



“Shew I unto you a
more excellent way.”

Acts 18:23-21:14; 1 & 2 Corinthians

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Introduction to Acts Chapters

The missionary journeys of Saul/Paul take up the rest of the book of Acts, starting in these chapters. We label them First Journey, Second Journey, Third Journey, and Journey to Rome (see the map in the back of the LDS scriptures) but Paul would likely not have counted them that way. First, we don't know how many 'missionary journeys' he went on before Acts 13—it could have been several (at least Damascus, Arabia, Tarsus, and Antioch). Secondly, he would probably have considered it all one single mission—in the service of his new master, Jesus Christ. We divide and name them to make it easier to recount the story and keep it all straight and because each of the first three journeys around the Mediterranean world ended up back in Jerusalem (indicating Luke may have intentionally organized it that way).

It can be very profitable to study Paul's journeys in conjunction with his letters, so that is what we will do in this course of study. To aid an individual effort to study them all as a chronological unit, see “A Paul Chronology” provided separately that outlines Paul's journeys and activities, his letters, and more, in a suggested chronological sequence.¹ It's also very helpful to study a map of Paul's travels or (even better) get a blank map of the Mediterranean world at that time (such as [this one on Wikipedia](#)) and draw them yourself as you study them, perhaps using different colors for each journey. This activity will help you appreciate and better remember the details of the journeys. There are also many sources that provide excellent pictures of these locations, also helping to give context and reality to the stories.

It is important to note that Luke's goal was to present the work of the spreading of the gospel, not provide a doctrinal discussion of early Christian teachings. Still, he did an excellent job laying out the important principles of the gospel—faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost—but typically not all in one place. Luke unfolded these gospel teachings as he unfolded Paul's mission. Commenting on this, one author noted: “Paul's message was consistent, but Luke features different parts of it on different missions. . . . He stresses Christ and faith in him on the first mission, make baptism prominent in the second, and features the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost in the third.”²

Luke recorded seven speeches by Paul, one on each of the three journeys away from Jerusalem and Antioch and four during his imprisonment in his own defense. Those speeches are (with two covered in this lesson):

1. Acts 13:16-41 (In the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, first mission)
2. Acts 17:22-31 (Mars Hill at Athens, second mission)
3. Acts 20:18-35 (Farewell to church leaders at Miletus, third mission)
4. Acts 22:1-21 (Public defense, Fortress Antonia steps, Jerusalem)
5. Acts 24:10-21 (Defense before Felix, Caesarea)
6. Acts 26:1-29 (Defense before Agrippa, Caesarea)
7. Acts 28:17-28 (Before Jewish leaders, Rome)

An overall outline for the book of Acts is as follows (with this week's lesson material in bold):

- The Ascension (1:1-11)
- In Jerusalem and Judea (1:12 – 6:7)
- From Jerusalem to Antioch (6:8 – 12:23)
- In Syria and Galatia (12:24 – 15:35)

¹ It is impossible to know exact dates of many events, especially when all the letters were written, but Luke and Paul provide enough hints in their writings to allow the construction of at least a chronological framework.

² Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 48.

- First journey (13:1 – 14:28)
- Jerusalem Conference (15:1-35)
- In Western Asia and Europe (15:36 – 21:14)
 - Second journey (15:36 – 18:22)
 - **Third journey (18:23 – 21:14)**
- Paul's Imprisonment (21:15 – 28:31)
 - Journey to Rome (27:1 – 28:31)

In Western Asia and Europe – Acts 15:36 – 21:14

Much of this section was covered in the last lesson with the first and second journeys of Paul. In 18:23, Paul returns to the places he visited on his first and second missions, Galatia and Phrygia, then returns to the city where he dropped off Aquila and Priscilla at the end of his second journey—Ephesus. Like Corinth did in his second journey, Ephesus became Paul's base of operations during his third journey, spending much of his time there before making a relatively quick journey into Greece to check on his second journey converts. Having collected significant funds from his Gentile converts for the Jerusalem Saints struggling with drought and persecution combined, Paul then returned to Jerusalem to deliver those relief funds and to meet with the leaders there that he had not seen for several years. However, that trip ended poorly for Paul, leading to his arrest and multi-year imprisonment.

Third journey – Acts 18:23 – 21:14

The trip from Antioch through Asia and Greece and back to Jerusalem, which comprised Paul's third journey, was about thirty-five hundred miles.³ This journey was from the summer of 51 to May 54 CE.

³ Robert J. Matthews, "‘Unto All Nations’ (Acts)," in Millet, *Acts to Revelation*, 42.



The third journey can be outlined as follows:

- Paul revisits Galatia & Phrygia (18:23)
- Apollos teaches in Ephesus (18:24-28)
- Ephesus (19:1-41)
 - Paul confers Holy Ghost (19:1-7)
 - Paul teaches at the school of Tyrannus (19:8-10)
 - The sons of Sceva (19:11-20)
 - Timothy & Erastus sent to Macedonia (19:21-22)
 - The riot in Ephesus (19:23-41)
- Macedonia and Greece (20:1-6)
- Troas; Paul preaches and raises Eutychus from the dead (20:7-12)
- Miletus (20:13-38)
 - Sailing to Miletus (20:13-16)
 - Speech to church leaders (20:17-38)
- Paul travels to Jerusalem (21:1-17)
 - Journey to Caesarea (21:1-9)
 - Agabus' prophecy of Paul's imprisonment (21:10-14)

Paul revisits Galatia & Phrygia – Acts 18:23

18:23 **after he had spent some time there, he departed.** “There” is Antioch (v. 22). Paul appears not to have stayed long in Antioch but quickly got on the road again to revisit and strengthen the churches he first established in Galatia and Phrygia. Though the account doesn’t provide details about which cities Paul visited, it would appear he journeyed through the mountains again in eastern Turkey, through Tarsus, his home town, then probably west to towns he had been to before—Lystra, Derbe, Iconium, and Antioch Pisidia—and perhaps some he had not visited before, such as Collossae, Laodicea, or Hierapolis.⁴

Apollos teaches in Ephesus – Acts 18:24-28

18:24 **Apollos . . . came to Ephesus.** Luke inserted a side note about something happening back in Ephesus, away from Paul, but which will intersect his story later. An Alexandrian Jew named Apollos came preaching the baptism of John (v. 25). Aquila and Priscilla heard him and “expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly” (v. 26). Thus brought to see a fuller truth, he began to mightily expound the gospel of Jesus Christ, then left Ephesus for Achaia (v. 27; Corinth, specifically, in 19:1). He will become a Paul ally and companion, using his skills to assist in spreading the gospel among Jews and Gentiles in Greece.

Ephesus – Acts 19:1-41

Ephesus was an important port city in western Asia Minor. It was the fourth largest city in the Roman world with a population of over 250,000. It was the administrative seat of Rome in this part of the world with an extensive road system going to all parts of Asia and ship connections to Greece.⁵ One of the seven wonders of the ancient world was located in Ephesus, the temple of Artemis (called “Diana” in the KJV, using the Roman name), a massive structure that brought worshippers and admirers from all over Greece and the Roman empire, and helped made Ephesus merchants and those who ran the temple quite rich.

Paul confers Holy Ghost – Acts 19:1-7

19:1 **Paul passed through the interior regions.** There were good Roman roads going through the rugged terrain from Iconium and Antioch down to the coastal town of Ephesus. The trip would have taken several weeks—longer, depending on how many and how long his stops were.

19:1 **came to Ephesus.** Paul returned to Ephesus as he had expressed: “I will return again unto you, if God will” (18:21). Aquila and Priscilla had stayed behind while Paul returned to Jerusalem and Antioch.

During his time in Ephesus, Paul wrote three letters, 1 and 2 Corinthians and a previous Corinthian letter (lost). Accordingly, these letters are part of this lesson (below).

19:2 **Have ye received the Holy Ghost.** When Paul arrived in Ephesus, he found twelve men (v. 7) who, like Apollos, had accepted the baptism of John but nothing else (v. 3). Paul taught them the full gospel, baptized them (again), and laid his hands on them to give them the gift of the Holy Ghost (vv. 5-6).

Joseph Smith, speaking of this incident, taught that “some sectarian Jew had been baptizing like John,”⁶ meaning someone lacking authority but assuming it from John’s teachings. The proof is that they knew nothing about the Holy Ghost, which John taught his disciples. That’s why Paul rebaptized them.

Paul teaches at the school of Tyrannus – Acts 19:8-10

19:8 **spake boldly for the space of three months.** Once again, Paul started in the synagogue, but after three months moved to a school (lecture hall) owned by Tyrannus (v. 9). The school was probably used in the morning and afternoon but was free during midday as people ate lunch and took a break, or in the evenings. Paul took

⁴ Since there was no mention of these last cities in previous journeys, a trip that went through them would offer the opportunity of Paul preaching and establishing relationships there, as reflected in his letters.

⁵ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds*, 2:405-406.

⁶ *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 263.

advantage of this time and taught there nearly every day for two years (v. 10). Luke speaks of the facility as if it were well-known, but none of the ruins of Ephesus have so far been identified as this building.

19:10 **all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word.** Asia is a Roman province in western Turkey, of which Ephesus was the dominant city.

The sons of Sceva – Acts 19:11-20

19:11 **special miracles.** The word used, *dynameis*, can mean miracles but also power; God was showing his power through the hands of Paul in Ephesus.

19:12 **handkerchiefs or aprons.** A better translation of this verse is: “that when face cloths or aprons that touched his skin were applied to the sick, their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them” (NAB). Faith healed them even when he was not present. Luke likely presents this story to show that Paul is similar to Peter in terms of healing experiences (see 5:15, where Peter’s shadow passing over someone can heal them).

19:14 **seven sons of on Sceva, a Jew.** Seeing Paul’s miracles, certain Jewish men tried to duplicate his results by calling upon Jesus’ name (v. 13). One evil spirit answered them: “Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?” (v. 15). Their failure became well-known, led to many investigating the truth.

19:19 **used curious arts brought their books.** The increase in belief in Christ finally compelled many to burn their magic scrolls full of incantations and sayings to trick the unseen powers into doing the speaker’s will. These now seemed wholly ineffective in face of true faith and priesthood.

19:20 **mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.** Another Lukan transition phrase, marking the end of a section of the progression of the gospel among the Gentiles (see commentary on 1:8 in Lesson 21).

Timothy & Erastus sent to Macedonia – Acts 19:21-22

19:21 **to go Jerusalem.** Paul expressed the desire to return to Jerusalem again, then go to Rome. He sent Timothy and Erastus (formerly an important official of Corinth, attributed archaeologically at Ephesus) across to Macedonia to check on the churches there and prepare the way for Paul (v. 22).

The riot in Ephesus – Acts 19:23-41

19:23 **no small stir about that way.** “That way” was an early name for those who followed Christ, who was “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

19:24 **a certain man named Demetrius.** Because of all his converts, Paul angered a group who made their living from the presence of an important temple of Diana (Artemis in the Greek), selling silver statues of the goddess to visitors. Artemis’ temple at Ephesus was the first temple made all of marble and was the largest building in the Greek world, considered one of the ancient world’s “seven wonders.”⁷

19:25 **ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.** Making small replicas of the temple or the goddess herself to sell to sailors and others passing through Ephesus to see the temple, provided a steady and lucrative income for the silversmiths and others in the town.

19:26 **throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded.** Paul has not left Ephesus much in quite some time, but he has been sending other out to many areas, to teach, preach, and support. His leadership is well-known in the town, and disliked by this group, if not more.

19:27 **our craft is in danger . . . also that the temple.** If they weren’t upset by the impact on their own purses, the notion that the great temple or Artemis, one of the wonders of the world, would be ignored or destroyed was motivating to Demetrius’ crowd.

⁷ McRay, *Paul*, 181.

19:28 **Great is Diana of the Ephesians.** Upset at Demetrius' assessment of the risk to their livelihood and city, the crowd began to chant, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" (NRSV, ESV, NASB, NIV, NAB, NLT, CJB).

19:29 **having caught Gaius and Aristarchus.** Little is known of Gaius but he is mentioned in Romans 16:23 and 1 Corinthians 1:14 (though there are other men with that same name, so these references might not be him). Aristarchus is mentioned a few times. He went with Paul from Greece to Asia (20:4) and journeyed at least partway to Paul to Rome (27:2). Paul mentioned him in two letters (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 1:24). Both men were captured by the angry crowd (perhaps because they could not find Paul).

19:29 **rush with one accord into the theatre.** The theater in Ephesus is still largely intact today (right). It held about 25,000 people and was built into the hillside. From the upper seats provided a good view of the port directly in front of it. It was into this theater that the mob dragged Gaius and Aristarchus.



19:30 **the disciples suffered him not.** When Paul heard what was happening, he determined to address the issue directly. Luke's language indicates that Paul wanted to make a legal appeal to the authorities to stop the mob violence happening against two of his companions. But the disciples, led by political leaders from the area ("certain of the chief of Asia," v. 31) restrained him—wisely, no doubt—and kept him being caught up in what was taking place.

19:32 **the more part knew not wherefore they were come.** Like many crowds that get caught up in the moment, the large group in the theater mostly had no idea what they were supposed to be protesting. They just saw the crowd and followed along.

19:33 **Alexander beckoned with the hand.** Alexander was a Jew (v. 34) but possibly also a Christian and a metalworker in the town (2 Timothy 4:14). He attempted to make a defense of the situation as a fellow worker of fine metals but was shut down by the noisy crowd because they recognized he was a Jew. He may also be mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:20. If he was a Christian, Paul says that he "did me much evil" (2 Timothy 4:14).

19:34 **the space of two hours cried out.** The chant started in v. 28 picked up again, now going on for an extended time ("two hours").

19:35 **the townclerk.** This scribe or clerk for the city probably had his office in the Odeon, which was on the other side of the hill from the stadium, so he may not have been aware of all the chanting until someone came and told him about it. He was able to go to the temple and appeal to the crowd by reminding them that everyone knows that Ephesus was the place to worship Artemis.

19:35 **the image which fell down from Jupiter.** The word "Jupiter" is not in the Greek, which simply says the goddess fell from the heavens. One translation says her "statue" fell from the sky (NRSV) and another her "sacred stone" (ESV).

19:36 **be quiet, and to do nothing rashly.** The clerk urged the people gathered in the theater to disperse and not act as a mob.

19:38 **the law is open.** Or, 'legal means are available.' The clerk challenged Demetrius and the others to bring a formal complaint before the "deputies" (proconsuls). He told them they needed to use a "lawful assembly" (v. 39).

19:40 **we are in danger.** Ephesus stood to lose much by such a riot, as the Roman authorities would have to come in to quell the riot, which often led to a loss of autonomy. With that, the clerk dismissed everyone and told them to go home or back to work (v. 41).

Macedonia and Greece – Acts 20:1-6

20:1 **departed for to go into Macedonia.** Paul realized it was time for him to leave Ephesus and headed north toward Macedonia to join Timothy and Erastus. After preaching in that area (probably Thessalonica and Philippi), he went to “Greece” for three months (v. 3, probably in Corinth, as he had suggested he would do in 1 Corinthians 16:6), then returned to Macedonia to avoid a plot against him by the Jews (v. 3). He and a large group of converts from all over Greece and Asia Minor met in Troas (vv. 4-5).

Though not mentioned in Acts, Paul made it clear in his letters that he had gathered much needed funds for the Jerusalem saints who were suffering under famine and persecution (2 Corinthians 9:3-5; 12:14; 13:1; Romans 15:24-28). The urgency to deliver this offering was certainly a big part of the reason why Paul left at this time. The Jewish saints needed this support because as Christians, they were cut off from relief that normally would be provided to them but which was denied because of their faith.

20:4 **Sopater of Berea.** Though not in the KJV, better manuscripts note that he is the son of Pyrrhus. Nothing else is known of him, though he might be the same person as Sosipater mentioned in Romans 16:21.

20:4 **Aristarchus.** See 19:29.

20:4 **Secundus.** No other mention of him in the NT. He was from Thessalonica and his name means ‘second’ which can also have the connotation of ‘favorable.’

20:4 **Gaius of Derbe.** See 19:29, which might be a different Gaius, since there he is listed as from Macedonia.

20:4 **Timotheus.** Timothy.

20:4 **Tychicus.** Also mentioned in Ephesians 6:21, 24; Colossians 4:7, 18; 2 Timothy 4:12; Titus 3:12. This man traveled much with Paul and was sent by him to Ephesus and other locations. He and Trophimus were from “Asia,” meaning western Turkey.

20:4 **Trophimus.** Also mentioned in 21:29; 2 Timothy 4:20. He was with Paul in Jerusalem and was the man Paul’s enemies claimed he had brought into the temple (past the court of the Gentiles).

20:5 **tarried for us.** Luke begins here again to us first person plural pronouns, indicating that he joined Paul somewhere in Macedonia and went with him to Troas. The details of the return trip of the third journey are significantly higher than other journeys, also indicating a first-person experience.

20:6 **after the days of unleavened bread.** Just after the Feast of the Passover. Because of the precision of Luke’s comments in this and the next verse, we can be reasonably certain that Paul arrived in Troas on 23 Apr 54 and stayed for seven days.

Troas; Paul preaches and raises Eutychus from the dead – Acts 20:7-12

20:7 **upon the first day of the week.** The disciples gathered together on Sunday, celebrating Jesus’ resurrection on that day.

20:7 **came together to break bread.** This could refer to the Lord’s supper, sharing a meal, or both. Early Christians would often come together in a ‘pot-luck’ type of meal as they worshipped together, in a larger commemoration of the Last Supper.

20:7 **Paul preached unto them.** Paul gave a talk in Troas that lasted until midnight, though we don’t know what time he started. The impression from Luke, however, is that it was very long.

20:9 **sat in the windows a certain young man named Eutychus.** As Paul spoke, one young man fell into a deep sleep and fell down from the third story window in which he was seated (meaning he was sitting on the ledge of an open window. The fall killed him (he was “taken up dead” by those who ran down to get him). With some irony, the name Eutychus means ‘fortunate.’

20:10 **Paul went down, and fell on him.** Paul went down and “fell on him” (using Elijah and Elisha-like language; see 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:33-36), and brought him back to life, assuring the crowd “his life is in him.”

20:11 **he therefore was come up again.** Apparently, someone took Eutychus away to care for him and Paul and others returned to the upper room to eat some more and visit, “even till break of day.”

20:12 **they brought young man alive.** Eutychus did come back to the group after some time, apparently just as Paul was ready to leave, very much alive again. Luke records that they were “not a little comforted” by this miracle.

Miletus – Acts 20:13-38

Luke’s narrative of this section gives a sense of what it was like to travel in a ship in the ancient world. You didn’t get on the ship and sail for days and days. Rather, the vessels hugged the coastline (to know where they were) and stopped frequently for food and rest.

Sailing to Miletus – Acts 20:13-16

20:13 **we went before to ship.** For some reason not stated in the text (perhaps people were waiting at the port to capture him?; perhaps he wanted to meet with one more person or group before leaving?), Paul left Troas on foot while the rest of the company sailed to Assos. There they met him and picked him up. It is possible that Paul intended to accomplish the entire journey on foot, but they enlisted a boat and picked him up to save time.



20:15 **came the next day over against Chios.** Characteristic of Luke’s first-person accounts, he gave in great detail the various stops of their voyage—Mitylene (a city south of Assos; verse 14), Chios (an island), Samos (another island), Trogyllium, and finally Miletus (about 30 miles south of Ephesus; right).

20:16 **Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus.** Paul skipped a visit to Ephesus this trip, which probably pained him. But he was determined to get to Jerusalem for Pentecost, probably late May 54, so instead he sent for the local leaders to come to him during their long layover in Miletus (v. 17).

Speech to church leaders – Acts 20:17-38

20:18 **he said unto them.** Paul’s third speech concluded his third journey. This one was given to the leaders of the church in western Asia where Paul called a regional conference. It can be summarized as follows:

- Paul recounted his experiences among them and the sacrifices he had made to minister among them (18-21)
- He goes “bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there,” except that “bonds and afflictions abide me” (22-23).
- He does not worry about those potential problems but counted himself blessed to serve the Lord; he has done his part faithfully (24-27).
- He counseled them to care for the churches because “grievous wolves” are coming among them, “speaking perverse things” (28-31).
- He commended them to God, reminding them of how he cared for himself and that they should care for each other (32-35).

20:18 **I have been with you at all seasons.** Referring to the time he stayed in Ephesus, which was for a year and a half.

20:22 ***I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem.*** Luke’s language prefigures Paul’s capture and imprisonment in Jerusalem, Ceasarea, and Rome,

20:24 ***I might finish my course with joy.*** A “course” is a race, a metaphor Paul used elsewhere to represent a long race run well (see 2 Timothy 4:7).

20:25 ***shall see my face no more.*** Predicting that he would not have the opportunity to come back to Asia (western Turkey), Paul declared that he had done enough to be clean from their blood (v. 26) and taught them “all the counsel of God” (v. 27).

20:28 ***made you overseers.*** “Overseers” is *episkopos*, often translated ‘bishop’ though ‘overseer’ is a good sense of the term which can be applied to many different occupations. Paul tied it to a flock and shepherd here, encouraging them to feed the sheep but warning that wolves would come and destroy (v. 29).

20:30 ***of your own selves shall men arise.*** “Wolves” in v. 29 might represent an attack from outside—they are not part of the flock. But he also warned of attacks from the inside as some of the ‘sheep’ spoke lies and drew others away.

20:32 ***an inheritance among all them which a sanctified.*** Another way of seeing this is to have a place among the saints, since a ‘saint’ is someone who is made holy by God through Jesus’ atonement.

20:34 ***these hands have ministered unto my necessities.*** Paul spent much of his time working to pay for his own needs, not wanting to be a burden to the people he converted. This also distinguished him from other ‘missionaries’ of the day, who converted people and got them to follow them just to have their financial support.

20:35 ***he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*** This saying of Jesus is not recorded in any of the gospels, which were not written yet anyway. Instead, Paul must have received this saying along with other sayings and stories of Jesus through the oral traditions predominant among the early church members.

20:36 ***he kneeled down, and prayed.*** Concluding his talk, they all kneeled together and Paul prayed. They wept at his departure, fearing that they would never see him again (v. 37). We don’t know if they did, because Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and imprisoned (and shipwrecked) for about five years, which is where Acts ends. What little we know of his life after his imprisonment doesn’t include returning to the Asia/Ephesus area.

Paul travels to Jerusalem – Acts 21:1-17

Journey to Caesarea – Acts 21:1-9

21:1 ***after we had gotten from them.*** The Greek sense is much stronger: ‘after we had torn ourselves away from them.’ Luke’s words emphasize the sorrow they all felt at parting.



21:1-11 ***we came with a straight course.*** Paul’s company left Miletus, heading for Caesarea. In great first-person detail, Luke recounted many stops along the way:

- One night on **Coos** (v. 1), a small city on an island of the same name off the southwestern coast of Asia (Turkey);
- **Rhodes** (v. 1), also a city and island with the same name, where they would have seen the remains of the great Colossus of Helios (left), a 100-foot statue to the sun god built about 300 BCE and considered one of the

seven wonders, but by Paul’s day reduced by an earthquake to just the bronze feet and knees.

- **Patara** (v. 1), a port of southwest Asia where the company changed ships to a larger one going to Phoenicia (v. 2).

- Seeing but not stopping long in Cyprus (probably Paphos on the western side of the island, since Luke mentioned leaving it “on the left hand,” and they were sailing southeast they sailed to **Tyre**, v. 3), a journey that would have taken from two to five days, depending on the winds, where the ship unloaded its cargo, perhaps wine from Greece or grain from the Black Sea.⁸ The group stayed in Tyre for a week and the local disciples warned Paul not to go to Jerusalem (v. 4). As he was leaving, a large group of them followed him to the ocean shore and prayed with him there (v. 5).
- **Ptolemais** (v. 7), today and in the Old Testament called Acco, where the group met more saints but only stayed one day.
- **Caesarea** (v. 8), one of the most magnificent harbors in the ancient world, *Caesarea Maritima* was where they met with Philip (8:26-40) and his prophetic daughters (vv. 8-9; this meeting could be Luke’s source for much of the early information in Acts)

Agabus’ prophecy of Paul’s imprisonment – Acts 21:10-14

21:10 **a certain prophet, named Agabus**. Agabus had correctly prophesied the famine (Acts 11:27-28) and now prophesied of Paul’s arrest (vv. 10-11).

21:11 **he took Paul’s girdle**. ‘Belt’ is a better translation. This was the fabric tied around the waist to hold the tunic in place and to carry things, such as money. It would easily be long enough to bind both hands and feet.

21:11 **bound his own hands and feet**. Agabus predicted that Paul would be bound by the Jews at Jerusalem and given over to the Gentiles.

21:12 **besought him not to go up**. In spite of the warnings and pleadings of many in Caesarea (and previous ones in the journey to Jerusalem), Paul was determined to go to Jerusalem, deliver the funds he had raised for famine relief, and meet with the saints there, even if it meant his death (v. 13).

21:14 **The will of the Lord be done**. Luke’s description of Paul’s submission to God’s will was surely intentionally reminiscent of the Savior’s in Gethsemane before he suffered (Luke 22:42).⁹

⁸ McRay, *Paul*, 207.

⁹ Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 344.

1 Corinthians

Imagine that an apostle, say Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, received this e-mail:

Dear Elder Holland,

I am a member of the Kolob 3rd ward and want to alert you to some problems in our ward. These are activities in which many of our members are engaged:

- Suing each other in the civil court about money, property, and other issues.
- Frequenting bars and clubs where alcohol is served.
- Administering the sacrament while drunk.
- Women insisting on conducting Sacrament meeting and refusing to follow the counsel of the bishop.
- Boasting of how being baptized by a General Authority makes them more special.
- Teaching Sunday School classes from a book by a well-known philosopher, not the scriptures.
- Arguing about whose spiritual gifts are the most important.
- The bishopric refusing to excommunicate a man—in fact, they had him speak in Sacrament meeting two weeks ago!—who brings his live-in girlfriend to church each Sunday, bragging about how important he is because he owns the local sports team.

Please come to Kolob and help our ward. I don't know how much longer I can stand it!

Desperately,
Cora N. Thians

Such a ward surely doesn't exist in the Church today, yet Paul received a letter from the saints in Corinth that had very much this kind of request. His response is 1 Corinthians.

Corinth was a prosperous town situated at a key location on the narrow isthmus between the gulfs of Corinth (Ionian Sea) and Saronic (Aegean Sea), about fifty miles west of Athens. A track was used to haul cargo the four miles between the two ports on either side, thus saving a 200-mile long and dangerous sea voyage around the Peloponnese peninsula. This trade brought the city wealth, immorality, and other vices, which situation is reflected in Paul's writings to the saints there. Being a Roman colony, Latin was probably a dominant language at Corinth, though Greek was clearly spoken by many, if not most, of the city. Corinth was also the location of the Isthmian Games which were held regularly, including while Paul was in the city.

Paul first visited Corinth during his second mission, 50-51 CE. Arriving alone after perhaps a discouraging time in Athens, he here met Aquila and Priscilla and for a time did leather and canvas work with them. Paul had a vision encouraging him to stay because there were many people ready to hear the gospel message. Eventually joined by Silas and Timothy, Paul stayed eighteen months and converted many in Corinth. But members were struggling with many issues stemming from their pagan background. He returned to Corinth more than once and sent many of his companions there to strengthen the members.

Paul wrote more to the Corinthians than any other church, and his letters to them dealt with a wide variety of topics because of their many needs. "First Corinthians is so good because the Corinthians were not."¹⁰ The Corinthian correspondence illustrates the difficulties of the early church and how quickly apostasy set in through the mixing of Greek philosophy and Christian doctrine and the sinful traditions that many found hard to leave behind.

Paul wrote four letters to the Corinthians in all and they wrote at least one back to him. Of the five letters, though, we only have two, meaning we only have parts of the conversation and have to guess at the missing details.

¹⁰ Ogden and Skinner, *Acts Through Revelation*, 129.

Date (approx.)	Written from	Description	Reference
Dec 52	Ephesus	Paul to Corinth: cease sexual sins and idolatry	1 Cor 5:9
Jan-Feb 53	Corinth	Chloe (and others?) to Paul: questions and concerns	1 Cor 1:11; 7:1
Mar 53	Ephesus	Paul to Corinth: 1 Corinthians	1 Cor 16:19
Summer 53	Macedonia	Paul to Corinth: "With many tears" teaching forgiveness	2 Cor 2:4-9
Dec 53	Macedonia	Paul to Corinth: 2 Corinthians	2 Cor 13:1

Some great 1 Corinthians one-liners:

- 1:22 "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom."
- 3:19 "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."
- 7:9 "For it is better to marry than to burn."
- 8:1 "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth."
- 10:12 "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."
- 11:11 "Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord."
- 14:33 "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace."

An overall outline is as follows:¹¹

- 1) Greeting (1:1-9)
- 2) Corinthian weaknesses and vices (1:10-6:20)
 - a) Divisions at Corinth (1:10-17)
 - b) Christ is the wisdom of God (1:18-31)
 - c) Truth known by the Spirit (2:1-16)
 - d) We are all Christ's (3:1-23)
 - e) Apostles as examples (4:1-21)
 - f) Sexual impropriety in the church (5:1-13)
 - g) Suing other Christians (6:1-8)
 - h) The body and spirit (6:9-20)
- 3) Responses to the letter from Corinth (7:1-15:58)
 - a) Questions about marriage (7:1-16)
 - b) Live in your calling (7:17-24)
 - c) The unmarried and widowed (7:25-40)
 - d) Food sacrificed to idols (8:1-13)
 - e) Paul's defense as an apostle (9:1-27)
 - f) Flee from idolatry (10:1-11:1)
 - g) Cultural religious practices (11:2-16)
 - h) The sacrament (11:17-34)
 - i) Spiritual gifts (12:1-11)
 - j) Different gifts (12:12-31)
 - k) Charity (13:1-13:13)
 - l) The gift of prophecy (14:1-25)
 - m) The gifts in the churches (14:26-40)
 - n) The resurrection appearances (15:1-11)
 - o) Questions about the resurrection (15:12-34)
 - p) The resurrected body (15:35-58)
- 4) Conclusion (16:1-24)
 - a) Collection for the poor saints (16:1-4)
 - b) Plan to visit Corinth (16:5-12)

¹¹ See Welch and Hall, *Charting*, 14-2; Sperry, *Paul's Life and Letters*, 118f; Hawthorne, *Dictionary of Paul*, 164f.

Greeting – 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

As with his other writings, Paul started with an opening that was similar to typical letters of his day, but different in length and approach. He summarized in the first verses his entire message, touching on grace, peace, prayer, blessings, unity, testimony, judgment, justification, and sanctification. He also invoked the name of Jesus in every verse but one of the first ten, keeping the focus on the right person.

1:1 **called to be an apostle.** Chronologically, this is perhaps the first time Paul has used this title to refer to himself. The term was generally used in the NT church to indicate someone called to serve as a missionary—someone sent out with authority to speak the words of Jesus. Because the Corinthians challenged Paul’s authority as part of their concerns, he may have been especially keen to start with a pronouncement that he did indeed act with the authority of Jesus Christ.

1:2 **Sosthenes.** The head of the Corinthian synagogue at one point, then Paul’s co-worker (see Acts 18:17, where he was beaten for his testimony). He was the junior co-writer with Paul, perhaps because many in Corinth knew him.

1:2 **Unto the church of God.** Paul was writing to baptized members in Corinth (whereas in 2 Corinthians he was writing to “all the saints which are in all Achaia,” a much broader audience).

1:2 **church.** This is *ekklēsia*, a Greek term that simply means ‘assembly’ (the church called Assembly of God gets its name from this phrase) and was used in a political context outside of the NT. Paul’s consistent use of the term shows that he and others had adopted the Greek word to name their own congregations. Our English word “church,” interestingly enough, comes ultimately from the Greek word *kyrios*, meaning ‘Lord’ (it was *kyriakon doma*, the ‘Lord’s house,’ which became *circe* in Old English, then ‘church’).

1:2 **sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.** “Sanctified” is not past tense but an ongoing activity; they are engaged in becoming sanctified. They are “called” (‘invited’) to be “saints” (‘holy ones’, ‘set apart’, ‘consecrated’).

1:2 **both theirs and ours.** Referring to “our Lord,” meaning they (others who pray in the name of Jesus) have the same Lord as we do.

1:3 **grace . . . and peace.** Standard in Paul’s letters, “peace” was the common Jewish greeting but Paul added “grace” to always point back to Christ.

1:6 **testimony of Christ was confirmed in you.** It was made certain and established.

1:7 **come behind in no gift.** Paul used many references to athletic contests in his writings, especially to the sports-minded Corinthians. “Come behind” is what a runner does when he falls back from the leader.

1:8 **blameless in the day of our Lord.** “Blameless” is a legal term meaning ‘cannot be called into account.’ Though a different word than that found predominantly in Romans and Ephesians (and also here in 4:4 and 6:11), the concept is still ‘justified,’ someone whose sins are permanently erased from the record and can never be brought up again. Two other scriptures come readily to mind:

And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now? Have ye walked, keeping yourselves blameless before God? Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time, within yourselves, that ye have been sufficiently humble? That your garments have been cleansed and made white through the blood of Christ, who will come to redeem his people from their sins? (Alma 5:26-27).

Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day (D&C 4:2).

1:9 **the fellowship of his Son.** “Fellowship” is *koinōnia*, ‘association’ or ‘community.’ The *ekklēsia* or assembly is called together to enjoy association with each other and with Jesus through the sacrament and the Spirit.

Corinthians Weaknesses and Vices – 1 Corinthians 1:10 – 6:20

The first part of the letter laid out Paul's case against the things he had heard about Corinthian behavior from some in Chloe's household (or house church)—Stephanas, Fortunatus, Achaicus, and Chloe herself (1:12, 15-17).

Dissensions, divisions, lack of trust in God, rejecting those in authority, and sin are all confronted in these chapters.

Divisions at Corinth – 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

1:10 **speak the same thing.** NIV: "that all of you agree with one another."

1:10 **no divisions among you.** "Divisions" is 'split' or 'tear.' It also "recalls the furrows created by plowing."¹²

1:10 **perfectly joined together.** 'Restored' or 'made complete'; it "recalls the mending of nets."¹³

1:10 **same mind . . . same judgment.** Or, 'In the same thought and of the same opinion.' None of this means that Paul discouraged original thought, but he did greatly desire unity of purpose, goals, and beliefs in terms of gospel doctrines.

1:11 **by them which are of the house of Chloe.** Though this could refer to those in her household (that live in her home), in NT parlance, "of the house of" also refers to those who attend church there. Church meetings were held in homes for many years in the early church, with formal meeting places not really coming into play until the time of Constantine and beyond, once Christianity became a more formal part of the Roman empire.

1:12 **Cephas.** Aramaic for 'rock.' This was Simon Peter, which is our English transliteration of the name Jesus personally gave him (translated into Greek, it is *petros*, from which we get Peter). By referring to him by the actual name Jesus called him, Paul honored Peter, showing respect for his position and authority. However, it is curious that Paul would refer to him in this context. Does it mean Peter visited Corinth at some point, taught and baptized people? He also mentioned those "of Christ," who certainly did not visit Corinth. Perhaps the way to understand this is that he started with himself and Apollos, whom they knew, then to extend the argument to the absurd, tossed in Peter as the leader of the whole church, and Christ himself.

1:13 **was Paul crucified for you?** Paul's point is that too many in Corinth have been caught up in a notion that their importance depended on who baptized them. Dispelling this, he reminded them that the focus was always on Jesus, because no one else could do for them what he had done.

1:14 **I baptized none of you.** Paul apparently baptized some of the first converts (vv. 14, 16), but as others received the priesthood and had authority, they began to baptize each other. Like Paul, missionaries often encourage local members to fellowship those examining the gospel and could invite the member to perform the baptism or confirmation when a convert joined the Church.

1:14 **Crispus.** Another synagogue leader at Corinth, converted by Paul (Acts 18:8).

1:14 **Gaius.** Also mentioned in Romans 16:23, Gaius was probably Paul's host in Corinth. Like Chloe, he appears to have also hosted a church at his home.

1:14-16 You have to smile when you read this. Probably in his early fifties, Paul had traveled widely and met hundreds or even thousands of people. Who knows how many he had baptized? I can imagine him saying emphatically to the scribe (who dutifully writes it down), "I'm grateful that I didn't baptize *any* of you." Then Sosthenes, who was from Corinth, reminds him, "Paul, don't you remember? You baptized Crispus and Gaius."

"Oh yes," said Paul, motioning to the scribe, "except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that I baptized in my own name."

Sosthenes gently interrupts again, "Paul, what about Stephanas?"

¹² Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds*, 3:109.

¹³ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds*, 3:109.

Paul nods somewhat impatiently, ready to get on with his point, “Yes, I think you are right, I also baptized the household of Stephanas.”

Sosthenes ponders for a moment, saying, “I think you also . . .” But Paul cuts him off with a raised hand, saying to the scribe, “Other than that, *I* can’t remember baptizing anyone else.” Then smiling, he added, “even if *Sosthenes* remembers many more. Now where was I?”

1:17 **not with wisdom of words.** At Athens and other places, Paul had certainly encountered people who believed reason and debate were the best way to solve a problem. But Paul feared such approaches made the sacrifice of Jesus of empty or useless. At the very least, they turned the focus to the speaker and his skills, rather than to the far more important message of Jesus’ atonement.

1:17 **lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.** Literally, ‘lest Christ’s cross should be emptied out/deprived of power.’

Christ is the wisdom of God – 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

1:18 **the preaching of the cross.** “Preaching” here is *logos*, with many meanings, including speech, discourse, doctrine, and teaching. But it’s also the word John later used to represent Jesus—“the Word” who spake and the storm was stilled, who commanded and raised Lazarus from the dead, who opened his mouth to create the universe.

1:18 **foolishness.** The cross is foolishness to anyone who doesn’t accept the testimony of those who saw Jesus raised from the dead. It is foolish that a condemned criminal could be the Son of God; that a man hung on a tree and thus cursed of God could be the Messiah; that a man could come back from the dead at all. But to those who accept the testimony of apostles and the Spirit, it demonstrated the great “power of God” to overcome even death.

1:18 **them that perish . . . us which are saved.** In both cases (“perish” and “saved”), the verb form indicates an ongoing action: the unbelievers are perishing while those who embrace Christ are being saved. Neither has a fixed end—it is still in play and can be changed at any time, though they are heading in that direction.

1:19-20 Quoted/paraphrased from Isaiah 29:14; 19:12; and 33:18.

1:21 “God was pleased to save those who believed in the foolishness of preaching, because in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom” (TW).

1:22 **the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom.** Not surprisingly, Paul used the word “Gentiles” (*ethnos*) only three times in 1 Corinthians, and not at all in 2 Corinthians. Mostly he referred to Greeks (*Hellēn*), such as the natives of Corinth. The gospels give many examples of Jews seeking for a sign, and history records the tendency of Greeks to debate and argue to attain wisdom.

1:23 **we preach Christ crucified.** The story of Jesus, condemned and crucified by the Romans, then resurrected and living again, worked for no one on the surface. How absurd that a convicted criminal, cursed of God (Deuteronomy 21:23) should become the Messiah and Savior of the world!

1:23 **unto the Jews a stumblingblock.** *Skandalon* (“stumblingblock”) has two meanings: a rock or stone in the road that causes you to trip; the stick or other trigger of a trap. Both meanings are interesting. The message about Jesus can cause Jews to trip walking down the path of life, or can be the thing that triggers a trap by which Satan captures them. From this word we get ‘scandalous.’

1:23 **unto the Greeks foolishness.** With the desire for knowledge and wisdom and a strong belief that there was no such thing as the resurrection, the message about Jesus to the Greeks sounded like babbling.

1:24 **unto them which are called.** “Called” is *klētos*, meaning ‘invited,’ such as to a banquet. Both Jews and Greeks were called to the gospel; those who responded to the invitation feel the power of God through Christ.

1:26 **For ye see your calling.** ‘Remember when you joined the church.’ Not many of them were wise by the world’s definition, wealthy and powerful, or born of noble families. In fact, many of them were considered foolish by the world’s standards. But God chooses the foolish. Why? Paul explained next.

1:29 **That no flesh should glory in his presence.** ‘That no mortal person should be arrogant before God.’

1:30 **wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.** Christ becomes all these things, and more, to those who accept God’s invitation (v. 24).

1:31 **as it is written.** The phrase following is a quote from Jeremiah 9:24.

Truth known by the Spirit – 1 Corinthians 2:1-16

“Either ministers of religion receive revelation or they do not, and if they do not their words do not carry the final converting seal. Granted they may say things that are true, but truth alone is not enough. Pure religion is a thing of the Spirit and not of the intellect alone, and its truths must be carried into the hearts of hearers by the power of the Spirit, otherwise the human soul is not changed, the old man of sin is not crucified, and the seeker after salvation does not become alive in Christ.”¹⁴ Compare to D&C 50:17-22.

2:1 **not with excellency of speech or of wisdom.** Paul had tried “excellency of speech” in Athens, meaning using Greek forms of rhetoric and poetry, with little success. When he came to Corinth, he determined to preach the core message of the gospel only (v. 4 also).

2:2 **not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ.** To “know” here is *oida*, with many meanings, including: understand, perceive, experience, acknowledge, remember, and pay respect to. “The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the apostles and prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that he died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it.”¹⁵

2:3 **weakness, and in fear.** Paul’s humility is manifest here (though not in all parts of 1 Corinthians or his other letters), considering the weakness, fear, and trembling which he experienced when first preaching the gospel in their city.

2:5 **your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men.** Paul’s purpose in preaching truth by the Spirit was to help the Corinthian saints rely on that same Spirit for their own testimonies, and not on worldly wisdom. So today, as we study and learn using techniques and skills of the world, we need to not forget that the Spirit is the most important way we learn and confirm truth.

2:7 **we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery.** A “mystery” is *mystērion*, something hidden or secret. God declared this information from before the foundations of the world, so it is not secret because he has hidden it, but because it is not according to the world’s wisdom, so “the princes” (meaning, rulers) of this world cannot understand it. See 1:23-25.

2:9 **Eye hath not seen.** The source of this is Isaiah 64:4, though modified for Paul’s purposes. Compare 3 Nephi 17:16-17.

2:10 **God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.** The mysteries of God, declared at the foundation of the world yet hid from men, are declared by the Spirit to the humble followers of Christ.

2:11 **JST** “. . . even so the things of God knoweth no man, ~~but~~ **except he has** the Spirit of God.” Only through the gift of the Holy Spirit can truth be fully comprehended.

¹⁴ McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:318.

¹⁵ Joseph Smith, *Teachings*, 121.

2:13 **comparing spiritual things with spiritual.** Or, “interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual” (NRSV). Only someone who can be taught by the Spirit can understand spiritual things.

2:14 **the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit.** Compare Mosiah 3:19, where the natural man is an enemy to God—someone will not trust or accept something that comes from his or her enemy.

2:16 **who hath known the mind of the Lord.** The quoted scripture is Isaiah 40:13 (LXX).

We are all Christ’s – 1 Corinthians 3:1-23

One of Paul’s marvelous metaphors was that the church was like a building, with the foundation being Jesus. He used this metaphor again in Ephesians and 2 Timothy. The metaphor taught “unity and humility . . . the great themes of this chapter.”¹⁶

3:1 **as unto carnal.** Or, “as people of the flesh” (NRSV). Paul declares that he only gave them “milk” because they were not ready for “meat” (v. 2). He called them “carnal” because, he explained, there were still “envying, and strife, and division” among them (v. 3), including the notion about who baptized them (v. 4).

3:6 **I have planted.** Corinthian members of the Church were contending about who had taught or baptized them and how that association made them better than another. Paul used a gardening metaphor to show that none of the people that brought them the gospel message mattered very much—he planted some seeds, Apollos (who came after) watered the young plants, but only through the miracle of God (just as with a real garden) did anything actually grow. See also verse 7.

3:8 **are one.** While the Corinthian saints were divided about who had baptized them, the men whose authority they were citing were united in their belief and Christ.

3:9 **ye are God’s building.** In the middle of this verse, Paul shifted metaphors from the garden to building construction. The last words of verse 9 should have been at the beginning of v. 10.

3:10 **a wise masterbuilder.** Or, ‘architect.’ Paul used this metaphor to convey the idea that truth was the only sure foundation and that the building that we become belongs to Jesus as the divine architect of our lives.

3:11 **no man lay than that is laid.** With the foundation in place, you cannot build a different building on top of it. To build a home on a temple’s foundation, for example, would be a scandal.¹⁷ The builders of the walls must continue based on what the architect laid in the foundation—in this case, Jesus Christ. It also reflects a confidence in Christ, in a day when many buildings collapsed because of an inadequate foundation. Compare to Ephesians 2:20-22 where the building is founded on Christ, apostles, and prophets, and which grows to become a holy temple.

3:12 **gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble.** These are the building materials of apostate or man-made religion, either valued or common in the eyes of men but not of the same material as the preaching of Christ, the chief cornerstone. These are proved not to be of God by being tested (v. 13).

3:13 **fire shall try every man’s work.** In Paul’s day, the threat of fire burning a building was a real source of great fear, for once started there was little hope of putting it out.¹⁸ Fire was also symbolic of God’s judgment. It was used to “try” or test and refine metals and other materials. Some related scriptures include:

“And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God” (Zechariah 13:9).

“And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was

¹⁶ Ogden and Skinner, *The New Testament*, 131.

¹⁷ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds*, 3:120.

¹⁸ Williams, *Paul’s Metaphors*, 13-14.

cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Revelation 20:9-10).

“And the great and abominable church, which is the whore of all the earth, shall be cast down by devouring fire” (D&C 29:21).

3:14 ***If any man’s work abide.*** Paul’s ‘test’ was figuratively to put someone’s work to the fire. If it survives the burning judgment of God, that person will be rewarded. If it doesn’t survive, “he shall suffer loss” (v. 15), though he can still be saved (v. 15).

3:16 ***ye are the temple of God.*** Shifting to a third metaphor to make the same point, Paul compared church members to temples, which were houses where gods dwelled, whether the temple of Jehovah in Jerusalem or Zeus in Greece. As members of the church, they had received the Holy Ghost and would have it dwelling with them if they did not defile themselves with sin.

3:17 ***If any man defile the temple of God.*** “Defile” is *phtheirō*, meaning to destroy (the same word is translated “destroy” later in the verse).

3:17 ***the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.*** Notice the second word “temple” is in italics in the KJV; it is not in the Greek. Paul was really declaring that like a temple, they were “holy” (Greek *hagios*, meaning set apart for God, exclusively his). “. . . for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are” (NASB). Paul was calling them to live up to their covenants.

3:18 ***let him become a fool.*** Anyone who has the knowledge and wisdom of the world is invited to become “a fool” in order to humble themselves and become truly wise in the end.

3:19 ***it is written.*** From Job 5:13.

3:20 ***And again.*** From Psalm 94:11.

3:22 ***all are yours.*** All the eternal and critical things are given to believers in Christ.

Apostles as examples – 1 Corinthians 4:1-21

4:1 ***Let a man so account of us.*** Or, “Think of us in this way” (NRSV). Paul counseled them to consider himself and those who served with him as “ministers of Christ” and “stewards” of God’s teachings. “Minister” (*hypēretēs*) means ‘someone who acts under orders’ such as an assistant, deputy, or servant. A “steward” (*oikonomos*) is a ‘manager of a household’ who has care of the budget, children, and other elements of running the house.

4:2 ***it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*** No steward would last long running a household if he wasn’t completely trustworthy. Paul uses this argument in his own defense—if he was not a faithful steward, the Lord would not keep him in his role.

4:3 ***I judge not mine own self.*** Though others might judge him, Paul does not condemn his own actions or faults. Rather, he leaves such judgment to the Lord (v. 4).

4:5 ***judge nothing before the time.*** Meaning, before the Second Coming, at which time all “hidden things” will come to light and even the “counsels of the hearts” will be made manifest to all.

4:6 ***I have in a figured transferred to myself and to Apollos.*** Or, “I have applied all this to Apollos and myself for your benefit” (NRSV). His teachings about ministers and stewards are applied to the two of them and used to teach and even chastise the Corinthians for some of the things they have been saying about the missionaries.

4:7 ***what hast thou that thou didn’t not receive?*** Since everything they have come from God, what reason could they have to boast about it?

4:9 **God hath set forth us the apostles last.** As indicated by the footnote, the adjective modifies “apostles,” not the verb “set forth.” “Last” can mean several things. The NIV captures the meaning well: “For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession,” referring to a victory march through the capital with the conquered coming at the rear of the parade in subjugation. It’s a statement of abject humility.

4:9 **appointed unto death.** Perhaps prefiguring Paul’s death and that of many other apostles in that day, but more likely to continue the victory parade metaphor; prisoners taken in battle came last in the procession, condemned to death in the arena for all to see their shame, as “a spectacle unto the world.”

4:11 **hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted.** Paul knew firsthand these and many other persecutions for the sake of the gospel (also vv. 12-13).

4:13 **the filth of the world . . . the offscouring of all things.** Both words have similar meanings—“filth” is garbage, scum, or dirt, with “offscouring” being associated more with what is wiped or scraped from something (like a plate for bowl). These terms give a powerful image of how Paul often felt he was treated by the world.

4:14 **as my beloved sons I warn you.** Paul feels toward the Corinthians as a father (v. 15) and writes all of this as a loving parent would do for his children.

4:16 **be ye followers of me.** “Followers” is ‘imitators’; “in other words, Follow Christ at all costs, as I, Paul, have done.”¹⁹

4:17 **I sent unto you Timotheus.** This was Timothy, one of Paul’s lifelong companions and most ardent supporters. He paid him high praise, calling him “my beloved son” and “faithful in the Lord.” Timothy likely delivered this letter to them when he came.

4:19 **I will come to you shortly.** Paul apparently paid a visit to the Corinthian saints between the first and second letter, during the last summer of his third missionary journey (about 53). See also 2 Corinthians 1:16, 2:1, 3-11.

4:21 **with a rod, or in love.** Paul asked how he should come, which was up to the saints in Corinth. If Timothy reported back that they were making progress, he would come with love; if not, he may come “with a rod,” meaning he would come prepared to administer discipline to them.

Sexual impropriety in the church – 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

A member of the church at Corinth was engaged in immoral activities, and they had not done anything about it. In fact, they were proud to have him among them, perhaps because of his prominent position in society. Paul taught about the role of church discipline.

5:1 **have his father’s wife.** Probably meaning they were married, though married or not, to have relations with your step-mother was considered *porneia*, or illicit sexual relations (Leviticus 18:8). Such a relationship was also illegal under Roman law, and Corinth was a Roman colony, subject to such laws.²⁰

5:2 **ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned.** They were arrogant when they should have been deeply saddened, because he was still among them. Perhaps he was a man of high social standing, and so they were proud to have him in their congregation.

5:3 **For I . . . have judged already.** Paul had passed judgment, based on the evidence presented to him. Church discipline was clearly the correct action in this case.

5:4 **when ye are gathered together.** Paul encouraged the Corinthian saints to unite together and deal with this issue.

¹⁹ Ogden and Skinner, *The New Testament*, 132.

²⁰ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds*, 3:127.

5:5 **deliver such an one unto Satan.** Or, excommunicate him.

5:5 **for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved.** The reason for church discipline was made clear: to help the sinner gain control over the flesh (appetites) and bring their spirit (or mind, thinking) in line with the will of God.

5:6 **Your glorying is not good.** They were boasting about something related to this man (see v. 2).

5:7 **Purge out therefore the old leaven.** The reference in this and verse 8 is the Feast of Unleavened Bread in conjunction with Passover. Paul tied this effort to purge out the leaven of sin through Christ, the Passover sacrifice. This may indicate that Paul wrote the letter near Passover time (perhaps the spring of 55 CE).

5:9 **I wrote unto you in an epistle.** We do not have this letter which seems to have been written before 1 Corinthians, perhaps while Paul was in Ephesus in about 54 CE. Some argue that 2 Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1 might be this letter, added onto that other letter by a well-meaning scribe later, since the topic in those verses is similar to what Paul summarizes here.

5:10 **the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters.** Expanding on the message of that letter, which was focused on fornication (v. 9), Paul counseled them not to associate with people in other forms of sin as well.

5:11 **not to keep company.** Or, ‘mingle together with,’ not referring to social gathering, but in allowing this sinful person to continue in fellowship with them, sharing the *agape* meal (communal or shared meal, with love being the name of and reason for the meal) which was tied to the sacrament each Sunday in their worship. This verse extends Paul’s list of sinful behaviors that should not be tolerated in such fellowship to the greedy, idolatrous, abusive, drunken, or thieves.

5:12 **do not ye judge them that are within?** God will judge the world (those “without,” meaning outside the church) but the saints are obligated to judge those in gross violation of their covenants within the church.

5:13 **put away from among yourselves that wicked person.** Quote from Deuteronomy 17:7 (and others, including Deuteronomy 19:19; 22:21, 24; 24:7).

Suing other Christians – 1 Corinthians 6:1-8

Another issue appears to be that church members were taking each other to court on various charges. Paul strongly counsels them to settle such matters among themselves, arguing that the saints will judge the world, so why can’t they settle their own issues without involving the world. No doubt he also viewed this as a perception issue, not wanting those outside the church to see anything less than unity among church members.

6:1 **go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?** Paul urged them to settle their differences within the church, teaching that it would be better to be wronged or defrauded than to go to law against a brother in the church (v. 7). This may be based on Christ’s teachings as later captured in Matthew 18:15-17.

6:2 **the saints shall judge the world.** Another concept based on Jesus’ teachings, as reflected in Matthew 19:28.

6:5 **I speak to your shame.** This is strong language. Paul wanted to be clear that he was quite serious about this.

The body and spirit – 1 Corinthians 6:9-20

6:9 **Be not deceived.** Paul gave a list of sexual and other sins in verses 9-10. The NAB for this verse reads more clearly: “Do not be deceived, neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers nor boy prostitutes, or practicing homosexuals, nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God.”

Elder Richard G. Scott said: “Any sexual intimacy outside of the bonds of marriage—I mean any intentional contact with the sacred, private parts of another’s body, with or without clothing—is a sin and is forbidden by God. It is also a transgression to intentionally stimulate these emotions within your own body” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 38).

Elder Boyd K. Packer also stated: “[Satan] knows that this power of creation is not just an incident to the plan, but

the key to it. He knows that if he can entice you to use this power prematurely, to use it too soon, or to misuse it in any way, you may well lose your opportunities for eternal progression” (*Ensign*, July 1972, 112).

6:11 ***such were some of you.*** Paul shared his hope that even those who have done these sins could be both justified (made clean) and sanctified (made holy) through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

6:12 ***JST***

1 Corinthians 6:12 KJV	JST
All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.	All these things are not lawful unto me, and all these things are not expedient: all things are not lawful for me, therefore I will not be brought under the power of any.

Scholars believe that some of this verses (and others in this section) are quotations from Chloe or her letter, with Paul’s refutation following. In the JST, the Prophet changed the quotation sections to truth statements, adding “not” to refute the concept. The quotation from the letter in this verse was probably: “All things are lawful unto me.”

6:13 ***Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats.*** Another likely quotation from Chloe (see v. 12). Paul’s refutation follows, turning their focus away from food and to how they can use their bodies in the service of God.

6:14 ***will also raise up us.*** Extending the argument that they should worry less about food and more about serving the Lord, Paul reminded them that they would one day be raised up (resurrected) by God, just as Jesus had been. More about this in chapter 15.

6:15 ***your bodies are the members of Christ.*** “Members” (*melos*) refers to parts of the body, another concept explored more in chapter 12. We are ‘joined’ to Christ through covenants, becoming metaphorically part of his body.

6:15 ***God forbid.*** The KJV translators used this phrase in several of Paul’s letters, but he doesn’t actually evoke the word “God” in any of them. The phrase, *mē genoito*, has the meaning of ‘not to be’ and is variously translated as “Never!” (NRSV, ESV, NIV, NLT) or “May it never be!” (NASB) or “Of course not” (NAB). My personal translation is ‘No way!’

6:16 ***for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.*** Condemning being with “an harlot,” Paul invokes Genesis 2:24 and counters that those who are “joined unto the Lord” become one with him.

6:18 ***Flee fornication.*** ‘Run from sexual sin!’ (NLT). Paul argues that immortality is a sin against one’s own body. The first part of this verse “Every sin that a man doeth is without the body” is probably also a quotation from the Corinth saints, which he refutes in the next line.

6:19 ***your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.*** Continuing his argument, Paul asserts that our bodies become holy like a temple because the Holy Spirit can dwell in them. This elevating of the status of a physical body is a strong counter-cultural argument against Greek philosophy, which saw the body as weak and something to be thrown away for a higher, spiritual existence. More on this in chapter 15.

6:20 ***For ye are bought with a price.*** Extending his earlier point, Paul added that not only were their bodies the temples of the Holy Ghost, but they did not belong to themselves, but to God (v. 19). He explains that this is because Jesus purchased us with his blood, so our bodies and spirits are God’s. The price Jesus paid for us was his own life.

Responses to the Letter from Corinth – 1 Corinthians 7:1 – 15:58

In the letter the Corinthians had sent Paul (1 Corinthians 7:1), they appear to have asked him several questions. In the rest of his letter, he set out to respond to these questions.

Questions about marriage – 1 Corinthians 7:1-16

Chapter 7 is probably the most worked over section of this letter in the JST. The overall theme of the changes is to change the focus from one of marriage for all church members to those serving the Lord, such as Paul himself. Like our young missionaries today, who postpone dating and courtship while they serve, the JST has Paul advocating for dedicated service to God without other distractions, when called.

7:1 **JST** “. . . whereof ye wrote unto me, **saying**, It is good . . .” It is made clearer in the JST that Paul was reacting to a statement from the church at Corinth, which is exactly what scholars believe.

7:2 **JST** “Nevertheless, **I say**, to avoid fornication . . .” Paul offers his endorsement of marriage to their statement that sex was bad.

7:3 **render unto the wife due benevolence**. Or, “The husband should fulfill his wife’s sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband’s needs” (NLT). Paul also argues in v. 4 that each person doesn’t have “power” (or right) over their own bodies, but over the spouse’s.

7:5 JST “~~Defraud~~ **Depart** ye not one **from** the other.” Most translations say ‘deprive’ here, meaning to abstain from sexual relations, which Paul says should only be done “with consent for a time.” The part about “fasting” is a later addition, not in the early manuscripts.

7:5 **incontinency**. Or, ‘lack of self control.’

7:6 **I speak this by permission**. “Permission” here is *sungnōmē*, ‘indulgence’ or ‘concession.’ It means Paul was offering this as a personal opinion.

7:8 **It is good for them if they abide even as I**. This is the scripture that teaches that Paul was single, but it also hints that he was a widower, because Paul was surely married as a younger man when he was part of the staff of the Sanhedrin. If he was previously married, we do not know what transpired to have him be single at this time in his life.

7:9 **JST**

1 Corinthians 7:9 KJV	JST
But if they cannot contain , let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn .	But if they cannot abide , let them marry: for it is better to marry than that any should commit sin .

It was Paul’s personal opinion (v. 6) that single people might remain that way, though he doesn’t say why (and there has been much interpretation over the years, including the creation of monks and nuns in reaction to these verses), but he also conceded that marriage was right for those who might otherwise be tempted toward immorality.

7:10 **Let not the wife depart from her husband**. Paul is quoting “the Lord” here, something that must have been an oral tradition of Jesus’ teachings at this time (also v. 11). This concept is reflected in the later records of Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:7-12.

7:12 **to the rest speak I, not the Lord**. After establishing the marriage rules Jesus taught, Paul now offers more specific recommendations, but is clear they are his own.

7:12 **she be pleased to dwell with him**. They are married (he already called her a wife), not just living together. The “brother” is a church member and the wife is not, but Paul still counsels preserving the marriage if both are willing. The same for a believing wife married to a non-Christian husband (v. 13).

7:14 **For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife**. This verse was the subject of an entire revelation given to Joseph Smith sometime in 1830 (D&C 74), where the “unbelieving husband” was a Jew who wanted to circumcise his sons according to the Law of Moses and have them live that law. The Prophet explained that this was why Paul told them not to be united with unbelievers.

7:15 **if the unbelieving depart, let him depart.** Paul's priority was peace in marriage, so rather than staying in a miserable relationship (or an abusive one), divorce was justified in some circumstances.

7:16 **thou shalt save thy husband.** If the relationship is good, stay married, because you never know if your example and testimony will one day lead your spouse to embrace the gospel.

Live in your calling – 1 Corinthians 7:17-24

7:17 **as God hath distributed to every man.** Or, "let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned" (NRSV). Paul says that his is his instruction ("so ordain I") in all the churches he works with.

7:18 **Is any man called being circumcised?** Circumcision—as a visible sign—was a symbol for keeping the law of Moses, but it was also a specific point of contention among Jewish members and Gentile converts. Paul's counsel was for neither party to worry about the others' status. Some Jews, who embraced Greek culture, had surgical operations to 'reverse' their circumcision, so they might look like Greek men. This would also be contrary to Paul's direction. He declared, "Circumcision is nothing," but the important thing was to keep the commandments (v. 19).

7:20 **abide in the same calling wherein he was called.** "Calling" is not a church calling but rather the circumstances of like in which one finds oneself. Paul counseled to be satisfied with whatever God has given, whether slave or free (v. 21).

7:23 **Ye are bought with a price.** Returning to his point in 6:20, Paul now applied it to slaves versus free people; because we are all purchased by Christ, we do not have to feel enslaved by men, even if we are slaves in the eyes of the world.

The unmarried widow – 1 Corinthians 7:25-40

7:25 **concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord.** "Virgins" here refers to the unmarried. Paul does not have a specific teaching of Jesus of which he is aware, but he will offer his own thoughts, from his own experience.

7:26 **good for the present distress.** The nature of the "present distress" is unknown. The Greek word implies a necessity or constraint that is compelled upon a person. Perhaps it means the current persecution endured by church members, or some specific circumstance the Corinthians wrote to Paul about.

7:27 **seek not to be loosed . . . seek not a wife.** Maintain the status quo in terms of marital relations, based on the "present distress" (v. 26). In other words, it is a temporary, not a doctrinal, statement.

7:28 **such shall have trouble in the flesh.** Not because of getting married but because of the "present distress" (v. 26).

7:29-33, 38 See the JST changes for these verses in the LDS Bible. These changes turn the audience to those called to serve missions. Such service requires sacrifice, usually of a temporary nature. They need to leave the things of the world behind to serve well.

7:29 **the time is short.** Likely referring to the Second Coming, the great eschatological reversal, when the righteous are finally rewarded for their patience and the wicked finally punished for their sins (also vv. 30-31).

7:32 **I would have you without carefulness.** Or, "I want you to be free from concern" (NASB), relating to Paul's next counsel about why those engaged in missionary service are better off unmarried.

7:33 **he that is married careth for the things that are of the world.** A broad statement, it is true, but unencumbered people can generally prioritize the Lord's service over other responsibilities, while a married person has to balance service in the kingdom against keeping a strong marriage (also v. 34).

7:35 **not that I may cast a snare upon you.** Paul's counsel is not intended to trap or restrain them in any way but as direction he hopes will help them better serve God.

7:36 **if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin.** Or, “If anyone thinks that he [or she] is not behaving properly toward his [or her] fiancée” (NRSV). In other words, if passions are too strong and marriage seems like a necessity, they should marry. But if those called to serve can abide a bit longer, then let them remain single and continue to serve (v. 37).

7:38 **he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.** Remember, this is all part of the “present distress” (v. 26) situation, with Paul giving advice for these specific circumstances, not broad doctrinal declarations.

7:39 **she is at liberty to be married.** According to Jesus’ marriage law (see v. 10 above), a woman remarrying while her husband remained alive was considered adultery.

7:40 **I think also that I have the Spirit of God.** Paul believes that his counsel is inspired, even though he is not quoting scripture or Jesus’ teachings for most of it.

Food sacrificed to idols – 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

This chapter teaches the same concept as Romans 14, so see those notes for an analysis. In summary, he said to Jews: eating food from idols is not a sin (and often their only source of meat), so don’t give Gentiles a hard time about it; to Gentiles: don’t make eating food from idols a stumblingblock to faithful Jewish members.

Paul’s defense as an apostle – 1 Corinthians 9:1-27

9:1 **Am I not an apostle?** We have no record of Paul being called as a member of the Twelve, though there is agreement among most LDS commentaries (and some others, too) that he was in such a position by this time. However, it is possible that he was speaking of himself using the ‘called as a missionary’ sense of the word and was never a member of the Twelve.

9:1 **am I not free?** Paul’s writings show his attitude was that he was anything but free, repeatedly calling himself a slave of Jesus Christ (e.g., Romans 1:1; Titus 1:1). So to what was he referring here? Verses 19-23 give the clue.

9:1 **have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?** Paul’s many personal encounters with Jesus included: on the road to Damascus (Acts 9, 22, 26); in the Jerusalem temple (Acts 22:17-21); at Corinth (Acts 18:9-10); and in Fortress Antonia (Acts 23:11; which was future at the time of this letter).²¹ Perhaps it was the vision at Corinth that he had talked about most when there and he is reminding them of that experience.

9:2 **for the seal of mine apostleship are ye.** A “seal” is something used to make an impression in wax or other material that certifies and seals letters and contracts. Metaphorically speaking, Paul is saying that the conversion of those in Corinth are the authentication of his apostleship, certifying his calling.

9:3 **Mine answer to them that do examine me.** This chapter is a defense of Paul’s calling and authority to preach the gospel and manage the church, which was evidently a source of debate at Corinth.

9:4 **Have we not power to eat and to drink?** Or, ‘Don’t I have the ability to have people pay for my food and drink?’ Other apostles apparently relied on members of the church to provide for their living expenses, something Paul is known to have done as well, but not as much, if at all, while he was staying in Corinth (also v. 6).

9:5 **Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife.** Peter is the only apostle whose wife is spoken of in the NT, and then only indirectly (Matthew 8:14; Mark 1:30). But it is probable that most were married and sometimes traveled with their wives. Paul is single (7:8) so the use of “we” here indicates that others in his party brought their wives along, and required saints in the visited areas to provide food and lodging for them.

9:5 **other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas.** Three groups are mentioned as having the ability to bring their wives with them: other missionaries, Jesus’ (half) brothers (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3), and Peter (Cephas was his Aramaic name; see 1:12).

²¹ Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 30.

9:7 **who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?** Or, 'Who goes to war paying for it himself?' Soldiers were sent (like apostles) by someone who funded their efforts.

9:7 **who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit.** Who would spend all the money and effort planting a vineyard, only to never drink any of the wine that comes from it?

9:7 **who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk.** The third rhetorical question, which all have the same answer: no one. The point is that an apostle is like these three examples: he serves the Lord and does not have to pay for his own expenses; he plants or cares for a flock, and enjoys the harvest of souls (fruit and milk) that comes with the effort.

9:9 **Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn.** The quote is from Deuteronomy 25:4. It applies to Paul and other apostles because they are doing the hard work of harvesting and therefore merit some reward, just as a farmer would let his ox doing all the hard work of grinding wheat eat some of it (v. 10).

9:11 **sown unto you spiritual things . . . we shall reap your carnal things.** Paul and the other missionaries gave great spiritual blessings to the Corinthians—is it too much to ask for some material blessing as a result?

9:12 **others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather?** It appears that when other missionaries came through the town, that the Corinth saints took care of them. So why not Paul and his group of preachers?

9:13 **they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple.** Paul cited scriptural and practical precedent: the priests working in the temple in Jerusalem received a portion of the sacrifices at the temple (including money, meat, other food, oil, fleece, and drink) as 'payment' for their service rendered twice each year (Deuteronomy 18:1-5).

9:14 **the Lord ordained.** Paul argued that Jesus himself taught that those who preach the gospel should receive some benefit from their efforts, perhaps citing Jesus' words as later found in Matthew 10:8-11; Luke 10:7).

9:15 **I have used none of these things.** In spite of his strong arguments, so far with the Corinthians, he had not requested their material support. They were either doubting Paul's authority because they heard that other cities had supported him (which may have contradicted their understanding from his example) or perhaps doubted his authority because he *did not* ask for such support from them, as did other traveling missionaries and the Twelve.

9:16 **for necessity is laid up on me.** By virtue of his knowledge of Christ and the covenants he had made, Paul felt that he had no choice but to preach and travel, teaching the gospel message to all who would hear.

9:17 **if against my will, a dispensation.** Or, "but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship" (ESV). Like v. 16, Paul is compelled by his testimony to accept this stewardship given him. It was not his will to see Christ on the road to Damascus; rather, he surrendered his will to Christ and became his slave.

9:18 **What is my reward then?** If Paul is compelled by God to preach, the reward he enjoys is to do it without charge to his converts and not exercise his God-given right to support from the saints.

9:19 **I made myself servant to all.** "Servant" is 'slave' (*doulos*), which Paul is to all to convince more people.

9:20 **unto the Jews I became as a Jew.** Paul changed his approach, language, and style, according to his audience. The core message was always the same, but he understood their different needs, backgrounds, and circumstance, and adjusted his style and preaching accordingly (also v. 21-22).

9:21 **without law.** Not 'lacking the law' but *anomos*, 'not having' or 'a violator of' the Law of Moses.

9:21 **being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ.** Though like free from God's law, Paul was obedient to the laws of God and Christ.

9:24-27 The Isthmian Games were held near Corinth about the time Paul had been there in 51 CE. Perhaps he even attended them. These verses allude to those competitions,²² which is much more clear in other translations, speaking of running, boxing, and great self-control:

“²⁴Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. ²⁵Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; ²⁷but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified” (NASB).

Flee from idolatry – 1 Corinthians 10:1 – 11:1

The point of this chapter is to avoid evil. Paul gave examples from the scriptures to show how important this was, then offered some reassurance about their ability to do so.

10:1 ***all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea.*** Referring to Moses and the children of Israel he brought out of Egypt, all of them were under the cloud of the presence of the Lord that presided over the camp of Israel, and all passed through the sea on dry ground as the Lord saved them from the Egyptian army (see Exodus 13:21-22; 14:21-22). Paul refers to both of these as being “baptized,” meaning immersed in the cloud and the sea.

10:4 ***that spiritual Rock that followed them.*** Some have drawn on this verse to tie it to when Moses twice struck a rock and produced fresh water for the people to drink, in two different locations (Exodus 17:17 and Numbers 20:7-11). This caused some ancient Jews to develop a tradition that the just as the manna went with them from place to place, so did the rock that provided water!²³ Modern scholars argue that this is just two occurrences of the same story, but Paul follows the line of the ancient interpreters and writes that the water-rock “followed them,” then ties that metaphorically to Jesus, who was their true rock and foundation.

10:6 ***these things were our examples.*** Paul wanted the saints to learn from the examples of the ancient Israelites, even if they were Gentiles, just as we talk about pioneer stories today, which can even help those who don’t have pioneer ancestors. He next gave several examples to consider from the books of Moses, bracketed by this verse and verse 11.

10:7 ***The people sat down to eat and drink.*** The quotation is from Exodus 32:6.

10:8 ***fell in one day three and twenty thousand.*** Numbers 25:1-9, the event Paul referred to, says 24,000 died in one day; it’s not known why Paul’s number is different.

10:9 ***destroyed of serpents.*** See Numbers 21:5-9.

10:10 ***destroyed of the destroyer.*** See Numbers 16:41-50, which says 14,700 died in this instance.

10:12 ***take heed lest he fall.*** In Paul’s doctrine, there was no guaranteed salvation. Those who had come into the fold of Christ were certainly able to fall away if they were not vigilant and continued faithful to God.

10:13 ***will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.*** “God protects us against temptations that are thrust upon us, but if we seek out temptations our protection is weakened.”²⁴ Compare to Alma 13:28-29.

The word “temptation” in this verse is *peirasmos*, which can mean a temptation but also a test, trial, or proving. Some have struggled with the notion that God will not give a trial that we cannot endure, when they see such

²² Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds*, 3:149.

²³ James L. Kugel, *How to Read the Bible*, New York: Free Press, 2007, Kindle version, “No Water, No Food” and “Rock Around the Flock.”

²⁴ Ogden and Skinner, *The New Testament*, 139.

suffering all throughout the world. I recently had a fascinating email exchange with a friend about this verse. After several back-and-forths in our conversation, I summarized what I was thinking this way:

If I could explain evil in the world with all its consequences, that would be amazing. Poets, prophets, philosophers, and theologians have wrestled with that, and typically came away with more questions than answers. The improper exercise of agency must be one of the most painful things for our heavenly Father to watch, and yet he enthrones it as a core principle, because agency is the supreme law of progression. Nothing could happen on earth until agency was exercised by Adam and Eve, and the final act of mankind will be to exercise agency and surrender to the will of God at the judgment.

The woman you speak of [who had lost her son tragically to an unjust war in a foreign land, and suffered much more], however truly tragic and unimaginable, is sadly but one story among millions. And from my observation, the vast majority who so suffer in our modern world and in ages past have not known God in any way that they could even reach out to him to ease their pain. On my mission in France, I repeatedly had people tell me they could not believe in God because if God existed, there would be no suffering in the world. As a 19-year-old, I had no coherent answer for that statement, and forty years later I'm not sure I have progressed much beyond that position. And though I am struck by the many, many talks in General Conference that consistently address the idea of dealing with suffering in this life with faith, I cannot recall a talk addressing why people without the gospel (or any knowledge of God and Christ) are benefitted from such pain, except perhaps to bring them to God. But for literally billions today and throughout history, they have almost no way of gaining that knowledge in this life.

However, one book that addresses this somewhat is *The God Who Weeps* by Terryl and Fiona Givens. Perhaps you've read it, or perhaps you know them, with your circle much wider than mine. They wrote:

The pain associated with sin is the natural consequence of our choices; it is not God's retribution upon the wicked. . . . When Enoch saw God weeping, he learned that it was humanity's "misery," the fact of their "suffering," that drew forth heaven's tears. God's mourning for rebellious Israel was for their present misery, not an imagined future hell. The gift and power of agency mean we are free to create the conditions of our own existence—which can be a blessing or a curse. . . . What is always at stake in any decision we make is what that choice turns us into. We may suffer the unfortunate consequences of *other* peoples' choices. People may honor or abuse us, harm or nourish us. But for the most part, it is our *own* choices that shape our identity (pp. 80-81).

So perhaps the real point is that how we react and deal with such pain is the opportunity for real personal growth, whether we know God or not. We love stories of people who not only cope with but who overcome pain and suffering to do some good in the world. But honestly, such stories are powerful because they are rare. I think most just try to get through another day, consistently baffled that they could be so unjustly treated, likely concluding that God or fate or the universe must be truly against them.

I was struck by a statistic once that said about 350,000 people die per day on the earth, as an average. That is equivalent to an entire large city. I ponder that when I hear the news about this death or that, and one day it especially hit me when there was that huge tsunami in the Pacific that killed about 350,000 people. I thought, from God's perspective, that catastrophic natural disaster merely doubled the number that he welcomed into the spirit world that day. That thought might strike you as somehow ignoring their suffering or minimizing the tragedy of that event, but for me, it put it in a fascinating eternal perspective. Yes, in this life we suffer, and some suffer far more than I can imagine in my mostly sheltered, safe, and healthy life here in the US. But all suffering ends and in God's perspective, really isn't that long anyway. One day, perhaps, we'll look back on our brief mortal sojourn and see it through that lens. That Rohingya woman will have been taught about Christ and the Atonement, will have been reunited with her slain baby boy, now a powerful, mature son of God, and will have found great joy in her own eternal progression toward godhood. I think like Enoch seeing God weep, she will still feel that exquisite pain, but it will have been overcome and subsumed by exquisite joy and gratitude for the grace of God in her path toward her ultimate perfection. We will all fall down before the Father and the Son, like the people in John's Revelation, with

God wiping away all tears, with no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain, for all these things have passed away (Rev 21:4).

10:16 **The cup of blessing . . . bread.** While not the first reference to the sacrament in scripture, this is an important reference that predates the gospel accounts but uses similar language, indicating that Paul had received his information about Jesus' life from good sources. See also 11:23-29 below.

10:20 **they sacrifice to devils, and not to God.** Paul's judgment was that pagan sacrifices, while appearing similar to Israelite practices—animals, altars, etc.—were actually being made to demons instead of God, and he did not want the saints participating in such sacrifices. They needed to choose to participate in God's sacrifice—now represented by the sacrament as the great and last sacrifice—or the pagan ones; they could not do both (v. 21).

10:23 **All things are lawful for me.** See 6:12; the JST changes this verse also to match the changes in that one.

10:24 **every man another's wealth.** "Wealth" is not in the Greek (as indicated by the italics). A better translation is "but the good of his neighbor" (ESV).

10:25 **sold in the shambles.** Or, "Eat whatever is sold in the meat market" (NRSV). One of the questions was about eating meat sacrificed to idols, which Paul will address next but broadly answers here—eat what is sold in the markets and don't ask where it came from. They could also eat whatever was provided at a banquet without asking about its origins (v. 27). It all comes from the Lord, ultimately (v. 26).

10:26 **the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.** Quotation from Psalm 24:1.

10:28 **This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not.** If they were told, however, that the meat came from a sacrifice in a pagan temple to one of their gods, Paul counseled them to decline to eat it, lest anyone be confused about their loyalties.

10:30 **why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?** Paul's point is that eating such meat really doesn't matter to an individual's spirituality—the meat was sacrificed to a non-existent god anyway, so it can't hurt them. However, in their world, knowingly partaking of such meals could have an unfavorable impact on Christians, because in many cases, the eating of the meat was perceived to be an act of supporting that god.

10:33 **Even as I please all men in all things.** Paul counseled them to follow his example and strive to build good relations with those around them, not for their own profit but in the hopes of spreading the gospel and saving many.

11:1 **Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.** Summarizing, Paul invited them to follow his own example in these things, because he strove to follow Christ's example.

Cultural religious practices – 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Paul's comments here mostly relate to the worship services held by early Christians. One of his concerns was how they shared food (or didn't) when they got together. His recommendation is in verse 33, which could be read, 'Wherefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, share the food that you bring with each other.' Much of this relates to the *agapē* (love) meal that early Christians shared, related to the Last Supper and the Sacrament (which today we remember with only a small piece of bread and some water, but they had as a full meal, just as Jesus and his disciples had done).

11:2 **keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.** Not strictly "ordinances" as we think of them (baptism, the sacrament, etc.) but 'traditions' or 'instruction,' though that could include ordinances in the traditional sense. Paul wants them to teach the gospel message just as he did.

11:3 **the head of the woman is the man.** The covenant relationship of a husband and wife is like that of all of us to Christ and Christ to God. It is a model of subjection, but patterned after divine subjection, which is based on love, respect, and personal sacrifice to truth. This section was interpreted wonderfully by Lynne Hilton Wilson, emphasizing not the subjugation of women, but the power it represents for them, "a sign of unique female

authority to pray and prophesy.” In other words, Paul was encouraging female participation in religion and setting them on an equal status with men in their relationship with the Lord.²⁵

11:5 ***with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head.*** Jewish women covered their heads when praying while Gentile women did not, thus creating a cultural conflict in prayer. Likewise, pagan men covered their heads when praying to their gods while Jewish men did the opposite. For cultural reasons, Paul sided with the Jewish position and cited scriptural precedent from Genesis to support that position, while turning the entire question into a metaphor about how the relationship of husbands and wives was symbolic of the relationship of Christ to the church (v. 3). It is not supposed to be a treatise on husband-wife relationships.

11:6 ***if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn.*** Prostitutes shaved their heads to signify their trade.²⁶

11:8 ***the man is not of the woman.*** In the story in Genesis, Eve was created from Adam’s rib, making her “of the man.” She was also his “helpmeet” or partner, making her “for the man” (v. 9). See Genesis 2:20-23.

11:11 ***neither is the man without the woman.*** In the Lord, a man and a woman are united, and cannot attain their full exaltation without each other.

11:14 ***if a man have long hair, it is a shame.*** Another cultural reference that is less relevant for our day. Men in Paul’s day typically kept their hair short, especially in cities and Greek and Roman cultures.

11:16 ***we have no such custom.*** Paul’s anticipated that his explanation about how women should prophesy with heads covered would be controversial, so ended with a disclaimer statement that his counsel was not church policy.

The sacrament – 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

11:18 ***I hear that there be divisions among you.*** Paul is not certain but has heard of serious contention during their Sunday meetings.

11:20 ***this is not to eat the Lord’s supper.*** The practice of having full meals together in their worship services seems to have been a point of contention. Paul reminds them that they can take the sacrament without providing a full meal.

11:21 ***one is hungry, and another is drunken.*** Many but not all ate before they came to the meetings, resulting in some coming hungry (most likely the poor) and others drunk (most likely the wealthy). The disparity was the issue Paul wanted to address, counseling them to be sensitive to that and share their food with all (vv. 33-34).

11:23 ***the Lord Jesus . . . took bread.*** This (through verse 29) is an early and full record of the last supper and sacrament, written before those in the gospels. Paul probably learned this from Peter and others who were there. Paul’s language differs slightly from the three gospel accounts of the implementation of the sacrament (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20), though the core elements of the symbolism of the bread and wine and doing it in remembrance of him are present.

11:28 ***let a man examine himself.*** When taking the sacrament, come to the table humbly, with great self-scrutiny. Taking it unworthily brings self-condemnation (v. 29).

11:32 ***we are chastened of the Lord.*** The private correction received from the Lord by the Holy Spirit is not the same kind of correction one might get from the world, but can lead to a more powerful personal reformation.

Spiritual gifts – 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Comparing Paul’s teachings in chapter 12 to D&C 46:8-26 and Moroni 10:8-18 is beneficial.

²⁵ See Lynne Hilton Wilson, “Unveiling Women’s Veils of Authority,” in *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 28: (2018), 133-14, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/unveiling-womens-veils-of-authority/>.

²⁶ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds*, 3:156-158.

12:1 **JST** “Now concerning spiritual *gifts things*.” Note that “gifts” is in italics in the KJV, meaning it is not in the Greek. The JST emphasizes the transition of this phrase from the many temporal things of the previous chapters to the spiritual ones in the next three.

12:3 **no man can say that Jesus is the Lord**. Joseph Smith taught that this should be “no man can **know** that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” It is one thing to declare it, it is another to know it deep in your soul by the power of the Spirit.

12:8-10 Paul listed several gifts of the Spirit (“diversities of gifts” and “differences of administrations”; vv. 4-5) in these verses.

12:11 **dividing to every man severally**. Or, “who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses” (NRSV).

Different gifts – 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Everyone is different, with different abilities and gifts, but all work together to support each other and the church. What are your gifts?

12:12 **the body is one, and hath many members**. Interestingly, it was the custom in pagan temples to purchase wooden or clay body parts and give them as an offering for the temple, either to ask for a blessing on that part of their bodies (from injury or illness) or to signify devotion. Many such parts have been found in Corinth and are on display in the museum there. This may be part of the imagery Paul had in mind.²⁷

12:14 **the body is not one member, but many**. Every body has multiple parts. Paul used this notion to teach the value of each individual’s contributions to the church. Not only are all parts needed to make a whole body, but if there was only part, such as an eye, ear, or nose, significant abilities would be missing (vv. 15-20).

12:22 **more feeble, are necessary**. The weakest parts of the body is just as necessary as the strongest part to truly function.

12:23 **our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness**. Or, “our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty” (ESV). We clothe our bodies not to cover the presentable parts but the unpresentable parts, which therefore ironically honors them.

12:28 **God hath set some in the church**. Paul developed this notion more fully in Ephesians 2:19-20; 4:11-14.

12:29 **Are all apostles?** Reciting several church positions and practices, the answer is clearly “no,” because not everyone can be an apostle or prophet or any other single function, or all necessary things would not get done.

12:31 **a more excellent way**. Having established that all are needed in the church, Paul teased them into one characteristic that all could indeed enjoy, in the next chapter.

Charity – 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

13:1 **have not charity**. Speaking in tongues, prophesying, knowing great mysteries, and moving mountains by faith are not as important as charity, which is *agapē*, meaning a type of love that represents devotion, love of an ideal or principle, or a love between people with no sexual connotations.

13:2-7 Nearly identical verses are found in Moroni 7:44-46. Few passages of scripture are more poetic and inspired at the same time.

13:4-7 Or, “⁴Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (NRSV). Compare Article of Faith 13.

²⁷ Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds*, 3:165-166.

13:8 **Charity never faileth.** This has become the Relief Society motto (see Handbook 2, 9.1.3, <https://www.lds.org/handbook/handbook-2-administering-the-church/relief-society>).

13:11 **when I became a man, I put away childish things.** The distinction between what children can do and what adults can do was even more delineated in Paul's day than in ours. Children had no rights and were totally under the subjection of their father. They were typically very limited in social contacts and only the wealthy could afford more than the simplest of education. When Paul "because a man" was probably when he went through the Jewish ritual of adulthood, today called a *bar mitzvah*, typically at age 13.

13:12 **we see through a glass, darkly.** Ancient mirrors were typically made of polished brass, not glass, so you can imagine how dimly the image reflected back would be. Full knowledge will come later, when we are "face to face" with the Lord.

13:13 **the greatest of these is charity.** Faith and hope are critical foundational elements of the gospel, but charity is greater. Why? Once we have full knowledge of the Lord (v. 12), faith and hope fall away, but true love of God and others will always be part of our eternal lives.

The gift of prophecy – 1 Corinthians 14:1-25

D&C 46:9-11 explains why the Lord gives gifts—that we will help each other. Paul's writing here supports that doctrine in this chapter.

14:1 **desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.** Like charity being greater than faith and hope, Paul pronounced prophesying to be the most important spiritual gift.

14:3 **he that prophesieth speaketh unto me to edification.** While speaking in tongues can be personally edifying, if no one understands you, no one else is benefitted (vv. 2, 4). Prophecy, on the other hand, can edify, exhort, and comfort others.

14:6 **speaking with tongues.** Paul gave a special emphasis on tongues, probably because the Corinthians were concerned about it. Paul counsels that unless others can understand and it edifies the church, the gift of tongues is only for an individual's benefit. Likewise, Joseph Smith said:

- The devil can imitate tongues (162).
- The purpose of tongues is to teach unbelievers (195; also 1 Corinthians 14:22).
- Don't be overly curious about tongues (247).
- Don't indulge in it too much (229).
- Anything taught by tongues is generally not doctrine (229).²⁸

14:8 **if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare.** When the army goes to war, the trumpeter must sound loudly and with certainty, or the army will be confused. So it is with prophesying rather than tongues, which might confused others because of the unclear nature of the message (v. 9).

14:11 **I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian.** A "barbarian" (*barbarous*) is one who doesn't speak Greek, which to the Greeks sounded something like 'bar-bar-bar' or nonsense.

14:14 **my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.** Paul's concern is silent prayer that others cannot hear. He counsels for vocal prayers that all may be uplifted by the spirit (v. 15).

14:18 **I speak with tongues more than ye all.** Paul sounds boastful but it is probably true, given his travels and experiences. He tempers it with the next phrase, however.

²⁸ Page numbers in parentheses are from *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* as cited in Ogden and Skinner, *The New Testament*, 143.

14:19 **rather speak five words with my understanding.** Paul would rather speak a mere five words that are clear to others than 10,000 (the biggest number he can count) in a tongue that no one understands.

14:20 **in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.** Treat each other with kindness but seek to understand the gospel message as adults.

14:21 **it is written.** Quotation from Isaiah 28:11-12.

14:22-25 A valid comment about gifts and their impression on non-believers. Verse 25 is a quotation from Isaiah 45:14.

The gifts in the churches – 1 Corinthians 14:26-40

14:26 **Let all things be done unto edifying.** When the saints gathered together to worship, the first goal should be edification and uplifting each other. If someone wants to speak in tongues, just make sure someone is ready to translate, otherwise just be silent (vv. 27-28).

14:31 **that all may learn, and all may be comforted.** Beyond edification, gaining greater understanding and being comforted and uplifted are significant secondary goals.

14:32 **the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.** Or, 'the interpretation of past prophets is best done by current prophets.' Scripture is marvelous and important, but living prophets trump scripture every time.

14:33 **God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.** Peace is yet another goal of coming together as a church. Confusion should never be the result of our teaching, exhorting, and prophesying.

14:34-35 **Let your women keep silence in the churches.** This contradicts what Paul said in 1 Cor 11:2-16, but the JST greatly clarifies Paul's meaning: **JST:** "it is not permitted unto them to **speak rule**; but they are commanded to be under obedience . . . it is a shame for women to **speak rule** in church." The issue was about order and respecting the priesthood, not about superiority of one sex over another, as Paul says in his concluding remark (v. 40).

14:37-38 **the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.** Paul strongly states the correctness of what he has just taught, arguing that anyone with the spirit of prophecy will recognize its correctness and anyone who doesn't understand just demonstrates their own ignorance.

The resurrection appearances – 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

The Corinthians had some questions regarding the resurrection. Paul responded to their concerns with logic, reason, and testimony. There are several 'classic' LDS scriptures in this chapter but they were likely not given for the same purpose we use them for today. For example, verse 29 is the only scripture in the Bible mentioning baptism for the dead, but Paul was not trying to teach them about baptism for the dead. He had a different point and used that doctrine as an illustration of it. Likewise in verses 40-42, we often use these as a 'proof text' for the three degrees of glory, and that is a valid concept from these verses. However, Paul was not teaching that doctrine, but something else, and using those ideas as a proof of his point. But what are Paul's points? The Corinthians had at least two issues that Paul addressed in verses 12 (there is no resurrection) and 35 (if there is a resurrection, how is it done and what it is?). Paul's efforts were to respond to these two issues.

15:1 **I declare unto you the gospel.** The "gospel" ('good news' or 'good message') is Jesus crucified for our sins, buried, and resurrected (vv. 3-4). The witnesses of this were Cephas (Peter), the Twelve, 500 brethren, James and others, and finally Paul himself (vv. 5-8).

15:2 **keep in memory.** See the footnote which gives a more potent rendering: Paul wanted them to 'hold fast' in the minds the truths he had taught them.

15:3 **delivered unto you first of all that I also received.** In the KJV, it sounds like Paul was speaking of what he first said to them when he arrived. But the Greek *prōtois* can also mean, leading, prominent, or most important. A better translation is: "For what I received I passed on to you as of first [highest] importance" (NIV).

15:3 **according to the scriptures.** Paul found plenty of evidence in the scriptures of his day (the Old Testament) that prophets had testified of Jesus' Atonement, death, and resurrection.

15:5 **Cephas.** Peter (see 1:12).

15:6 **five hundred brethren.** There is no record of a visitation to such a large group in the gospels, so Paul's note of it here is the only account.

15:7 **he was seen of James.** This is Jesus' (half) brother, who features prominently in Acts 15 and wrote the letter of James toward the end of the NT.

15:7 **then of all the apostles.** Paul had already mentioned the Twelve in verse 5, so this reference to "all the apostles" is a good illustration of the use of that term in the generic Greek sense of a 'sent one,' someone acting in authority, much as we use the term Elder in the Church today to represent leaders and missionaries called to serve the Lord.

15:8 **as of one born out of due time.** The term used here, *ektrōmati*, refers to some kind of miscarriage or abortion. Paul is metaphorically saying that he is like an aborted child compared to others in the Twelve—he wasn't an original witness of Christ's resurrection but rather came later and only after he had persecuted the Church.

15:9 **I am the least of the apostles.** Paul was a humble apostle, laboring by the grace of God (v. 10).

15:10 **I labored more abundantly than they all.** Paul's comments often sound like bragging, and perhaps they are, but he nearly always tempers them with a secondary qualification, such as here: "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." He took no credit for his success as a missionary but gave all credit to God.

[Questions about the resurrection – 1 Corinthians 15:12-34](#)

15:12 **how say some among you that there is no resurrection.** This was the first issue raised by some of the Corinthians—they had somehow rationalized or discredited the doctrine of Jesus' resurrection and thereby of everyone else. This was surely related to the common Greek belief that a body was evil and corrupt, so why would a person want an eternal body?

15:13 **then is Christ not risen.** Paul's response to their question about resurrection was that if there was no resurrection, there was likewise no good news about Christ—his resurrection was a critical part of the message.

15:15 **we are found false witnesses.** Paul's reasons that if the message of the resurrection is false, then he and the other missionaries who taught them these things and testified of Christ are liars.

15:17 **ye are yet in your sins.** If their testimony of Christ's resurrection was false, then the message about his Atonement was likewise false, and none of them could claim that they were justified before God.

15:18 **they also which are fallen asleep.** The Corinthians clearly cared about those who had already passed away (see also v. 29) because he used that concern in his step-by-step logical argument against the notion of there being no resurrection.

15:19 **we are of all men most miserable.** This is a position that many take today—Jesus was a great teacher and if we follow his teachings, it will make our lives happier. But Paul argued that that is a shallow proposition—in fact, if that was all the message of Christ had to offer them, they were "most miserable."

15:20 **now is Christ risen from the dead.** Having shown how rejecting the notion of the resurrection completely tears apart the faith they had embraced, Paul powerfully testified that Christ was indeed resurrected. He had seen him and knew for himself it was true!

15:20 **the firstfruits of them that slept.** Among Jews and Gentiles alike, "firstfruits" were those first or best crops or animals, often offered to the Lord (or gods among the heathen) as sacrifices. Jesus was thus the best of those that are resurrected, as well as being the first one to go through that experience.

15:22 **as in Adam all die.** Paul is the only one in the New Testament to tie together the fall of Adam and the resurrection of Christ, though the concept is prevalent in the Book of Mormon (e.g., 2 Nephi 2:25; Mosiah 3:16).

15:23 **Christ's at his coming.** "Coming" is *parousia*, referring to the presence or arrival of a person. While we often refer to it as the "Second Coming," that term is never found in the NT—it is simply the coming or the return.

15:24 **Then cometh the end.** "End" is *telos*, the conclusion or final result. Paul put the resurrection in an eschatological format by teaching that the final result of God's plan was the resurrection, when Jesus would deliver up the world to the Father, having overcome all earthly kingdoms and powers.

15:25 **The last enemy . . . is death.** Continuing the theme of the ultimate triumph of God, Paul argued that to 'overcome all things' must of necessity include victory over death, otherwise there would be no one to share God's victory with.

15:27 **it is manifest that he is excepted.** The grammar is confusing here because the personal pronouns refer to both Jesus and the Father at different points. The verse could be read this way: 'For he [the Father] hath put all things under his [Jesus'] feet. But when he [the Father] saith all things are put under him [Jesus], it is manifest [clear, evident] that he [the Father] is excepted [outside; not included], which [who, meaning the Father] did put all things under him [Jesus].' Said a simpler way: 'All things are put under Jesus' feet, except the Father, who is the one who put all things under Jesus' feet.' The verse is a quotation from Psalm 8:6.

15:27 **JST** "For he saith, when it is manifest that he hath put all things under his feet, ~~But when he saith and that~~ all things are put under, ~~him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which~~ **accepted of the Father, who** did put all things under him." These changes teach a different doctrine, that once Jesus demonstrates that he has conquered all things, including death (from v. 26), then he will be fully accepted of the Father who gave him this responsibility.

15:29 **which are baptized for the dead.** Baptism for the dead was one proof of the resurrection. If Christ hadn't overcome death, why would the Corinthians bother being baptized for these people who had already passed on? No other details are known about this practice.

15:31 **JST** "I protest **unto you the resurrection of the dead; and this is my** ~~by your~~ rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord **daily, though I die daily.**" The KJV is often interpreted metaphorically as Paul speaking of the self-discipline he exercises (represented by 'dying' daily). The JST changes it to an affirmation of the resurrection.

The resurrected body – 1 Corinthians 15:35-58

15:35 **How . . . with what.** The second issue is in verse 35—how are we resurrected and what do these resurrected bodies look like? The answer is simply: 'Miraculously, like a seed growing' and 'Not like the ones we have now.' To illustrate, Paul contrasted several things (vv. 36-50), including: grain as seeds and harvest; flesh of beasts and man; the glory (brightness) of the sun, moon, and stars. The last also represents the different degrees of glory we may inherit after this life, but he was not teaching that doctrine. He was answering the question about the nature of the resurrection, and used the different degrees to show that resurrected bodies are not like earthly ones.

15:37 **thou sowest not that body that shall be.** Greek thinking held the body as corruptible and flawed, but Paul assured his listeners that he was not talking about the resurrection in terms of a mortal body like they then had, but a new and different body, just as a plant or tree is dramatically different than the seed.

15:39 **one kind of flesh of men.** Paul's next comparison was man's body to that of different kinds of animals—so in the resurrection, our new bodies would be different than what we know today.

15:40 (JST) "~~There are~~ Also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial, **and bodies telestial**; but the glory of the celestial, *is* one; and the ~~glory of the~~ terrestrial, *is* another; **and the telestial, another.**" The addition of the 'missing' kingdom aligns with the three heavenly elements—sun, moon, and stars—mentioned in verse 41. But the point is that our resurrected bodies would look, feel, and be different from our current bodies as the sun, moon, and stars differ from each other.

15:42 ***It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption.*** Paul's point in the next three verses was to contrast the condition of mortality with that of immortality; our current bodies are corruptible (they can get sick and die), dishonorable (shamed, disgraced), weak, and natural (governed by breath; subject to appetites and passions). But our resurrected bodies will be incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual (filled and governed by the Spirit of God).

15:45 ***Adam was made a living soul.*** Paul took this thought from Genesis 2:7, then compared it to Jesus who is "the last Adam" and was "made a quickening spirit." To be quickened means to come alive or give life; "spirit" is, of course, *pneuma*, which can have the meaning of spirit but also wind, breath, feeling, thinking, and more. This does not refer to the type of being Jesus was after he was resurrected. Rather, Paul was making a play on words here even as he continued his point about the nature of resurrected bodies—in Genesis 2:7, God breathed life into the man so that he became a living mortal; because of his Atonement, Jesus became that life-giving breath to our immortal, resurrected bodies. This thought continues through verse 49.

15:46 (JST) "Howbeit that ~~was not first~~ which **is natural first, and not that which** is spiritual, but ~~that which is natural, and afterward afterwards~~, that which is spiritual." The meaning is the same but easier to discover in the JST version. Other translations express it similarly, but the NJB is the best: "But first came the natural body, not the spiritual one; that came only afterwards."

15:51 ***We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.*** This and other scriptures speaking of the Second Coming make it clear that Paul and others of his day believed that the Second Coming was imminent and would likely be in their lifetime. Thus Paul said that not all of them would die but some would be "changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (vv. 51-52) as the final trumpet calling all to judgment sounds. See 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

15:54 ***Death is swallowed up in victory.*** Paul took this language from Isaiah 25:8.

15:55 ***O death, where is thy sting?*** This verse is taken loosely from Hosea 13:14.

15:58 ***steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work.*** The importance of continued faithfulness to covenants and righteous living is Paul's final word about the resurrection; works is inevitably tied to grace with the apostle to the Gentiles.

Conclusion – 1 Corinthians 16:1-24

Collection for the poor saints – 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

Paul discussed his desire to return to Corinth to collect the offering for the Jerusalem saints, as he has done in Galatia and Macedonia. He told them of his plans to come to Corinth after staying in Ephesus for a few more weeks, because of the "great door and effectual" opened to him there, then passing through Macedonia. Paul's plans changed, however, after the uproar in Ephesus and additional news from Corinth (Acts 19:24 – 20:2).

16:1 ***the collection for the saints.*** This refers to the Jerusalem church members who were suffering from not only a great famine but persecution and loss of economic opportunity because of their belief in Christ. Paul collected money from his converts in Asia (Turkey) and Greece to bring back to Jerusalem to their aid.

16:3 ***whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters.*** Or, "Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem" (NIV).

Plan to visit Corinth – 1 Corinthians 16:5-12

16:5 ***when I shall pass through Macedonia.*** Paul's original plan was to go to Corinth via Macedonia (Philippi) after Pentecost (v. 8), but after he had to leave Ephesus unexpectedly fairly early in 57 CE, he went straight to Corinth instead (Acts 19:21-22). After going to Macedonia in mid-57, he returned to Corinth for the winter (Acts 20:2; 2 Corinthians 12:14; 13:1; Romans 16:23), which he had promised to do (v. 6).

16:10 ***Timotheus.*** Timothy was sent to Corinth by Paul, probably to deliver the 1 Corinthians letter and to assess the situation. See Acts 19:22.

16:12 **Apollo**. Aquila and Priscilla's convert from Corinth who went to Ephesus, where he was at the time of this writing with Paul.

Final encouragement – 1 Corinthians 16:13-24

16:21 **with mine own hand**. Paul dictated the letter but added the last four verses by his own hand to verify the letter.

16:22 **Anathema Maran-atha**. "Anathema" is Greek for 'doomed to destruction,' meaning cursed by God. It is also used by Paul in other verses such as 1 Corinthians 12:3. "Maran-atha" is Aramaic for 'Lord, come,' rendered in Greek *erchou kurie* ('Come, Lord'); see also in Revelation 22:20.

2 Corinthians

The situation around the writing of 2 Corinthians spanned several years. After spending about eighteen months in Corinth (A.D. 50-51), Paul concluded his second mission with a quick stop in Ephesus to drop off Aquila and Priscilla, then went to Caesarea, Jerusalem, and 'home' to Syrian Antioch. In the summer of 51, he set out again across Galatia, Phrygia, and Asia, arriving in Ephesus in the fall, rejoining Aquila and Priscilla. He labored in Ephesus from 51-53. During this time he wrote his first letter to the Corinthians (lost but referenced in 1 Corinthians 5:9) and appeared to have made a quick trip to Corinth. Returning to Ephesus, he wrote his second letter, 1 Corinthians, between Passover and Pentecost, 53. In the summer, he apparently visited Corinth a second time, then moved north to Philippi in Macedonia where Luke and Titus joined him. He sent Titus back to Corinth to check on things; this was probably where he wrote the third letter, referenced in 2 Corinthians 2:4-9, sending it with Titus. He crossed over to Troas where he was to rejoin Titus, but not finding him went back to Macedonia where they linked up and Paul rejoiced in the news Titus brought of Corinth. Probably staying in Philippi again, this was when he wrote 2 Corinthians. Finally, in late 53 (perhaps December) he made his way south to Corinth for yet a third visit, staying about three months with Gaius.

The reasons for writing 2 Corinthians can be determined by Paul's comments. It appears that some, perhaps Jewish converts, to Christianity were still 'pushing' the Law of Moses. They came teaching things contrary to what Paul had taught. They criticized Paul personally, including his appearance and speech, as well as his doctrine. He was pleased from Titus' report that the saints at Corinth were not falling for these teachings, for the most part. Still, he felt compelled to defend himself against the criticism. It is thus a powerful self-portrait of Paul, giving us more personal information about him, his experiences, and his feelings, than any other letter.

Introduction – 2 Corinthians 1:1-11

1:1 **and Timothy.** Paul co-wrote this letter with his friend and companion, Timothy.

1:1 **the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia.** Though the letter was addressed specifically to the assembly of the saints at Corinth, Paul expected them to share it with the other members in the area.

1:2 **Grace be to you and peace.** It is interesting to note that a standard Greek greeting in a letter was *chairein*, meaning 'greetings.' Paul did not follow this convention but picked a close term to turn the greeting into a gospel lesson: *charis*, which means 'grace.' Then he added the typical Hebrew greeting of *shalom*, 'peace' (Arnold 3:200).

1:8 **our trouble which came to us in Asia.** Acts doesn't appear to give us the details of this event ("trouble" is singular). But it was severe enough to that Paul "despaired even of life."

1:9 **not trust in ourselves, but in God.** Paul recognized the purpose of the trial, to build faith in God.

1:10 **Who delivered us from so great a death.** This phrase picked up his resurrection theme from 1 Corinthians 15.

Ministry – 2 Corinthians 1:12 – 7:16

Paul's change of plans (1:12 – 2:13)

1:15 **I was minded to come unto you before.** Paul was in Ephesus and had intended to go to Corinth, then north to Macedonia, back to Corinth, and from there sail back to Judea.

1:17 **When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness?** 'Do you think I wasn't serious about those plans?'

1:17 **yea yea, and nay nay.** Meaning speaking opposite responses at the same time. Verse 18 has the same meaning: 'But as God is faithful, our word to you was not yes and no at the same time.'

1:20 **the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen.** God promises with a firm "yes."

1:22 **given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.** God establishes us in Christ and anoints us (verse 21), then seals us with a pledge (“earnest” in verse 22, *arrabōn* in Greek, similar to how we use ‘earnest money’ today as a down payment, a promise of full payment later) through the Spirit. Thus the gift of the Holy Ghost is the Father’s promise that he will keep his covenants.

1:23 **I call God for a record upon my soul.** The language Paul used here is reflective of Old Testament curse formulas (see Job 31:5-8 and Psalms 7:3-5 for examples). This is where a promise is made but if the person does not fulfill it, the punishment is included as part of the covenant. The Greek says that Paul calls upon God to witness the truth of his words; if they are false, God should take his life/soul.

2:1-5 When Paul sent Titus to Corinth with his letter (which we do not have, written between 1 and 2 Corinthians), it was with sorrow and anguish. He wanted to convey his love, but feared he would cause grief.

2:8 **confirm your love toward him.** This could have been the man mentioned in 1 Corinthians who had committed significant and flagrant sin (1 Corinthians 5). The apostle counseled the saints at Corinth to continue to love him, even though he was disciplined.

2:9-11 Paul wrote to see if they would choose to be obedient to God, and to encourage forgiveness so as to avoid anger or jealousy, which are tools of Satan.

2:12-13 Paul went to Troas to wait for Titus with the return message from the Corinthian saints. But Titus was somehow delayed and Paul was greatly troubled, to the point that he finally went to Macedonia to find him.

Paul’s focus on Christ in his ministry (2:14 – 6:10)

2:14 **thanks be unto God...triumph in Christ.** Finally finding Titus in Macedonia (probably Philippi or Thessalonica), Paul learned that the news from Corinth was positive, so Paul gave thanks to God, using the imagery of the Roman triumphal procession where the conquering general and army paraded through the town with their conquered treasure and prisoners.

2:15 **the savour of life.** The righteous are a sweet smell to God as they are to each other, even though to the wicked their smell is like death (a strong contrast). Triumphal processions included priests carrying incense burning in hand-held containers hanging from chains. ‘Life’ is reflected by the triumphant army; ‘death’ by the prisoners whose fate was sealed by their defeat.

2:17 **which corrupt the word of God.** This verse is better translated: ‘For we are not as many who sell for profit the word of God; but with sincerity and from God, in the sight of God, we speak of Christ.’ The people undermining Paul were practicing priestcraft, selling the gospel message for money.

3:1-3 Paul’s opponents apparently had letters of introduction, recommending them to the people of Corinth. Paul countered that the converts in Corinth are themselves Paul’s letters of recommendation, because of the message written in their hearts. “In the ultimate sense, the gospel is not written on tablets of stone or in books of scripture, but in the bodies of faithful and obedient persons; the saints are, thus, living epistles of the truth, the books of whose lives are open for all to read” (McConkie, 2:414).

3:6 **able ministers of the new testament.** ‘Adequate servants [*diakonos*; deacons] of the new covenant [*diathēkē*, ordinances, will, testament].’ Paul and the others bore testimony of the new covenant God made with Israel in Christ.

3:7 **the ministration of death, written and engraved in stones.** Paul’s language is that the Law of Moses was the “the ministry of death” (NASB) in contrast to the new covenant that brings life.

3:14 **their minds were blinded.** Using Moses wearing a veil to hide the glory of his transformation from the people (Exodus 34:33-35), Paul compared the reading of the Law, happening in synagogues all over the Roman Empire, to having a veil put over their eyes, thereby blinding them to the truth. This veil was “done away in Christ.”

3:14 **old testament** – “Old” is ‘worn out’ or ‘worse for the wear’; testament is [*diathēkē*, ordinances, will, testament]. This is a reference to the Law of Moses, fulfilled in the new covenant of Christ.

3:17 **where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty**. Obedience makes us free; sin makes us a slave to Satan. If we are worthy of the Spirit, it will turn our slavery into eternal freedom.

3:18 **beholding as in a glass**. With the veil removed, we see God’s glory as in a brass mirror (meaning, not seeing it well for now). But as we endure, we are changed into his image by the Spirit.

4:2 **renounced the hidden things of dishonesty**. Paul renounced secret lies that lead to deceit in handling the word of God. He preached truth which commends itself to every man by his conscience.

4:4 **the god of this world**. This is Satan, who strives to blind the minds of men “lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ . . . should shine unto them.”

4:5 **we preach not ourselves**. Authorized servants don’t speak of themselves, but of Jesus Christ, who shines light into their very souls.

4:7 **earthen vessels**. Because the authorized servants are humble “earthen vessels,” this light shows to others that it is the power of God, not man.

4:8-9 These verses (and some later in chapters 11 and 12) give a very personal view of some of the challenges Paul had as a result of his consecrated missionary service. “This is more than just having a positive mental attitude. Faith in God provides mental stability, knowing that he is ultimately in charge” (Ogden, 151).

4:10 **bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord**. Some see in this a reference to *stigmata*, or having marks in one’s body that are similar to those Christ received at his crucifixion. But Paul’s reference is surely metaphorical, saying that we are ‘marked’ by the Atonement so that “the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body,” referring to perhaps the example of a good Christian life or the resurrection (or both).

4:17 **exceeding and eternal weight of glory**. The challenges of this life, called “light affliction” by Paul, do not last long, and if we endure them well, we receive a glory that exceeds our expectations, and is eternal in nature.

5:1 **we have a building of God**. Shifting to a construction metaphor, Paul taught that our earthly “tabernacle” (or, tent) ended, we still have an eternal “building” with God. This building is more solid than the tent of mortality, and is not made by man but by God.

5:2 **earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house**. Because of challenges in this life, those who understand our destiny do not see death as an evil thing, but as the next step in our progression, that we might live in the wonderful heavenly house promised us by God.

5:4 **mortality might be swallowed up of life**. Not that we want to prematurely leave this life—quite the contrary. Switching metaphors, he explained that we do not want to be “unclothed” (lose our lives) in mortality, but rather recognize that our future state will be so much better.

5:5 **the earnest of the Spirit**. See 1:22 above.

5:9 **we labour...be accepted of him**. A prime example of Paul’s call to righteous living not just for the sake of being a good person but because “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” and receive our reward based on our deeds (verse 10).

Separate yourselves from sin (6:11 – 7:16)

Oxen are referenced in a couple other contexts in Paul’s writings. The first is in **2 Corinthians 6:14**, “Be ye not unequally **yoked** together with unbelievers.” Some cite this as a warning against mixed marriages with Christians not to marry non-Christians, but understanding the metaphor helps clarify that it is broader than that. Oxen were put in pairs when they worked. Some oxen worked best on the left side, some on the right. When you had the right

pair working together, they were ‘equally yoked,’ sharing the load and cooperating well. If you put two ‘left’ or two ‘right’ oxen together, they would be “unequally yoked,” causing problems getting the work done. The broader context of the verse is for believers to not work together in many contexts with non-believers, for their goals and interests would not match and they would work against each other.

Collection for Jerusalem Saints – 2 Corinthians 8:1 – 9:15

Paul’s Apostleship and Experiences – 2 Corinthians 10:1 – 12:13

Answers to accusers – 2 Corinthians 10:1-18

Defense of his calling (11:1 – 12:13)

Upcoming visit (12:14 – 13:10)

Conclusion (13:11-14)

Bibliography

Abbreviations:

- AT – Author’s translation
- BYU – BYU New Rendition
- CJB – Complete Jewish Bible
- ESV – English Standard Version
- JST – Joseph Smith Translation
- KJV – King James Version
- LXX – Septuagint (Greek Old Testament)
- NAB – New American Bible
- NASB – New American Standard Bible
- NIV – New International Version
- NJB – New Jerusalem Bible
- NLT – New Living Translation
- NRSV – New Revised Standard Version
- TNT – William Tyndale 1534 New Testament
- TW – Thomas Wayment translation

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