⁵⁴When the perishable body has been clothed with the imperishable and the mortal has put on immortality, then it will be seen that the saying that it is written is true and has been fulfilled: "Victory has swallowed up death."

⁵⁵"So, death, where is your victory? Where is your sting?" ⁵⁶Sin is death's sting and the power of sin is seen through our inability to keep God's law. ⁵⁷Yet now God gives us the victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸In light of this, stand firm in your faith, my brothers. Let nothing shake you. Give yourselves totally and continually to the Lord's work, because you know that whatever you do in the Lord is not futile, but will bear lasting fruit.

Offerings for God's people (16:1-4)

16 Now I want to speak to you about the gift you have been collecting for God's people. You are to follow the same instructions I gave to the churches in Galatia. ²Every one of you should set aside a sum of money on the first day of the week, one

15:45 Genesis 2:7

15:54 Isaiah 25:8

15:55 Hosea 13:14

that reflects your personal income. Save these offerings until I come, so that I do not need to raise a special collection then. ³I will write letters of introduction when I arrive for those men you have chosen to take your combined offering to Jerusalem, those worthy of such trust. ⁴If it seems right that I should go there myself, then they will accompany me.

Paul's plans (16:5-12)

⁵⁻⁶I intend to pass through Macedonia on my way to Corinth. I must go to Macedonia first, but when I come to you I hope it will be possible for me to stay in Corinth for a time. I may even be able to spend a winter with you, so you can help me prepare for my onward journey, wherever that may be. ⁷This would be much better than trying to see you now for what could only be a brief visit. If the Lord allows, I really want to spend some time with you. ⁸⁻⁹However, I will remain at Ephesus until Pentecost, because a wonderful opportunity has been given me for the effective work of the gospel, even though many oppose me.

¹⁰If Timothy visits you, make him feel at home; he should have nothing to fear while he is with you for, like me, he is doing the Lord's work. ¹¹Be sure that no one refuses to accept him. Then send him back to me in peace, for I am expecting him along with the other brethren.

¹²Let me explain about Apollos. I really wanted him to come to you with the other brothers, but he was very reluctant to do so now; but he will certainly come as soon as he has a suitable opportunity.

Closing farewell (16:13-23)

¹³Always be on your guard and stand firm in your faith. Be men full of courage and be strong. ¹⁴At the same time, let everything you do be done in love.

¹⁵⁻¹⁶You are aware that Stephanas and his household were the first to be converted in Asia. Ever since, they have been devoted in the way they have served the saints. I strongly encourage you, my brothers, to have a right heart of submission to such believers and to all others who work hard for the cause of the gospel.

¹⁷I was pleased when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, for they brought me the encouragement which I could not receive from you personally. ¹⁸I felt refreshed in my spirit by these men, and they will refresh you as well. Such men deserve to be recognised and honoured.

¹⁹Greetings from the churches in the province of Asia. Aquila and Prescilla also send their warmest greetings in the Lord, together with all those who belong to the church that meets in their home.

²⁰All the other brethren here send their greetings, as well.

Share the love of Christ among you in a holy way.

²¹I, Paul, close with this greeting written in my own hand.

²²A curse is on anyone who does not love the Lord. Come, O Lord, come!

²³May the Lord Jesus impart His grace to you. ²⁴My love to all of you who are in Christ Jesus. Amen! It shall be so!

