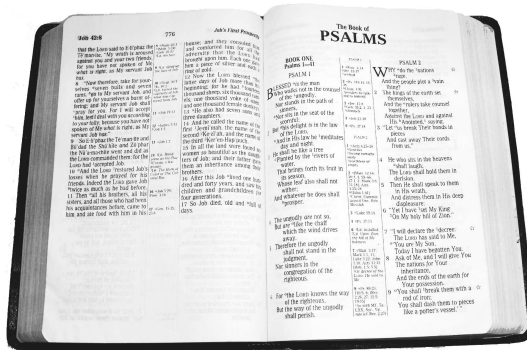


# PILGRIM BIBLE NOTES

God's holy Word simply explained and applied



## August 2016

Bible readings from 1 Corinthians chapters 11 to 16

*Her hair is given to her for a covering*

We repeat yesterday's reading because it raises the question of head-covering in worship: This can be a very controversial subject and godly people differ in their understanding of this passage of Scripture. Let us consider what these verses actually say:

- A man must not have his head covered because to do so would dishonour his head nor should he have hair so long that he looks like a woman (4, 14).
- The Greek word translated 'woman' in other verses of the New Testament is also used to refer to a wife (as translated in the English Standard Version of the Bible). A man is not the head of every woman in the church but he is the head of his wife.
- Paul is referring to a situation where a woman (wife) prays aloud or prophesies. He is not referring to women who are listening to others praying in church meetings.
- *Her hair is given to her for a covering.* Most women in Greek society grew their hair long. In a city like Corinth, a woman who walked through the streets with her hair cropped was announcing that she was 'free' from the restraints of marriage, available to any man for a price. All respectable women grew their hair long including those who were single. If a woman insists on cropping her hair short, she ought to go the whole way and be shorn or shaven. It is far better for her to grow her hair and be covered (5–6).

***Let all things be done decently and in order (14:40). Let us always seek to honour Christ in our relationships with each other, in marriage, in the home and in our church meetings.***

\* I recommend that you read Stephen Rees' very helpful article and exposition of these verses of Scripture in the Grace Baptist Church Stockport Bulletin for February 2016: ([www.gbcstockport.org.uk](http://www.gbcstockport.org.uk)).

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*You come together not for the better but for the worse*

Paul praised the Corinthians in verse 2 but he now makes the point of writing, ‘Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse’ (17). They were the worse for meeting together as a church. What were the circumstances that led to this terrible situation?

- He heard that there were divisions among them (18–19; cp. 1:10). We have already seen that they were not at peace with each other and that petty arguments and disputes were commonplace (1:11–12; 6:1–8). Verse 19 indicates that the factions among them would sift those who were genuine believers from those who were not.
- They were disorderly (20–22). The early churches often had a meal together known as ‘the Agape’ (‘Love-feast’), before coming to the Lord’s Table. This was a ‘bring and eat meal’ which provided an opportunity for those who were better off to share their food with the undernourished. At Corinth, the rich members ate their own food and some even became drunk. The ‘Love-feast’ had become a loveless feast and a terrible denial of Christian fellowship. Matthew Henry comments, ‘What was appointed to feed the soul was employed to feed their lusts and passions. What should have been a bond of amity and affection, was made an instrument of discord and disunion. The poor were deprived of the food prepared for them, and the rich turned a feast of charity into a debauch. This was a scandalous irregularity.’ How could their coming to the Lord’s Table possibly profit them when such a situation existed? They *came together not for the better but for the worse*.

Let us beware of harbouring divisive attitudes in our church, or of hurting others by thoughtless words or actions. We meet together to worship the Lord and to learn from his Word. **How dreadful if we come together not for the better but for the worse!**

*Do this in remembrance of me*

When we come to the Lord's Table, it is a solemn occasion when we remember the love of the Lord Jesus for us and his great sacrifice for our sins. The Lord Jesus commanded, '*Do this in remembrance of me*' (24–25). It is a remembrance service of his death which was a once for all sacrifice, not a re-sacrificing of Christ as some believe. When we eat the bread and drink from the Communion cup, we *proclaim the Lord's death till he comes* (26). The bread speaks of his body, broken and tortured at Calvary for us. The Lord Jesus said of the cup that we take at the communion service, '*This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins*' (23–25; Matthew 26:28; cp. Ephesians 1:7). **He wants us to remember that he paid the supreme price to save us and this should enhance our love for him and make us hate sin with all our heart.**

There is a very solemn warning in these verses about thoughtless and careless participation in the Lord's Supper: *Whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord* (27). What does it mean to be *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*? It means to despise them and to treat his death in a light manner, not discerning the Lord's body (29). The Corinthians were doing just this by their divisive and disorderly behaviour and God had visited them in judgment. Many of them were weak and sick and some had died (described as *sleep*, 30). Paul again rebuked them for their abuses at the 'Love-feast'. They were told to wait until everyone was assembled before eating (33–34; cp. verse 21). Those who were too hungry to wait for others should eat at home (34).

The bread and the cup of the Communion service must not be taken by non-Christians nor by those who are wilfully disobeying the Lord. We must prayerfully examine ourselves before we come to the Lord's Supper (28,31). **If we are entertaining sin in our lives, we must repent and be right with God before we take communion.** To ignore this is to invite divine chastisement (32).

*Concerning spiritual gifts*

One of the most controversial subjects among evangelicals today is that of spiritual gifts. Paul did not want the Corinthians to be ignorant *concerning spiritual gifts* (the Greek word 'pneumatikos' in verse 1 is 'spirituals' but it implies spiritual gifts, cp. verse 4). Ignorance concerning spiritual gifts has led to disaster in many churches today and in many a Christian life. Paul sets down some basic principles:

1. True worship is orderly (2).
2. The Holy Spirit exalts Jesus as Lord (3).
3. There are diverse gifts, ministries and activities of the Spirit (4–6).
4. Spiritual gifts are given for the profit of the church (7).
5. The Holy Spirit is sovereign in bestowing his gifts (11).
6. Every Christian is baptized by the Spirit into one body (that is the church, 13).
7. Though all members have differing functions, they belong to the one body of Christ and they need each other (14–24).
8. There must not be any schism (division) in the body and its members should care for each other (25–26).
9. God appointed apostles and prophets in the early church and gave miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (28–30).

**We must not come to the subject of spiritual gifts with closed minds, but evaluate modern claims by comparing them with Scripture.** This we shall attempt to do in the next few days. We must recognize that there are many sincere believers in the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, but they should also recognize that those who disagree with them are equally sincere in their beliefs.

Our reading will continue to be 1 Corinthians 12:1–11 for several days as we examine each of the spiritual gifts. Read the passage each day and also the additional readings and look up the references which are quoted.

*No one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed*

How can we recognize the working of the Holy Spirit among us?

1. There is order and control in true worship (cp. 14:40). We do not go out of control like idol worshippers (2). You may think it strange that Paul should remind the Corinthians of their past paganism when writing about spiritual gifts. They had *been carried away to these dumb idols*. In pagan worship the people were whipped up into an uncontrolled frenzy. Do you see the relevance? When worship is a noisy, emotional free-for-all, it is not spiritual worship and should not be mistaken for the ‘liberty of the Holy Spirit’. Some believe that they are ‘slain in the Spirit’ when they fall back to the ground as hands are laid on them. I ask, ‘Where is the control of the Spirit of God in such practices?’

2. The Holy Spirit does not exalt himself, but Christ as Lord (3). *No one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed*. Those who speak by the Holy Spirit exalt Jesus as Lord. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would *testify* of him and *glorify* him (John 15:26; 16:14). **Spirit worship is Christ-centred rather than Spirit-centred.**

3. The Holy Spirit unites God’s people (4–7). There are diverse gifts, but the same Spirit, different ministries but the same Lord Jesus, diversities of activities but the same God. If the same triune God is working through his people, how can we be divisive? The Holy Spirit brings unity, not discord (Ephesians 4:3–6). However, we cannot have unity with those who deny the faith. The Holy Spirit is *the Spirit of truth* and we must worship God *in spirit and truth* (John 4:24; 14:17; 15:26). If we are led by him, we will hate error and shun all that is false.

*The word of wisdom through the Spirit*

**(Additional reading: Acts 6:9–15)**

There is much disagreement among Christians concerning the nature of the nine spiritual gifts which are listed in verses 8 to 10. The comment on *the word of wisdom* (8) in Matthew Henry's commentary, written over 300 years ago, shows the difficulty in understanding what exactly is meant by these gifts: 'To one was given the *word of wisdom*; that is, say some, a knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel, and ability to explain them, and exact understanding of the design, nature, and doctrines of the Christian religion. Others say, an uttering of grave sentences, like Solomon's parables.'

*The word of wisdom* and *the word of knowledge* are to do with utterance (cp. 14:6). The Greek for *word* ('logos') is elsewhere translated *utterance* (1:4–5; Ephesians 6:19). These supernatural gifts were bestowed by the Holy Spirit. Daniel had the gift of wisdom (Daniel 5:11), so did Stephen (Acts 6:3,10) and Paul (2:6–7; 2 Peter 3:15). If anyone at Corinth possessed this gift, it is almost certain that it was not being used (6:5).

I do not believe that wisdom is given as a supernatural gift today in the sense that Paul and others had it, but we are encouraged to seek God for wisdom (Proverbs 4:7; James 1:5; cp. Ephesians 1:17). **Those with godly wisdom are a precious asset to any church.** Their wise counsel is desperately needed when problems and difficulties arise. If we would be wise, we need to hear the Word of God and to obey it (Matthew 7:24). We also need to know the fear of the Lord. *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom* (Proverbs 9:10).

*But the wisdom that comes from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.* (James 3:17)

*To another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit***(Additional reading: Acts 5:1–11)**

What is *'the word of knowledge'*? Bible commentators are divided in their opinions. Dr. John MacArthur suggests that it is the Spirit-given ability to understand the Bible (SPIRITUAL GIFTS, page 111) but I believe that W.A. Criswell is closer to the mark when he writes, 'This is the gift of appraisal and of judgment concerning things as they are. It is the ability to grasp the truth about a present situation: seeing, knowing, understanding, as the Holy Spirit sees, knows, and understands.' (THE BAPTISM, FILLING & GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, page 69). Criswell gives Elisha the prophet as an example of someone possessing such a gift (2 Kings 5:25–27; 6:8–10). Other examples are Nathan (2 Samuel 12:7–13) and Peter (Acts 5:3). This gift was supremely displayed in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ (eg. John 4:29). *'The word of knowledge'* was precise, the speaker knowing to whom his word was directed.

Some claim to have this gift today and then manipulate individuals and churches with their supposed knowledge which often derives from intuition. This is not a spiritual gift, nor are the revelations made by inner healing counsellors who fill in details of your past life (of which you were unaware) by a so-called *'word of knowledge'*. Many lying and slanderous statements have been made concerning people at inner healing counselling sessions.

We may help someone by wise and timely counsel, but these are not words of knowledge as supernaturally exercised by Nathan or Peter. We may not have the gift of supernatural utterance of knowledge, but we do need to add knowledge to faith (2 Peter 1:5) and to grow in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). **We do this by reading and meditating on the Word of God. It is lack of such knowledge that has led to so much confusion today. How well do you know God and his Word?**



*To another faith by the same Spirit*

(Additional reading: Hebrews 11:32–40)

We cannot be Christians without faith in God: *Without faith it is impossible to please him* (Hebrews 11:6). Faith is given by God (Romans 12:3; Ephesians 2:8) but the gift of *faith by the same Spirit* (9) is different from the faith given to every Christian. Those with this spiritual gift of faith were able to work wonders knowing that their prayer would be answered precisely in the way they desired (13:2; cp. Acts 3:6; 6:8; 13:9–12).

There have been remarkable men and women in the history of the church who have accomplished great things through their faith in God (eg. Hudson Taylor). I do not believe, however, that they had the gift of faith as described in this chapter. Some claim today that they have a ‘faith ministry’ whereby they speak a so-called ‘word of faith’ with miracles resulting. Their claims do not stand up to scrutiny. Do not be taken in by these ‘faith-word’ ministers who do not appear to exercise much faith to obtain their funds, but resort to high pressure appeals for money.

We all need faith for our spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:16; 1 Peter 5:8-9). We must *pursue* faith (1 Timothy 6:11). How? **True faith is not something that is worked up by playing on human emotions and we must not confuse feelings with faith.** There are times when we may feel at a very low spiritual ebb but God does not change and we trust in his unfailing love and power. Our faith is strengthened through hearing and reading the Word of God (cp. Romans 10:17); by leading a disciplined devotional life; by living as a Christian in this evil world; through fellowship with other believers. We can also be encouraged in our faith by reading good Christian biographies. Jesus once asked his disciples, ‘*Where is your faith?*’ (Luke 8:25). Can others see that you have a living faith in God?

*To another gifts of healings by the same Spirit*

**(Additional reading: Acts 28:1–10)**

*Gifts of healing* as found in the ministry of the apostles are not available today. There are many who claim to have *gifts of healings* but they deceive themselves and their followers. In my fourteen years in the Pentecostal movement I sat in hundreds of ‘healing meetings’ but never saw one miraculous healing. The claims of Benny Hinn and Morris Cerullo have been thoroughly investigated on television documentaries and found to be false.

Some teach that it is God’s will to heal us because physical healing is in the atonement. They use Matthew 8:16–17 and 1 John 3:8 as proof texts. It is not God’s will that every Christian should be healed of sickness here and now. We shall have new bodies as a blessing of the atonement but we must realise that we do not enjoy all the benefits of the atonement now. The redemption of the body and healing for every Christian will come after Christ returns (Romans 8:23; Philippians 3:20–21; Rev. 21:4; 22:2). Others teach that when a Christian is sick, it is because of sin or lack of faith in his life. These people are astray from Scripture. Sick Christians were not always healed in New Testament times (1 Timothy 5:23; 2 Timothy 4:20). The apostle Paul was not delivered from his own *thorn in the flesh* (2 Corinthians 12:7–10).

Does God heal today? Yes, he does according to his sovereign will. We cannot have healing on demand, however. The great 19th-century Baptist preacher C.H. Spurgeon had many answers to prayer when he prayed for sick members of his church in their homes, but he did not claim to have *gifts of healing* (see the biography of Spurgeon by Arnold Dallimore, pages 140–141; Banner of Truth Trust). We may ask God to heal us when we are ill, but we must be prepared to accept his will if he chooses not to heal us. **Happy the man or woman who has learned to be content in sickness and in health!**

*To another the working of miracles***(Additional reading: Acts 14:1–7)**

*The working of miracles* is a spiritual gift which enables a person to do supernatural works which defy human explanation. Only a few periods in the history of God's people have been marked with miraculous ministries (cp. Judges 6:12–13). Moses, Elijah and Elisha had outstanding wonder-working ministries but John the Baptist did no miracles (John 10:41). The ministry of Christ and the apostles was accompanied by mighty signs and wonders (John 2:11; 20:30–31; Acts 2:22; 13:9–12; Romans 15:19; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3–4). Miracles were not only seen in the healing of incurables and the raising of the dead, but also in bringing judgment upon hypocrites and enemies of the gospel (Acts 5:9; 13:10–12).

After the first century AD there was little mention of miracles until the rise of Roman Catholicism whose tales of miracles are highly questionable and only serve to reinforce much superstition. Many claim to work miracles today but such claims are false and do not stand up to testing. \* **Some say that we need miracles so that people will believe the gospel, but observing miracles does not always result in real faith (Matthew 11:20–24; 12:38–39; John 6:26; Acts 14:8–11).**

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever* (Hebrews 13:8), and he does work miraculously according to his own will in answering prayer. The greatest measure of faith is seen however when we are baffled by the seeming silence of Heaven and yet we still trust in the Lord. Let us remember the words of Jesus to Thomas, '*Because you have seen me you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*' (John 20:29).

\* 'Premier Christian', January 2015 carried a report of a mega charismatic church in California which makes great claims of miracles. The senior pastor says that twelve people have been raised from the dead through their ministry. Surely if such a thing really happened, it would have had massive publicity in California and been reported throughout the world.

*To another prophecy*

**(Additional reading: Acts 11:27–30; 13:1–3).**

‘Prophecy’ is God speaking (Hebrews 1:1–2; 2 Peter 1:21). T.V. Moore describes the prophetic gift as ‘a direct communication of God to the soul, either by visual, audible, or purely mental impressions, authorizing and requiring the person thus acted upon to speak authoritatively in the name of God, the things thus communicated.’ (Introduction to his COMMENTARY ON HAGGAI & MALACHI, pages 12–13; Banner of Truth Trust).

The gift of prophecy is not to be confused with the preaching of God’s Word, though the Lord does use preaching to speak to human hearts. This gift was given for the edification of the church (14:3–4). God also revealed future events to his prophets (Acts 11:28; 21:10–11). We must test prophecies and the Bible warns us against false prophets (14:29; Matthew 7:15,22). The prophetic gift is no longer necessary since we have a complete Bible in which God has revealed all we need to know.

Many so-called prophets claim to have revelations from God which deny the teaching of Scripture. They caused havoc and confusion in Bible times and at the time of the Reformation and they do so today. Others continue to make predictions for the future despite their record of failed prophecies. When they are challenged, they are unavailable for comment or they just shrug off their failures. It is not good enough to claim, as some do, that those with the gift of prophecy are liable to error in their ‘prophetic’ utterances. That is not Biblical prophecy, but a feeble excuse for their false prophecies. We must reject these people and their ministries (Deuteronomy 18:20–22). **Do you want to know the mind of God? Read your Bible!**

*Every word of God is pure; ... do not add to his words, lest he reprove you, and you be found a liar.* (Proverbs 30:5–6)

*To another discerning of spirits*

**(Additional reading: 1 Timothy 4:1–5).**

The Greek word translated ‘*discerning*’ is ‘*diakrisis*’ which means a thorough judging, evaluation or separation. Those gifted with the *discerning of spirits* had the ability to recognize and confirm whether or not words of wisdom and knowledge, tongues and prophecy, and other manifestations were of the Holy Spirit or counterfeit. The need to *judge* (discern) prophets is stressed later (14:29).

We must recognize that Satan and his evil spirits are behind all doctrine that denies the truths set forth in Scripture. False teachers are agents of the devil, whom the Lord Jesus described as the father of lies (John 8:44). They find their inspiration from *deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons* (1 Timothy 4:1). It is rather ironic that many of those who claim to be endowed with supernatural gifts of the Spirit today, are generally very weak in discernment. Many of them fellowship with heretics and others have fallen for occult practices such as inner healing and the mysticism of Richard Foster.

The spiritual gift of discernment was not given to everyone, but we are all to *test the spirits, whether they are of God*, because there are many false prophets (1 John 4:1–3). This testing is not some form of mysterious religious ritual; it comes from a careful assessment of what we are being taught, especially about the Person and Work of Christ. A man may claim to be endowed with miracle-working capabilities, but if his teaching is in error, he is a servant of Satan (Acts 13:8–10).

Plain common sense and discernment are often sadly lacking in evangelical churches. This has led to widespread confusion and weakness. **We must aim to have such a knowledge of God’s Word and to be so biblical in our thinking, that we will be able to discern both good and evil (Hebrews 5:14).**

*Different kinds of tongues ... the interpretation of tongues*

**(Additional reading: Acts 2:1–13).**

Tongues-speaking is a very controversial subject among Christians and we must be clear on the teaching of Scripture and in the way we evaluate modern claims. What is the spiritual gift of *tongues*? It is the supernatural ability to speak in another language which the speaker has not previously learned. Let us consider this gift:

1. Tongues in the Bible were properly structured languages and not just ecstatic babbling (14:21; cp. Acts 2:6–11).
2. Those who spoke in tongues were to do so in turn (14:27–28).
3. Those who spoke in tongues were not speaking to men but to God and they edified themselves (14:2–4).
4. Tongues spoken in the church were to be interpreted (14:13–14).
5. Tongues were a gift of revelation by the Holy Spirit. The word *mysterios* (14:2) in common with usage elsewhere in the New Testament (eg. Ephesians 3:3–8,9), means revelations of truths which were previously concealed to believers.
6. Tongues were a sign to unbelievers (14:22).

Most who enthuse about tongues-speaking today teach that all Christians should seek God for this gift. They believe that it is the evidence of ‘the Baptism or Filling of the Holy Spirit’ and that it is necessary for power to witness for Christ (cp. Acts 1:8). Should you seek this gift? No! True gifts of revelation have passed away since the apostles and the completion of Scripture (we will come back to this when we look at chapter 13:10–13). The detailed instructions for spiritual growth do not urge us to speak in tongues (eg. 2 Peter 1:5–8), neither is it required as a qualification for eldership (1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9). **The evidence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer is found in the fruit of the Spirit, not in gifts.** *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control* (Galatians 5:22–23).

*For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body*

The church is the body of Christ (12; Ephesians 1:22–23) and every believer belongs to that body: *For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body*. Every believer has been baptized by the Holy Spirit and *we have all been made to drink into one Spirit* (13). It is not biblical to suggest that we can be a Christian without having the Holy Spirit dwell within us. *If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his* (Romans 8:9).

The Lord Jesus promised that all who believed in him would receive the Holy Spirit after he had risen and ascended to heaven (*was glorified* – John 7:37–39). The disciples were commanded to wait in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high according to the promise of God the Father (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4–8). They were at the beginning of a new dispensation when the Holy Spirit would dwell in every believer (Ezekiel 36:26–27; Acts 2:38; Romans 8:9–11, 15–16; 1 Corinthians 12:13). The Holy Spirit was given to the church at Pentecost. There is no need to tarry or to agonize for the coming of the Holy Spirit into our lives. Every believer has the Holy Spirit.

Every Christian has been adopted into the family of God and has the Spirit of God's Son in his heart (John 1:12; Galatians 4:6). The Holy Spirit is called *the Spirit of adoption* (Romans 8:15). **If we believe that the Holy Spirit indwells some believers and not others we fail to understand the teaching of the Bible concerning adoption.** The Corinthians had many faults but the apostle could still write, *'Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?'* (3:16). Let us thank God for the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

*Dear Lord, and shall thy Spirit rest  
In such a wretched heart as mine?  
Unworthy dwelling! glorious Guest!  
Favour astonishing, divine!*

(Anne Steele)

*That there should be no schism in the body*

A healthy body is one whose members are all functioning in harmony with each other. A healthy church is the same. How can we play our part in building up our own local church?

- We must learn to be content with the gifts that God has given to us. One of the problems at Corinth was that many wanted to speak in tongues when God had not given this gift to all of them (cp. 14:18–19). They failed to see that they should have been using the gifts that God had given to them. In the human body, a foot cannot do what the hand does nor can the ear function as an eye (14–17). Let us learn to be content with what gifts God has given us for the present and let us use them for the good of our church. How sad it is that many Christians have opted out of any meaningful involvement in their local church. They are not using their God-given gifts. Are you burying your talents? Remember what Jesus said about the man who did that (Matthew 25:18,25–26).

- Every member is important (17–27). I do not believe that God still gives supernatural gifts such as the ability to work miracles, to prophesy or speak in tongues. He sovereignly gives us other gifts and abilities, however (18). We must be realistic in assessing our own gifts and we must use them under the direction of our church leadership (cp. Romans 12:3–8). We all need each other and even the least significant member is important (21–22). Notice that the ministry of *helps* is put before tongues (28). We must recognise that all parts of the church body are important: *There should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another* (25–26). **A caring, united church is a healthy church!**

We should earnestly desire greater gifts (31), not for our own benefit but for the glory of God. There is however, a more excellent way which is open to every Christian. We shall be considering this tomorrow.



*The greatest of these is love*

Paul stresses that it is far more important to show the *more excellent way* of love in our lives than to display outstanding spiritual gifts. What is the gift of tongues without love? It is a hollow, metallic clanging that irritates rather than blesses (1). If I had the gift of prophecy and understood all mysteries that God has revealed, if I were able to utter a word of knowledge in any situation where it was required, if I had the faith to work wonders, but did not have love, *I am nothing* (2). I may be self-sacrificing in giving even to the extent of laying down my own life, but if I do not have love, *it profits me nothing* (3).

Memorise verses 4 to 7 and meditate on the characteristics of love described in them. Think of the Lord Jesus Christ and how he showed the kind of love described in these verses. The Corinthian church would have been so different if they had been more loving to each other instead of being so divisive or disorderly. Examine your own heart. Are you patient and kind? Is the love of Christ seen in your life? Are you envious, boasting, proud, rude, selfish or easily provoked? Do you think evil, storing up grudges and bitterness against those who have hurt you? **If any of these unpleasant things (sins!) are present in your life, where is the love of Christ?**

Love bears all things, trusts, hopes and perseveres (7). *Love never fails*; it outlasts gifts of prophecy, tongues or knowledge (8). Faith, hope and love are all vital, *but the greatest of these is love* (13). We are to *pursue love* (14:1). Why do we find this so difficult and unattractive? Because it costs us dearly to love others and to deny ourselves, and so often, we are not willing to pay that price!

*Love is kind and suffers long;  
Love is meek, and thinks no wrong;  
Love, than death itself more strong:  
Therefore give us love.*

(Christopher Wordsworth)

*When that which is perfect has come*

The Corinthians were *zealous for spiritual gifts* (14:12) but the apostle shows that the *more excellent way* of love is of greater importance. Prophecies will fail (be rendered useless), tongues will cease, knowledge (the gift of *the word of knowledge*) will vanish away, but *love never fails* (8). These gifts of direct revelation will pass away, but when? The answer lies in verse 10: *But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part* (words of knowledge, prophesying, 9) *will be done away*.

What does the apostle mean by *that which is perfect*? Does he mean the second coming of Christ as some suggest? If that is so, the implication is that supernatural gifts of revelation are still available and we should seek to have them. The Greek adjective for *perfect* ('teleios') signifies completion, eg. *perfect* (complete) *will of God* (Romans 12:2). *Let patience have its perfect* (complete) *work* (James 1:4). Paul is writing about a time when revelation would be complete, when gifts of utterance (knowledge, prophecies and tongues), would be no longer necessary. 'Teleios' also signifies maturity (11; cp. 14:20).

The second coming of Christ is not described as the coming of *that which is perfect* anywhere else in the New Testament. Paul is quite unambiguous when he refers to the second coming of Christ in writing to the Corinthians (eg. 11:26; 15:23). Supernatural and revelatory gifts of the Spirit were very rare toward the close of the apostolic age. Some allege that this was because of sin and unbelief in the church, but this ignores the fact that the sinful Corinthian church enjoyed these supernatural gifts. We must recognise that God sovereignly withdrew these gifts and that attempts to revive them since the apostolic age have led to all kinds of error and excess. **Should we lament the passing of these spectacular gifts of the Spirit? No, the perfect has come! We have the prophetic word made more sure** (the Scriptures; 2 Peter 1:19–20). Let us grow in our knowledge of that Word as we read and study the Bible and meditate on it.

*Let it be for the edification of the church*

The Corinthians appeared to esteem the gift of tongues above all other spiritual gifts when it was actually inferior to prophesying (1). Tongues did not bring a blessing to anyone except the speaker because no one understood him unless the tongues were interpreted. A word of prophecy could be understood; it *speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men* and it *edifies the church* (1–5). Musical instruments must be played tunefully if they are to be appreciated; the trumpet must be clear when sounding a battle call; when we speak, we must seek to be understood or our words are wasted (6–9). Paul urges the Corinthians, ‘*Since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church*’ (12). The person who spoke in a tongue was to pray that he might interpret that language (13).

What does it mean to pray or sing with the spirit, and to pray or sing with understanding (15)? Peter Naylor comments, ‘The apostle refers to intelligent prayers ascending from a worshipper’s human spirit, prayers verbalized in a tongue recognized by nobody. The point is that because the worshipper does not intend others to hear there is no problem. But the speaker understands. The man praying in a tongue does not bid farewell to his wits. There is no question of some sort of pseudo-ecstatic, jumbled utterance meaning nothing to the worshipper and therefore signifying nothing to the God to whom prayer is made ... To pray with the ‘spirit’ means to address prayer to God without being heard by others. To pray with the ‘mind’ or intellect is to address God publicly with the needs of others in mind’ (COMMENTARY ON 1 CORINTHIANS, page 291).

The apostle had also been endowed by the Holy Spirit with the supernatural ability to speak with tongues more than any of the Corinthians. He preferred, however, to speak five words with his understanding than ten thousand words in a tongue, so that he might be able to teach others (17–19). ***The edification of the church was always his aim.***

*In understanding be mature*

We must be like children by lacking in malice, *but in understanding be mature* (20). Paul writes of the dual role for tongues-speaking:

- Tongues were a sign to unbelievers. Tongues had been a sign of judgment on Israel of old (21–22; cp. Isaiah 28:9–14). They had refused the plain teaching of the prophets and would hear the stammering lips of foreign invaders.
- If tongues were to edify and benefit the church, they must be interpreted. If Corinthian church services were chaotic and all were speaking in tongues, visiting enquirers and unbelievers would think that they were mad (23). We must not obscure the gospel by foolish behaviour or by speaking so that no one can understand us.

The Corinthians were all anxious to exercise their gifts in church worship meetings. Paul reminded them, ‘*Let all things be done for edification*’ (26). God does not give spiritual gifts for self-gratification, but for edification of the church. No more than two or three were to speak in tongues, and each of those in turn, with one interpreter. If there were no one to interpret, no one was to speak in tongues.

Prophecies were also restricted to two or three and these were to be judged (27–29). It would be foolish to listen to those who claimed to have ‘a word from the Lord’ without testing the things that they say. It is also important to notice that *the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets* (32). If they are out of control, they are not speaking by the Holy Spirit. A lack of order and control is more typical of pagan worship than Christian worship (12:2; see notes for 5 August).

The prophetic gift is not available today because revelation is complete. **The preaching of God’s Word must be central in our worship and evangelism.** This is the way to understanding and maturity! *In understanding be mature.* How can we worship God if we do not understand who he is? How can the unbeliever respond to the gospel if it is not made clear to his understanding?

*Let all things be done decently and in order*

It appears that some of the women at Corinth were not taking a submissive role in public worship. In what way are women to *keep silent in the churches* (34)? Does this mean that women cannot sing the praises of God and that they must remain in total silence? This view can hardly be correct because women prayed and prophesied in the Corinthian church (11:5). I believe that it means that women must not be given a leadership role in worship. They are not to have a public teaching role nor have authority over men or be appointed as elders (cp. 1 Timothy 2:12). We must not ignore this command which is based on *the law* (a reference to Genesis 3:16 on which the authority of men is grounded).

The apostle is not suggesting for a moment that women are inferior to men; in relation to Christ, he stresses their equality (Galatians 3:28). There is a difference in function, however. The failure to recognise this difference has led to much confusion in the realm of ‘women’s ministry’ in the life of the church. Paul recognised the value of the faithful service of faithful women (Romans 16:1–6; Philippians 4:2–3). Our churches would hardly survive without the work of godly women.

Paul rebuked the Corinthians for their arrogance in behaving as if the Word of God had first come from them. The apostle’s words were the Lord’s commandments and must be heeded. We dare not say, ‘It is only Paul’s opinion’ (34–37). The apostle cautioned the Corinthians against an over-reaction to his teaching. They were not to forbid tongues-speaking and they were to *desire earnestly to prophesy* (39). These gifts have now passed away, however, and we should not seek them. The history of the church shows that chaos and doctrinal confusion come from seeking these gifts. *Let all things be done for edification ... Let all things be done decently and in order* (26,40). **If we keep these two rules before us, we will be spared many problems in our churches.**

*The gospel which I preached to you*

There were some at Corinth who denied the resurrection of the dead (12) and Paul now writes to correct their error. This great chapter is rich in encouragement and it directs our attention to the resurrection of Christ and of believers. The apostle reminded the Corinthians of *the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received* (1). What is the gospel? *That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures* (3–4). If we deny these essential truths, we are not Christians and our faith is futile (2,14,17).

The truths of the substitutionary death of Christ for sinners, his burial, and resurrection have been attacked since apostolic times. Some still believe that Jesus did not die at Calvary. They say that he was taken down from the cross in an unconscious state and that he later recovered. Would the disciples have suffered persecution for something they knew to be false?

The death and resurrection of Christ rest on a solid foundation:

- God planned the death and resurrection of Christ before he made the world (Acts 2:23; 1 Peter 1:20–21; Revelation 13:8) and it was prophesied in the Old Testament (*according to the Scriptures*; 3–4; eg. Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12). The Lord Jesus explained this after his resurrection (Luke 24:25–27; 44–46) and the apostles preached the same thing (eg. Acts 2:22–36; 17:1–3).
- Paul stresses that the risen Christ *was seen* on different occasions by different people, including a gathering of 500 (5–7). He then speaks of his own experience, for he too had seen the risen Christ on the Damascus road (8; cp. Acts 9:1–6).

We have not seen the risen Christ, but we know that he is alive because his Word testifies to the fact. We also have fellowship with him and he is precious to us (1 Peter 2:7). **Do you know the risen Christ?**

*But by the grace of God I am what I am*

Paul was the last of the apostles to see the risen Lord Jesus. He was going to Damascus to persecute the church when Christ appeared to him and his life was transformed (8–10). He thought of the amazing grace of God (the word *grace* is mentioned three times in verse 10). ‘Grace’ means undeserved favour and Paul could hardly mention the word *gospel* without the thought of *grace* (1, 10; cp. Acts 20:24). God’s grace is:

- Sovereign – ‘He bestows his favour on whom he pleases, often on the most unlikely and unworthy’ (A.W. Pink – THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD page 26; published by Banner of Truth). Paul argues this in Romans 9:10–23.
- Free – God’s grace cannot be earned by good works (Ephesians 2:7–10). Any attempt to gain salvation by works is to *set aside the grace of God* (Galatians 2:21).

What are the effects of the grace of God in our lives?

- A changed life. Paul recognized that he owed his salvation to God. *But by the grace of God I am what I am* (10).
- Great love and gratitude to the Lord for his mercy so freely lavished upon us (1 Peter 1:8).
- A praising heart (Psalm 103:1–14; Ephesians 1:3–7; 2:7; Colossians 3:16).
- Humility. The apostle was mightily used by God but he was very humble. He had not known the Lord Jesus like the other apostles, but he had been saved suddenly and like a baby untimely born (8). He was painfully aware of his past way of life as a persecutor of the church of God and he considered himself *the least of the apostles* (9; cp. Ephesians 3:8).
- Zeal to serve God. The grace of God toward Paul was not in vain and he laboured more than the rest of the apostles. He did not boast of his own achievements, however, because he owed everything to the grace of God (10).

**What evidence is there of the grace of God in your life?**

*If Christ is not risen*

Paul wanted the Corinthians to think through the implications of the teaching of those in the church who were denying the resurrection of the dead. *Now if Christ is preached that he has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?* (12).

Notice the number of times the word ‘*if*’ appears in verses 13 to 19:

- *If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen* (13).
- *If Christ is not risen*, gospel preaching is pointless because it would no longer be good news (14).
- *If Christ is not risen*, our faith is in vain (14). If Jesus did not conquer death, we pray in vain. How can we trust in a dead Saviour? We may admire his example and his teaching, but even that teaching would be flawed and unreliable if his prophecies concerning his own resurrection were not true (Luke 18:31–34).
- *If Christ is not risen*, we are still in our sins (17). If the Lord Jesus did not rise, he is no more than a man and his death is meaningless. He cannot save us from our sins which includes the redemption of the body if he himself did not rise from the dead.
- *If Christ is not risen*, there is no hope for the future; those who have died have perished and we are the most pitiable of all men (18–19).

The Jewish Sadducees also said that there is no resurrection (Matthew 22:23). Their dogma was shattered when the Lord Jesus rose bodily from the grave. Do you see the importance of Christ’s resurrection? Do you see why we cannot have Christian fellowship with churches or individuals who deny this vital truth? They have a miserable, futile religion which is not Christianity and we will have none of it. **Jesus is alive. Let us rejoice in him!**



*As in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive*

We are reminded that death is our great enemy every time we attend a funeral. Death is no respecter of persons claiming rich and poor, young and old. How did death come into the world? It came through the sin of Adam (21–22; cp. Romans 5:12). As the head and representative of the human race Adam, by his sin, brought death upon all men (Genesis 3). The Lord Jesus is described as *the last Adam* (45) and as the representative of all his people, he brings life and victory over death. *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive* (22).

The question may be asked, ‘If Christ has conquered death for us, why do Christians still die and their bodies decay in the grave?’ Paul’s answer is, ‘*But each one in his own order: Christ the first-fruits, afterwards those who are Christ’s at his coming*’ (23). The first-fruits of the harvest foreshadowed the full harvest (Leviticus 23:10). By his resurrection the Lord Jesus is the first-fruits of God’s harvest which will be at his second coming. In that glorious day, he shall gather all his people home to himself. He will have completed his work as our Redeemer, destroying death, our last enemy. He will put an end to all kingdoms and authorities opposed to himself and will deliver the kingdom to God the Father and will be subject to him (24–28). This does not mean that Christ is inferior to God the Father in his Person. The ‘subordination’ of the Son to the Father is in his office as Redeemer and King but not in his Person. He was appointed to this work by God the Father (28), but he is still coequal with the Father (cp. Philippians 2:6–11). When all his enemies are subdued God will be *all in all*. Peter Naylor comments, ‘All is at an end. The programme is finished. ... Nothing can disturb the glory of the new creation. Never again will the Son be commissioned to seek and to save, to bleed and to die, to reign and to judge’ (COMMENTARY ON 1 CORINTHIANS, page 337).

**Are you ‘in Christ’? Only those who are ‘in Christ’ will share in this glorious resurrection and be gathered home to God.**

*Awake to righteousness*

Verse 29 is one of the most difficult New Testament verses to understand. It appears that the Corinthians were familiar with an erroneous practice of proxy baptism on behalf of the dead, possibly for converts who had died before they had been baptized. The apostle did not sanction such a practice, but rather points out their inconsistency in doing such a thing if there were no resurrection of the dead. What would be the point of it all? This false practice was probably one of those things which the apostle was to set in order on his next visit to Corinth (11:34). We must never use uncertain or obscure verses to establish doctrine. The Lord Jesus commanded that we baptize those who are disciples, but not on behalf of the dead (Matthew 28:19).

Paul reminded the Corinthians of his exposure to danger and life-threatening situations for the sake of Christ. The conflict at Ephesus (from where he wrote this letter) was such that he describes the opponents of the gospel as ‘beasts’. What advantage was all this to him if there was no resurrection (30–32)? If the dead do not rise, suffering is meaningless to the Christian because there would be no glory to follow (Romans 8:18). Paul quotes Isaiah 22:13 to show the consequences of such a view: *Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die* (32). What a dreadful outlook on life; living for pleasure now because there is no bright tomorrow. Many around us live just like that, as if there were no judgment, heaven or hell.

The apostle quotes the Greek poet Menander (whose writings would have been familiar to the Corinthians) to warn of the danger of keeping company with those who live for pleasure with no thought for tomorrow: *‘Evil company corrupts good habits’* (33). **We must watch the company we keep (cp. Psalm 1:1) because we are so easily infected with worldly ways of thinking and can easily fall into spiritual slumber.** We are called to be *awake to righteousness* (34). If we love the Lord, we will not want to live like those who do not know him.

*How are the dead raised up?*

Paul has asserted that there is a resurrection of the body and he now deals with two questions that may arise in our minds:

1. How does God form new bodies from those which have rotted and returned to dust? How about those who have been eaten by animals, or burned up in flames? How can there be a resurrection when there is no body to raise? *How are the dead raised up?* (35). Such questions are understandable but nothing is impossible with God! If he made Adam from dust, can he not raise us from dust to give us immortal bodies? A seed that is sown in the ground must die to its life as a seed in order to produce new life (36). It then becomes something entirely different – a plant. Just as there are different kinds of plants and different kinds of celestial bodies (stars and planets), there is a natural body and a spiritual body. The natural body is sown in corruption (see Genesis 3:19), in dishonour, and in weakness; it is raised in incorruption, glory and power as a spiritual body (37–44).

2. What will the resurrection body be like? (35b). It will not be flesh and blood subject to normal bodily needs such as food and rest. It will be in the image of Christ (49–50; cp. Philippians 3:20–21; 1 John 3:1–3). The risen Christ ate food but he did not need it for survival nor was he limited by space or material barriers. We shall be the same when our frail bodies are raised from the dust. Our present bodies were not made for heaven and could not endure its blazing glory and majesty. Our new bodies will be free from pain, suffering and death. There will be no imperfections in them and glory will be revealed in us (Romans 8:18). Just as the disciples recognized the risen Saviour, so we will be able to recognize each other in heaven.

Heaven is not some fuzzy state of nirvana where the soul is absorbed into some universal consciousness, where personality ceases to exist. **The future is wonderful beyond our wildest imagination — Glorious bodies and a place prepared for us where we shall see our wonderful Saviour who loved us and gave himself for us!**

*Death is swallowed up in victory*

We have already seen that death came into the world through the sin of Adam (see notes for 24 August). Death is a deadly enemy which reigns over every human being (Romans 5:14); it is a tyrant which swallows up thousands every hour throughout the world. Death has many servants to feed its appetite – disease, plagues, famine, wars, violence, etc. When Jesus rose from the grave, he burst open the prison-house of death and when he comes again, death, which swallows up every human will itself be swallowed up. This is the mystery, the truth which God has revealed (51): *Death is swallowed up in victory* (54; cp. Isaiah 25:8). The risen Saviour has *the keys of Hades and of death* (Rev. 1:18).

The Bible describes death as *sleep* for the believer (20,51). When a Christian dies, his soul (spirit) goes to be with Christ (Acts 7:59–60; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; Hebrews 12:23). When the Lord Jesus returns, there will be a great blast of a trumpet and *the dead will be raised incorruptible*. The dust of those bodies will be transformed. Those who are alive will also be changed; this transformation will take place in a split second (51–52). Our new bodies will be like Christ's resurrection body. They will not suffer sickness, pain, nor death. Death will be swallowed up and its deadly poisonous sting removed. Is it any wonder that we have a song of victory (55–57)?

We have a glorious hope. Let us not grow weary or discouraged in the work of God, but be *steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*. We serve the risen, almighty, sovereign Saviour! He will be with us until the end of the age when he comes again (Matthew 28:20). Have you grown disheartened in your Christian service? Remember, the Lord never promised that it will be easy. **Let us persevere because our labour for him is not in vain (58).**

*Now concerning the collection*

Our thoughts are now directed from the great truths of the resurrection of Christ and of all believers to the subject of the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem (1; cp. Romans 15:26). The phrase, '*Now concerning the collection ...*' indicates that this was one of the matters on which the Corinthians had requested guidance (cp. 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1). Many in the Jerusalem church were poverty-stricken, probably through periods of famine or persecution from unbelieving Jews (cp. Acts 11:28).

These verses lay down some of the principles for Christian giving (there are more in 2 Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9):

- The ministry of giving is for every Christian (*each*; 2). We cannot opt out of this obligation which God lays upon all believers.
- We are to give as we are able (*as he may prosper* – 2; cp. Acts 11:29). A true indication of our love for the Lord and his people is not found in the amount we give, but in the amount we hold back to spend on ourselves.
- We must give regularly and systematically. *On the first day of the week* indicates that Sunday was the regular day of worship for Christians rather than the Jewish Sabbath (cp. Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10).
- Christian leaders must be above reproach in money matters (cp. Titus 1:7). The churches were expected to donate substantial sums to Paul's appeal and he invited them to send representatives to go with him to Jerusalem with their gifts (3–4).

*Always abounding in the work of the Lord* (15:58) involves giving generously to that work. **Are you a cheerful giver?**

*We lose what on ourselves we spend  
We have as treasure without end  
Whatever, Lord, to thee we lend,  
Who givest all.*

(Christopher Wordsworth)

*A great and effective door has opened unto me*

It is almost impossible to reason with those who are convinced that the Lord has told them to do a certain thing or to go to a certain place. They have real problems if their schemes come to nothing or their plans are overturned. Paul did not plan with such a brash attitude and he recognized that the Lord may have different ideas to his own (*it may be ... if the Lord permits; 5–7*).

Paul urged the Corinthians not to despise Timothy if he came to them (10). He did not enjoy good health (cp. 1 Timothy 4:12; 5:23) and he seems to have been a little timid. We do not know why Apollos was unwilling to return to Corinth with the brethren (12). It may have been that he was uneasy with the party spirit at Corinth and did not want to give any encouragement to those who hero-worshipped him (cp. 1:11–12).

The apostle planned to stay in Ephesus\* until Pentecost. He writes, *‘For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries’* (8–9). The gospel had made a great impact in that city (Acts 19) but there was great opposition; this did not make Paul run away from Ephesus, however. When God opens doors, we can be sure that Satan will be active in opposing us. You, too, may encounter opposition at work for your stand as a Christian but you must not take that as a sign that you should leave your job; the Lord may wish you to remain. Remember, tribulation builds up Christian character (Romans 5:3–5). You must also persevere in the work that God has given you to do in the church, whatever the difficulties. **Churches are not built up overnight and we must not abandon our work for the Lord when the going is tough!**

\* The footnote in the Authorised Version says that this letter to the Corinthians was written from Philippi. I believe that the translators of the AV were mistaken and that Paul wrote from Ephesus (8; cp. 15:32). Philippi is in Europe, not Asia (19)

*Let all that you do be done with love*

Paul approached the end of his letter with some very challenging words in verses 13 and 14. The Corinthian church was being damaged by disorder and division. They needed to *watch* so that they would be on their guard against any work of Satan among them. They needed to stand firm in the faith against false teachers, especially against those who were denying the resurrection of Christ. Many of them were immature and Paul urges, *be brave* (the Greek means ‘play the man’). When Christian men lack godly manliness and courage, they do not glorify God! If we want to *be strong* in the Lord we must exercise ourselves in godliness (1 Timothy 4:6–7); we must be disciplined and build ourselves up through God’s word.

Paul had already written a great passage on love (chapter 13) and now he urges, ‘*Let all that you do be done with love*’ (14). The great problem at Corinth was a lack of love between some of the members of the church and so they quarrelled and had their cliques. The new commandment of the Lord Jesus is that we love one another (John 13:34). Love makes obedience to God a delight (John 14:15); it covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8); it brings joy in working for God in fellowship with others in the church; it makes all the difference to our Christian life and to the life of the church.

Read verses 13 and 14 several times and meditate upon them. They are God’s Word to us as well as to the Corinthians. **We live in confusing and evil days. Be on your guard, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong, and let the love of God be seen in all that you do.**

*Love is the golden chain that binds  
The happy souls above  
And he’s an heir of heaven that finds  
His bosom glow with love.*

(Joseph Swain)

*They have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints*

The Corinthian church was beset by problems but within it were to be found some choice and godly Christians. Paul mentions some of them here. Stephanus and his household were the first to turn to Christ in Corinth (*the first-fruits of Achaia*) and were among the few there who had been baptized by Paul (1:16). They were examples of those who did everything with love (14). The apostle writes of them, '*They have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints*' (15). Their home was a place where discouraged, weary, burdened and troubled believers could find a warm welcome and much encouragement. What a great ministry and the whole family were involved! We need to recognize that a Christian home can be greatly used by God.

Paul was a spiritual giant, but he needed the ministry of other believers. He wrote of Stephanus, Fortunatus and Achaicus, '*For they have refreshed my spirit and yours.*' We should gladly submit to such people who have earned our respect (16–18). Paul had first met Aquila and Priscilla at Corinth, but they were now with him in Ephesus where they had opened their home for church meetings (19; cp. Acts 18:1–3, 18–19). We should be warm in our greetings to each other and let us always be ready to welcome strangers. A kiss is a common form of greeting in some countries and in such cases it is permissible but if we do kiss, we must be sure that it is *a holy kiss* (20). There is a warning for those who do not love the Lord: *If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed* (22). **Do you love the Lord? If you do not, beware! You will be accursed rather than blessed. Why opt for such a wretched state? Oh, turn now to Christ and repent of your sin. He will then accept you!**

Some of the Corinthians had caused Paul much heartache, but he ends his letter by assuring them of his love for them, '*My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen*' (24).