

# **GROWING HEALTHY CHURCHES**

**Selected Studies in 1 Corinthians**



Study Guide  
(Leader's Edition)

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## CONTENTS

PART 1:	CALLED TO BE HOLY PEOPLE (1:1-9) .....	1
PART 2:	CORINTHIAN CLIQUES (1:10-17) .....	4
PART 3:	CORINTHIAN CARNALITY (3:1-15).....	8
PART 4:	CORINTHIAN MEAT EATERS (8:1-13).....	12
PART 5:	CORINTHIAN SELF-RELIANCE (10:1-13) .....	15
PART 6:	CORINTHIAN MOTIVES (12:31-13:13) .....	19
PART 7:	CORINTHIAN HOPE (15:1-34) .....	23
PART 8:	CORINTHIAN HOPE, CONT'D (15:35-58) .....	27

## PART 1: CALLED TO BE HOLY PEOPLE (1:1-9)

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### A. BACKGROUND

- This was a letter written by the apostle Paul to the church in the city of Corinth. Corinth was a major Greek port city boasting thousands of people.
- The church at Corinth included some Jews (1 Cor 7:18-19), but it was largely composed of Gentile converts (1 Cor 6:9-11, 1 Cor 8:7, 1 Cor 12:2).
- As such, it had several classes of people similar to any major United States city today.
- As heirs of Greek culture, philosophers and people of eloquence were held in the highest regard.
- They had a strong appreciation for learning and wisdom.
- As a large city, (perhaps some 100,000 people) sin was rampant and temptations for worldly pleasures were strong.
- As a port city, large groups of diverse people were in close proximity creating conflict in values.
- They let the worldly Corinthian culture determine the values of the church.

### B. THE TEXT (1:1-9 NIV)

*"Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, <sup>2</sup> To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ-- their Lord and ours: <sup>3</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. <sup>5</sup> For in him you have been enriched in every way-- with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge-- <sup>6</sup> God thus confirming our*

*testimony about Christ among you. <sup>7</sup> Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. <sup>8</sup> He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Cor. 1:1-9 NIV)*

- Notice how Paul states his authority for what he is about to say.
- One has to speak authoritatively in order to have his word taken seriously.
- God's purpose for them as a church
- Before he addresses their internal issues he carefully and lovingly reminds them that they belong to God and have been set apart for his purposes.
- They are privileged and to be different than those who are living for themselves, or for those living according to the world's values.
- In stating these things, he is indirectly pointing out how they have a common unity which is centered in Christ Jesus.

### C. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What aspect of Paul's apostleship makes it legitimate, and not a self-imposed title (1:1)?**
  - He was "called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God" (1 Cor. 1:1 NIV)
- 2. What does the phrase "in Christ" mean to you (1:2)?**
  - It means we are justified (2 Cor. 5:21)
- 3. What does the title "Lord" mean when referring to Jesus Christ and how does it affect the way you manage your life (1:2)?**
- 4. If believers are in Christ, and under his grace, why should they be concerned about sin in their lives (1:2-4)?**
  - Sin creates a barrier between God and themselves (Gen. 3:8; Isa. 59:2)
- 5. In what ways had the Corinthians been enriched by God (1:5)?**
  - "...all kinds of speech and with all knowledge" means believers are able to speak when God wants them to because of his enablement (MacArthur, The MacArthur Bible Commentary 1564)
- 6. Who will make us blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus (1:8; 1 Thess. 5:23-24)?**
  - 1 Thess. 5:23-24.
- 7. In what ways do believers experience fellowship (NIV) with Jesus Christ (1:9)?**
  - It means talking to him in prayer.
  - It means listening to him through his Word
  - It means to suffer for him (Phil. 1:29)
- 8. Paul is about to address several serious problems in the Corinthian church, starting with divisions within the church. Why do you suppose he began this letter so positively?**
  - He wanted to show their commonality in Christ and how they have all been blessed as fellow Christians.

## D. KEY POINTS

### 1. In Christ you are sanctified (1:1-4)

- You are sanctified (Gr. *hagiazō*) in Christ—dedicated to God (1:2)
- You are called to be saints (Gr. *hagios*), set aside for God's purposes (1:2)
- You have been given grace and peace (1:3-4)

### 2. In Christ you have been enriched (1:5-8)

- You have been enriched with all kinds of speech -- the ability to speak for God when he wants you to (1:5)
- You have been enriched with knowledge (divine enlightenment) -- insights you need to speak effectively for God (1:5)
- You have been given the grace gifts (*charisma; charismata*) special abilities for building up each other) ---use them until Jesus returns (1:7a)
- God will keep you (strengthen you inwardly) to the end (1:8)

### 3. In Christ you are strong (1:8-9)

- God will strengthen you inwardly until Jesus returns (1:8-9)
- "...for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose."  
(Phil. 2:13 NIV)

## PART 2: CORINTHIAN CLIQUES (1:10-17)

### TRUE OR FALSE?

Cliques are normal in every church and are therefore to be considered normal.



### A. BACKGROUND

The church in Corinth was experiencing many harmful cultural influences. These included:

- Client/patron practices. It was common in Corinth for those (patrons) who gave gifts and protection to people (clients) to expect loyalties back from their clients. The Corinthian Christians may have viewed themselves as "clients" of "patrons" such as Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and Christ.<sup>1</sup>
- Political differences. The Corinthian culture placed a very high emphasis on political struggles. The Christians may have lined up under the person they felt had the greater political power.
- Intellectual differences. The Corinthian culture placed a very high emphasis on intellect. The Corinthian Christians, attempting to be intellectual, may have developed differences between Paul and Apollos's emphasis on grace and freedom from the law vs. Cephas and Christ's emphasis on the continuity of the law.
- Misguided loyalties. Given the Corinthian culture's emphasis on patron/client relationships it is likely that the Corinthian Christians were devoting their allegiance to the one who either led them to faith in Christ, or to the one who baptized them.
  - Crispus: Was a leader of the synagogue in Corinth, Greece (Acts 18:8). He was a Jewish religious leader but became a believer in Jesus after Paul shared the gospel with the Corinthians. Crispus' conversion happened during Paul's second missionary journey.
  - Gaius: Paul baptized a man named Gaius in Corinth—one of only two he baptized there (1 Corinthians 1:14). Later, toward the end of his third missionary journey, when

Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans, he was staying in Gaius's home, and Gaius included his greetings to the church in Rome (Romans 16:23).

- Stephanas: a member of the church at Corinth, whose family were among those the apostle had baptized (1 Corinthians 1:16; 16:15, 17). He may have been the "jailer of Philippi" (cp. Acts 16:33).

## B. THE TEXT (10:10-17 NIV)

*I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. 11 My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. 12 What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." 13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14 I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. 16 (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel-- not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. 1 Cor. 1:10-17 NIV)*

### 1. They were not centered a common purpose (1:10)

- Divisions<sup>2</sup> or cliques, had formed in the Corinthian church.
- "United in mind and thought." Paul was saying they are to be united around the same purpose; e.g., having the same view of God, and man, and sin, and salvation.

### 2. They were not centered on common priorities (1:11)

- Chloe was as a Christian woman living in Corinth and was an acquaintance of the apostle Paul. Because Paul simply refers to her by her first name, Chloe, it is likely she was well known to the believers of that area, possibly one in whose house Christians met.
- Quarrels usually develop when people have different priorities.
- Funny Examples:
  - Some church members left the church because one church member hid the vacuum cleaner from them. It resulted in a major fight and split.
  - A dispute in the church because the Lord's Supper had cran/grape juice instead of grape juice.
  - Fight over whether or not to build a children's playground or to use the land for a cemetery
  - A church argument and vote to decide if a clock in the worship center should be removed.
  - An argument on whether the church should allow deviled eggs at the church meal.
  - These "divisions" (cliques) were resulting from quarrels but fortunately had not yet split off into other separate church congregations.



### 3. They were not centered on the right person (1:12-17)

- Divisions<sup>3</sup> had formed around four individuals Paul, Apollos, Cephas and Christ.
- Paul visited the Corinthian church three times spending more time there than in any other church, except for his time in Ephesus. His group was most likely Gentiles since Paul stressed the end of the Law.
- Apollos: Was an evangelist, apologist, church leader, and friend of the apostle Paul. He was a Jew from Alexandria, Egypt, described as "eloquent," "mighty in the Scriptures," "fervent in the spirit" and "instructed in the way of the Lord" (Acts 18:24). In A.D. 54, Apollos traveled through Achaia and eventually found his way to Corinth (Acts 19:1), where he "watered" where Paul had "sown" (1 Corinthians 3:6). This is important to remember when studying the first Epistle to Corinth. Apollos, with his natural gifts, had attracted a following among the church in Corinth, but simple admiration was growing into divisiveness. Apollo probably attracted the "intellectuals" since Alexandria placed an emphasis on this as did Corinth.
- Cephas: the Aramaic equivalent of the Greek name Πέτρος (*Peter*), surname of the apostle Peter.
- Christ, the heart of the gospel. The Greek suggests not that they felt they belonged to Christ but that Christ belonged to them.<sup>4</sup>

## C. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### 1. How would define the word clique?

- Definition: a clique is a small group of people, with shared interests, who do not allow others to join them.

### 2. Are cliques generally good or harmful?

- We cannot help but gravitate toward people who make us feel comfortable and accepted, so shouldn't cliques be healthy for a church?
- Didn't Jesus belong to a clique (his disciples, or Peter, James & John)?
- What about the various church denominations...are they cliques too?

### 3. Why are cliques harmful to the church body?

- Cliques are exclusive, not inclusive.
- Cliques can harm the synergy of the church body.
- Cliques send the wrong message to unbelievers.
- Cliques can lead to church splits.
- Cliques dishonor the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

## D. KEY POINTS

### 1. A healthy church is united in its biblical purposes.

- Purpose No. 1: Ministry to God, through worship by singing and praising him (Col. 3:16b; Ephesians 1:12; 5:19).
- Purpose No 2: Ministry to believers, through service and nurturing of others (Eph. 4:12; Col. 1:28).

- Purpose No. 3: Ministry to the world through evangelism and acts of mercy (Matt. 28:19; Luke 6:35-36).
2. A healthy church is *united* in its biblical priorities. It balances its time, talents, and treasures around the church's three purposes.
  3. A healthy church is *united* in one person. It is centered on Jesus Christ.

## PART 3: CORINTHIAN CARNALITY (3:1-15)

### TRUE OR FALSE?

Christians don't need to be concerned about their carnality because they know their sins are forgiven and they will make it to heaven someday.



### A. BACKGROUND

In this passage Paul was saying that because the Corinthian Christians were letting worldly things dominate their lives, they were not mature enough for "strong food." They were allowing worldly thinking (the lower side of their nature) to dominate their outlook and their actions (Barclay 1975, 30). See 1 John 2:15-16.

### B. THE TEXT (3:1-15 NIV)

*"Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly-- mere infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. 3 You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?*

*4 For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere human beings? 5 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe-- as the Lord has assigned to each his task. 6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. 7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. 9 For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.*

*10 By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. 14 If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved-- even though only as one escaping through the flames." (1 Cor. 3:1-15 NIV)*

- (3:1) "Worldly" (σάρκινος, dominated by the flesh, carnal) -their thinking had not been transformed by the Spirit (πνευματικός, spiritual person) but remained merely human (Vang 2014, 41). See Romans 12:2.
- (3:2) "Solid food" (βρώμα) -meaning mature doctrine. <sup>5</sup>
- (3:3) "Jealousy and quarreling"- The Corinthian culture excelled in competition and rivalries between the followers of various orators (sophists). They spent much of their time ridiculing rival teachers which resulted in jealousy and strife. This same cultural practice crept into the Corinthian church (Vang 2014, 41).
- (3:3) "acting like mere humans." They living like the rest of humanity.
- (3:4) "Mere humans" (ἄνθρωπος)-means acting like people of the world (NIV).
- (3:4-7) Client/patron practices. It was common in Corinth for those (patrons) who gave gifts and protection to people (clients) to expect loyalties back from their clients. The Corinthian Christians may have viewed themselves as "clients" of "patrons" such as Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and Christ.<sup>6</sup>
- See Acts 2:42-3:1 "the Lord added to their number..."
- (3:8-11) Christ-centered ministries will be rewarded according to the quality of their work (cp. 2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 25:14-30, parable of the talents).
- (3:12-14) Non-Christ centered ministries such as building a church around people, like Paul and Apollos, will not be rewarded because of their wrong motives (This principle also follows Paul's statements about the judgment seat of Christ in 2 Corinthians 5:10).
- (3:15) "...the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved-- even though only as one escaping through the flames." As if to make sure no one misunderstands his metaphor. Paul underscores he is not giving a soteriological (salvation) statement. Salvation is obtained by God's grace alone, not by works.

## C. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### 1. What did Paul mean by the metaphors of milk and solid food (3:2)?

- Milk = basic teachings, simplistic, not causing one to think deeper; e.g. Book of Romans.
- Strong food = Deeper teachings about God, salvation, Jesus, justification, sanctification, etc.

### 2. What were the indicators that the Corinthian Christians were still spiritual infants (3:3)?

- There was jealousy and quarreling in the church.

### 3. Why did Paul have to give "milk" instead of "solid food" to these Christians (3:1)?

→ Because they were not ready for it. They would not be interested in the deeper teachings of the gospel.

**4. What misconceptions did the Corinthian Christians have about Paul and Apollos (3:4-5)?**

→ They viewed them as their superiors.

→ Most likely they viewed them as "patrons" based on the patron-client culture in Corinth.

**5. How do the terms "planted," "watered" and "grow" relate to church growth? (3:6-7)**

→ Only God gives the increase.

→ Some people are frustrated because they want to water when God has called them to plant, or they want to plant when God has called them to water. Others are frustrated because they want to make the increase happen, when only God can do that.<sup>7</sup>

→ How does Acts 2:46-47 relate to church growth?

**6. What techniques could a church use for growth other than depending on God (3:7)?**

→ Elaborate marketing techniques used by corporations today.

**7. What will happen to those who serve the Lord (3:8-9)?**

→ They will be rewarded (cp. 2 Cor. 5:10)

**8. In what ways can churches demonstrate that Christ is its foundation? What foundations, other than Christ, could a church build on (3:10-11)?**

→ By making Jesus Christ its center, its main focus.

→ Other "foundations" could be church leaders (e.g. Paul, Apollos) or legalisms.

**9. How does the quality of one's work relate to their reward? (3:12-14; see also 2 Corinthians 5:10).**

→ The better the quality, the greater the reward.

→ This quality is most likely based on one's motives and what they have been given (see Luke 12:48b and 1 Peter 4:11).

**10. Is this verse saying that Christians can lose their salvation (3:15)?**

→ No, they will be saved but they may lose their reward.

## D. KEY POINTS

**1. A church body needs "solid food." (3:1-3)**

→ Paul describes a church body which was not maturing because it was focused on worldly things. Therefore, he could not feed them strong spiritual teachings because they were not ready for them. Churches which are fed only with "milk" will also remain weak and will fail to grow, making them vulnerable to carnality.

**2. Only God can make a church body grow (3:4-7).**

→ Paul then makes it clear that only God can make a church body grow. Relying only on contemporary marketing techniques, programs, or strong personalities for church growth will not work. Only God can make a church grow just as he did in the early church.

**3. A healthy church body builds on the foundation of Christ (3:8-15).**

→ Finally, Paul emphasizes the need for the church body to build on the foundation of Jesus Christ. Building a church body based cultural demands, instead of Jesus Christ, will seriously weaken the church and will eventually dissolve its identity as Christ's body.

## PART 4: CORINTHIAN MEAT EATERS (8:1-13)

### TRUE OR FALSE?

Christians are not responsible for the welfare of other Christians.



### A. BACKGROUND

Idol meat could be eaten in the courtyard of an idol's temple (8:10), or in the marketplace (10:25), or at domestic dinner parties (10:27). Often, idol meat would be the only meat available. Meat was expensive in the first century, if it could be found at all, and was not the daily food of most Corinthians. Enjoying meat in a private home was therefore a luxury enjoyed by the wealthy.<sup>8</sup>

However, after conversion, many believers resented eating such food bought at idol markets because it reminded them of their previous pagan lives.<sup>9</sup>

- Note: Three types of idolatry: 1) A physical idol or icon that represented some deity in the Greek Pantheon (e.g. Artemis, Poseidon, Zeus) ...avatars; 2) A superhero of Greek mythology (Hercules, Achilles, Cupid); 3) Demonic spirits that acted through physical idols (cf. 1 Cor. 10:20).<sup>10</sup>
- In the pagan culture of Corinth people commonly presented an animal for sacrifice at the temple of the god from which they sought favors.
- The pagan priests then took that meat to market to sell, and some pagan temples even had their own buffet.<sup>11</sup>

### B. THE TEXT (8:1-13 NIV)

*"Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that "We all possess knowledge." But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. <sup>2</sup> Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know<sup>3</sup> But whoever loves God is known by God. <sup>4</sup> So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that "An idol is nothing at all in the world" and that "There is no God but one." <sup>5</sup> For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), <sup>6</sup> yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came*

and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

<sup>7</sup> But not everyone possesses this knowledge. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. <sup>8</sup> But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.

<sup>9</sup> Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak. <sup>10</sup> For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol's temple, won't that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? <sup>11</sup> So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. <sup>12</sup> When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. <sup>13</sup> Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall." (1 Cor 8:1-13 NIV)

## C. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### 1. What type of food is Paul addressing in verses 1-2?

→ Food sacrificed to idols.

### 2. Who are the two kinds of believers in this passage? (see verses 4-8).

→ Those who have a mature spiritual understanding (8:4-6).

→ Those who have a weak, developing conscience (8:7-8).

### 3. What did Paul mean in verse 8 about food (meat) in itself?

→ Eating or not eating meat, by itself, does not prove anything in relation to God.

### 4. However, what caution does give Paul verses 9-13 to mature believers about eating food offered to idols when seen by a brother or sister in the Lord who has a weak conscience?

→ Don't eat the meat because it may become a stumbling block to the weaker believer who still associates it with idolatry.

### 5. How serious should mature believers take this caution? (See verse 12).

→ Very serious because it becomes a "sin against Christ" (it is a serious offense against the Lord himself).

### 6. According to 1 Corinthians 8:13 Christians are not to eat meat offered to idols; yet in 1 Corinthians 10:27 it is OK to eat meat. So, which is correct? What is the difference?

→ (8:13) "Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again."

→ (10:27) "If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience."

### 7. A missionary is invited to the home of a family in Northern Ghana where they are offered meat of an animal that had been sacrificed to a pagan god hoping that it would bring fertility to the land. "Should the missionary eat that meat?"<sup>12</sup>

### 8. How does 1 Cor. 10:28 apply to this missionary's situation?



→ If the unbeliever announces that the food had been sacrificed to idols don't eat because it will give the unbeliever a false understanding that Christians are OK with offering food to idols.

**9. What activities might a Christian do, that are not forbidden in the Bible, but might cause a brother or sister in the Lord to stumble?**

→ Drinking wine, going to movies, playing cards, dancing, farmers who raise tobacco, keeping an ancestral chart at home that used to be a shrine for veneration, using beads to guide prayers, naming children for traditional gods, worshipping on Saturday, etc.<sup>13</sup>

**10. Why do churches use grape juice instead of wine during the Lord's Supper? Didn't Jesus use wine at the last supper?**

→ Churches do not want to tempt a person with a weak conscience, or possibly an alcoholic, to stumble.

**11. What underlying principle does Paul give in 1 Corinthians 8:1, about this issue?**

→ Principle: Love trumps knowledge in such situations.

## D. KEY POINTS

**1. What is safe for one person may be unsafe for another.**

- We may be strong enough to resist some temptation, but it may well be that someone else is not.
- Something may be no temptation to us, but it may be a very strong temptation to someone else.
- Therefore, in considering whether we will or will not do anything, we must think not only of its effect on us, but of its effect on others as well

**2. Nothing ought to be judged solely from the point of view of knowledge; everything ought to be judged from the point of view of love.**

- The advanced Corinthians knew better than to regard an idol as anything...their knowledge had taken them far past that.
- But the danger in having a more mature spiritual knowledge is the tendency to feel superior and to look down unsympathetically on the person who has a weak conscience.
- It may well be that for the sake of the weaker brother or sister we must refrain from doing and saying certain legitimate things.

**3. No man has any right to indulge in a pleasure or to demand a liberty which may be a stumbling block to someone else.<sup>14</sup>**

- **So...**am I Responsible for the actions of other Christians?
- Yes, when my actions cause a fellow believer to stumble!

## PART 5: CORINTHIAN SELF-RELIANCE (10:1-13)

### TRUE OR FALSE?

Christians become less vulnerable to temptations as they mature spiritually.



### A. BACKGROUND

In this passage, Paul speaks primarily to the more mature ("strong") Corinthian Christians who saw no problem eating idol meat in the city's pagan temples. To them it was simply meat since they knew that "gods" and mythological heroes don't actually exist. Being overconfident they saw no connection between eating idol meat and idolatry. Paul previously cautioned them about how this might cause a weaker Christian to stumble (1 Cor. 8:1-13). Now he cautions these "stronger" self-reliant Christians about feeling immune to temptations while eating in these temples.

Despite conflicts within the group, the Christians at Corinth enjoyed friendly relations with outsiders. Believers dined with nonbelievers (1 Cor 10:27), and outsiders might have dropped in to a Christian meeting (1 Cor 14:24-25). Christianity at Corinth thus does not appear to have been particularly sectarian or subversive. Indeed, the church at Corinth was much too cozy with the dominant culture for Paul's liking. By engaging in litigation, patronizing prostitutes, and participating in pagan cultic meals, the Corinthians were conforming to the behavior patterns of the larger society. In this first letter, Paul is urging them to foster a sense of being at odds with the world.<sup>15</sup>

Even though most Christians in Corinth were Gentiles, Paul uses the experience of Israel's wandering in the wilderness to show how God's people can test his limit by trying to get away with as much as they could. Corinthian Christians were doing the same thing by patronizing the pagan temples, thinking they were strong enough to resist all associated temptations.

### B. THE TEXT (10:1-13 NLT)

" I don't want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters, about our ancestors in the wilderness long ago. All of them were guided by a cloud that moved ahead of them, and all of them walked through the sea on dry ground. <sup>2</sup> In the cloud and in the sea, all of them were baptized as followers of Moses. <sup>3</sup> All of them ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup> and all of them drank the same spiritual water. For they drank from the spiritual rock that traveled with them, and that rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup> Yet God was not pleased with most of them, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

<sup>6</sup> These things happened as a warning to us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did, <sup>7</sup> or worship idols as some of them did. As the Scriptures say, "The people celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged in pagan revelry." <sup>8</sup> And we must not engage in sexual immorality as some of them did, causing 23,000 of them to die in one day. <sup>9</sup> Nor should we put Christ to the test, as some of them did and then died from snakebites. <sup>10</sup> And don't grumble as some of them did, and then were destroyed by the angel of death.

<sup>11</sup> These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age. <sup>12</sup> If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall. <sup>13</sup> The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure." (1 Cor. 10:1-13 NLT)

## C. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### 1. In what ways were the Israelites blessed while they were wandering in the wilderness (10:1-4)?

- God blessed and protected them by:
  - Guiding them by a cloud by day (Exod. 13:21, and a pillar of fire at night).
  - Taking them through the (Red) sea to escape the Egyptians (Exod. 14:26-31).
  - Giving them spiritual food (manna/quail, Exod. 16:15; 17:6).
  - Giving them spiritual water from a rock "petra" (symbolizing Christ the "rock, Num. 20:11; Matt. 16:18).
- Amazing facts about the amazing Exodus:
  - FOOD: Feeding 2 or 3 million people required a lot of food. 1500 tons of food each day. Equivalent two freight trains, each at least a mile long, would be required!
  - FIREWOOD: take 4000 tons of wood and a few more freight trains, each a mile long, just for one day
  - WATER: If they only had enough to drink and wash a few dishes, it would take 11,000,000 gallons each day and a freight train with tank cars, 1800 miles long, just to bring water!
  - RED SEA: Two million people would be up to 800 miles long and would require 35 days and nights to get through the Red Sea. The Red Sea, 3 miles wide so that they could walk 5000 abreast to get over in one night.
  - CAMP GROUNDS NEEDED: Two-thirds the size of the state of Rhode Island was required, or a total of 750 square miles long.

### 2. Yet, what was God's view of most of them (10:5)?

→ Yet God was not pleased with most of them.

**3. What four failures did the Israelites experience during this period in the wilderness that might also be temptations to the Corinthian Christians? (10:7-10)**

- They indulged in pagan revelry (idolatry) 10:7.
- They indulged in sexual immorality (10:8).
- They put Christ to the test (10:9) ...e.g., "It's all right, God will forgive me."
- They grumbled and complained even though God blessed and protected them (10:10).

**4. Why did Paul cite these failures of the ancient Israelites (10:6, 11-12)?**

- They were given as examples and warnings (NLT) for us—Christians who live at the end of the age.
- They were given to tell us if we think we are strong (mature) then we are to be careful not to fall.

**5. What other individuals in the OT enjoyed a privileged relationship with the Lord, yet they too failed? (See 2 Samuel 11:2-4 and 1 Kings 11:9-10)**

- 2 Sam. 11:2-4...King David/Bathsheba,
- 1 Kings 11:9-10...King Solomon/worshipped other gods.

**6. What three things does Paul tell us about temptations (10:13)?**

- (1) Everyone faces temptations.
- (2) We will not be tempted more than what we can stand.
- (3) God will show us the way out so we can endure them.

**7. When are we the most vulnerable to temptation?**

→ H-A-L-T (hungry, angry, lonely, tired)

**8. List at least three ways this passage can be applied to Christians today.**

Scripture verses	How they can be applied today

**D. KEY POINTS**

1. We must not take God's love for granted by testing his limits (10:5, 9).
2. Even as mature Christians we can crave evil things and have "idols" (10:6-7).

3. We are most vulnerable to temptations when we think we are the least vulnerable (10:12).
4. We are to trust God and not self-reliance when facing temptations (10:13).

## PART 6: CORINTHIAN MOTIVES (12:31-13:13)

### TRUE OR FALSE?

When serving the Lord, motives aren't important as long as you are sincere.



### A. BACKGROUND

In Chapters 12 and 14 Paul explains how God has equipped the church with spiritual gifts (Gk. *charismata*). These are special abilities appointed by God for the purpose of building up the church body.<sup>16</sup>

Between these two chapters Paul inserts an excursus on love explaining how these gifts are ineffective unless they are motivated by love. Apparently, the Corinthian Christians were enamored with spiritual gifts, particularly the gift of tongues so Paul reminds them even the gift of tongues is meaningless without love.<sup>17</sup>

Apparently, some believed that those able to speak in tongues or prophecy were more spiritual than the others. This may have created yet another reason for division in the church, along with jealousy or a sense of inferiority. The motives for exercising these spiritual gifts by the Corinthian Christians was apparently self-promotion and self-glorification instead of love. They were doing the right things for the wrong reasons.

The word "love can have five different meanings:

- **Hesed**: A loyal, steadfast love (e.g. Ruth). It has the idea of faithful love in action and often in the OT refers to God's lovingkindness expressed in His covenant relationship with Israel.
- **Eros**: An ancient Greek term, is erotic love. It refers to sexual love. This is a love that arises from passion, infatuation, and sexual attraction. The word is never used in the NT.
- **Storgē**: Ancient Greek term. refers to family love, the kind of love there is between a parent and child, or between family members in general. The word is never used in the

NT apart from two compound words...astorgos meaning "without love, devoid of affection, without affection to kindred, hard-hearted, unfeeling (heartless; Rom. 1:31; 2 Tim. 3:3) and *philostorgos* (brotherly love; Rom. 12:10).

- **Phileō/Philadelphia**: a brotherly friendship and affection, especially for a fellow believer. It is the love of deep friendship and partnership. It might be described as the highest love of which man, without God's help, is capable of.<sup>18</sup> *Philos* and its verb form, *phileō* are used 55 times in the New Testament
- **Agapē**: A self-giving love that gives without demanding or expecting re-payment.<sup>19</sup> It is love so great that it can be given to the unlovable or unappealing. It is love that loves even when it is rejected. It signifies the true and pure love of God to his dear Son (John 17:26), to his people (Gal. 6:10), and to a depraved humanity that is in rebellion against him (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). It is a love that disciplines and corrects harmful indulgence and misbehavior, no matter what the cost to self.<sup>20</sup> It is not only a love of affection and feelings; it is a love of the will and commitment. Simply stated, agape love is a sacrificial love, that is, a love that cares, gives, and works for another person's good...no matter how the person may respond or treat one. Agape love can be experienced only if a person knows God personally...only if a person has received the love of God, that is, Christ Jesus, into his heart and life. Agapē and its verb form *agapaō* are used 253 times in the New Testament.

## B. THE TEXT (12:31-13:13 ESV)

*"But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way. <sup>1</sup> If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing."*

*"Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."*

*"Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. <sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup> but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. <sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. <sup>12</sup> For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. <sup>13</sup> So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."*

- (13:2) The Corinthians were enamored with spiritual gifts, particularly the gift of tongues and prophecy. Paul reminds them even the gift of tongues is meaningless without love.
- Without love, a person may speak with the gift of tongues, but it is as meaningless as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. It is nothing but empty noise without love. (Guzik)
- (13:7) Believes all things. Paul is not saying love is gullible. The person who "believes all things" is the opposite of a skeptic, whose basic approach to life is to doubt or



disbelieve. The one who loves with agape love is optimistic, and is disposed to believe the best rather than the worst about people.

- (13:7) Hopes all things. The person who loves with agape love doesn't give up easily on the other person. He/she can recognize that there is a problem, but hopes to resolve the problem. He/she maintains an optimistic, positive attitude rather than a pessimistic, negative attitude.
- (13:8) Love never ends: Love will never come to an end, but the need for spiritual gifts is temporary.
- (13:12) When Paul says that we see in a mirror dimly, he means that the spiritual awareness and insights that we enjoy now are but a dim reflection of the awareness and insights that we will experience in the age to come. In that new age, we will not see dimly, as in the reflection from a bad mirror, but face to face.
- (13:12) Mirror. In Paul's day, however, the mirrors were usually made of metal, and the reflections that people would see in such mirrors would be much less helpful. You might encounter a mirror of that sort in a public restroom at a rest stop along an Interstate highway.

### C. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **What happens if one has the gift of tongues but not love? (13:1)**
  - That person is like a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal (nothing but empty noise).
2. **Though one may have the most highly esteemed gifts, what is God's estimate of him when he is without agape love? (13:2).**
  - That person's actions are nothing/worthless. Cp. 2 Corinthians 5:10 "bad/evil" → motive?
3. **How much would a person gain by making the most extreme sacrifices without agape love?**
  - That person would gain nothing.
4. **In the table below, list the characteristics of agape love described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7:**

What love is	What love is not
→ It is patient	→ It does not envy
→ It is kind	→ It does not boast
→ It rejoices with the truth	→ It is not arrogant
→ It bears all things	→ It is not rude
→ It believes all things	→ It does not insist on its own way
→ It hopes all things	→ It is not irritable
→ It endures all things	→ It is not resentful
	→ It does not rejoice at wrongdoings

5. **Because people live so far apart these days, are Christians limited to only *phileo* love or can they actually express *agape* love? If so, in what ways?**
6. **Describe a situation in your life where another person expressed *phileo* love to you.**



7. Describe a situation in your life, where another person (other than Jesus) expressed agape love to you.
8. This chapter describes addresses the subjects of spiritual gifts and agape love. Which one has an “expiration date” and which one does not. What does this tell you?

#### D. KEY POINTS

1. The greatest expression of *agape* love was God's gift of his Son, Jesus Christ.
2. In order to express genuine agape love, one must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
3. The underlying motive for all spiritual gifts (and all good works) is to be agape love if they are to be meaningful in God's eyes.

## PART 7: CORINTHIAN HOPE (15:1-34)

### True or False?

Most people are aware that life continues after death.



### A. BACKGROUND

The Christians in Corinth were denying not the resurrection of Jesus Christ but the resurrection of the body. Paul was explaining to them that if a man denied the resurrection of the physical body, he thereby denied the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and nullified the entire Christian message of its truth and the Christian life of its reality.<sup>21</sup> However, because Jesus physically rose from the dead, they too will be physically resurrected. That is the message of hope Paul gives to the Corinthian Christians in this chapter.<sup>22</sup>

- Corinthian Christians did not understand the resurrection.
- Greek influences: Dualism/Gnosticism, spirit is good, body is bad. Body not resurrected.
- Sadducees: Taught there was no resurrection.
- Many in the OT believe everyone went to the Sheol (OT), a gray land beneath the world where the dead lived a shadowy existence, without strength, without light, cut off from living humans and God.<sup>23</sup>

### B. THE TEXT (15:1-34 NAU)

"Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, <sup>2</sup> by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

<sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup> After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; <sup>7</sup> then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; <sup>8</sup> and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. <sup>9</sup> For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. <sup>11</sup> Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed."

"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? <sup>13</sup> But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; <sup>14</sup> and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. <sup>15</sup> Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. <sup>16</sup> For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; <sup>17</sup> and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup> Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup> If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

<sup>20</sup> But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. <sup>21</sup> For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, <sup>24</sup> then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy that will be abolished is death. <sup>27</sup> For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. <sup>28</sup> When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all. <sup>29</sup> Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them? <sup>30</sup> Why are we also in danger every hour? <sup>31</sup> I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. <sup>32</sup> If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, **LET US EAT AND DRINK, FOR TOMORROW WE DIE**. <sup>33</sup> Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals." <sup>34</sup> Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame." (1 Cor. 15:12-34 NAU)

→ 15:2 "by which also you are saved." This is in the Greek present tense meaning you are being saved, not you have been saved. It is not something which is ever completed in this world.<sup>24</sup>The ESV states it correctly, "'you are being saved" (1 Cor. 15:2 ESV)." It won't be completed until you are physically glorified at Jesus' return.

→ 15:3 "according to the Scriptures." The gospel message was not something Paul made up. It was the good news foretold in the OT.

- 15:5-8. Appeared to Cephas (who probably feeling remorseful) for denying his association with Jesus). Appeared to James, half-brother of Jesus, 500 brethren, then to Paul (Saul).
- 15:6, 18, 51. "Fallen asleep." Paul is not teaching the idea of soul sleep, that when a person dies that his soul "sleeps" until the time of the future resurrection. In this condition, the person is not aware or conscious. The Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh-day Adventists hold to this doctrine as do most annihilationalists (those who say that the wicked are judged and don't exist anymore). "Fallen asleep" is simply a euphemism for being dead. Like saying that person "passed."
- 15:20, 23 "First fruits" were brought to the Feast of Passover and offered up → they were to be the first and best fruits of the harvest...grown in specially prepared soil. It was a sign of the harvest to come and the resurrection of Jesus was a sign of the resurrection of all believers.
- 15:24 "...when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father." God gave to Jesus a task to do...to defeat sin and death and to liberate man. The day will come when task will be fully and finally accomplished.
- 15:29 "Baptism of the dead" (Mormon teaching, vicarious baptism/proxy baptism). Often debated but probably means those who get themselves baptized out of respect for and affection for the dead. Barclay writes that this practice of baptizing for the dead most likely sprang out of a superstitious view of baptism. The doctrine of baptism was most likely not clearly understood at this time.<sup>25</sup> The practice was forbidden by the early Church. The phrase baptism for the dead is used only in this verse of the Bible. "Those" (v. 29) is in the third person, plural, not you (second person). Paul is effectively those other people who practice baptism for the dead.

## C. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What is the "gospel," and why is it called the "good news" (15:1)?**
  - The "good news" is that God has provided salvation through Jesus Christ, sins can be forgiven, and one can have eternal life with God.
- 2. What three great events are basic to the gospel (15: 3, 4)?**
  - Christ died for our sins.
  - He was buried.
  - He was physically raised on the third day.
- 3. What is the largest number of believers who saw the risen Lord at one time (15:6)?**
  - More than 500 brethren at one time.
- 4. Why do you suppose Paul described Jesus' appearance to him "as to one untimely born" (15:8)?**
  - Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6) when Paul (Saul), was pursuing Christians in order to destroy them.
  - This took place after Jesus' ascension to heaven (AD 31/33).
- 5. According to Paul, if Christ had never risen from the dead, what would be the consequences (15:13-19)?**
  - Paul's preaching would be in vain.
  - People's faith would be in vain.

- People would still be in their sins.
- People who die would perish.
- There would be no hope.

**6. What additional insights does 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 John 3:2 bring to 15:20-23?**

- Those who died in Christ will be physically resurrected when Jesus returns
- Next, those who are alive when Jesus returns will also be taken up in the clouds to be with him forever.

**7. How does knowing you will be physically resurrected; affect the way you live now?**

- It can give you hope when it seems there is no hope in the world.
- It can give you a very positive, realistic outlook on life.
- It can give immense joy in knowing that salvation involves the whole person, body, soul/spirit.

## **D. KEY POINTS**

1. Jesus Christ's physical resurrection from the dead is the greatest climactic point in salvation history.
2. The irrefutable proof of Jesus Christ's physical resurrection lies with both the number of witnesses who saw him and the duration of his post-resurrection appearances.<sup>26</sup>
3. Because Jesus Christ physically rose from the dead, all believers will also rise physically from the dead.
4. This is what gave hope to the Corinthian Christians, and to all believers.

## PART 8: CORINTHIAN HOPE, CONT'D (15:35-58)

### TRUE OR FALSE?

Salvation is completed at the time a person accepts Jesus Christ as Savior.



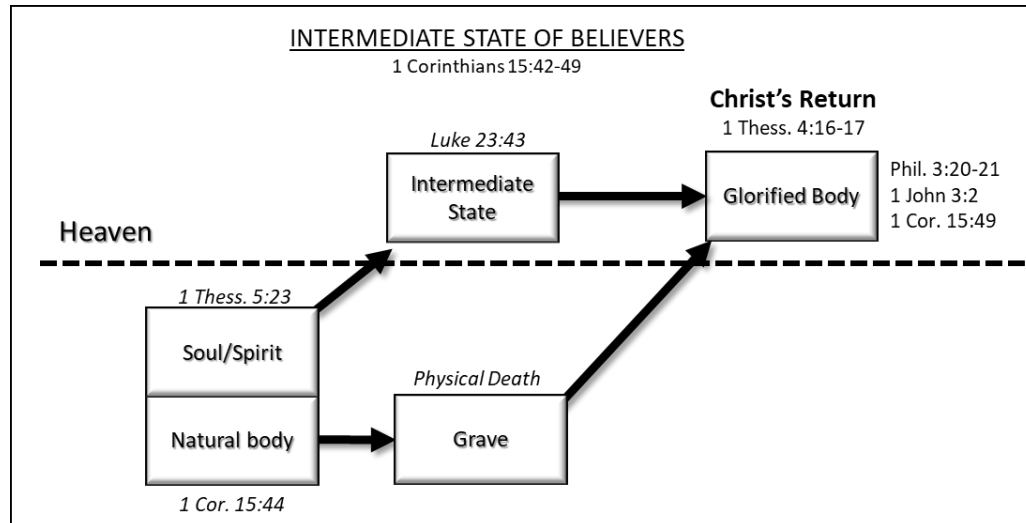
### A. BACKGROUND

Paul now moves from the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ to the bodily resurrection of believers, and contrasts the earthly body with the heavenly body.

Paul's intent was to refute harmful cultural influences in the Corinthian church about the resurrection. These included:

1. Greek dualism/Gnosticism: Only the spirit of a person is resurrected, the body dies and is not eternal.
2. Sadducean influences: There is no resurrection. When a person dies, they cease to exist.
3. Sheol misconceptions: An OT misconception by many who believed that everyone who dies goes to Sheol (a gray land beneath the world where the dead lived a shadowy existence, without strength, without light, cut off from living humans and God).<sup>27</sup>

Since those believers who die will not have resurrected bodies until Jesus Christ returns, they will be in what some call an intermediate state—bodies which are incomplete and in an unnatural state.<sup>28</sup> Scripture does not reveal much information about the believer's intermediate state, probably because the hope of the believer is not centered upon a temporary intermediate state.<sup>29</sup> See diagram below.



However, Scriptures give several clues that believers may have some form of a physical body in the intermediate state between death and Christ's return (Rev. 6:9-11; Luke 9:28-36; 16:19-31).<sup>30</sup>

- Clue No. 1 (Rev. 6:9-11): Since they "called out in a loud voice," they were able to express themselves verbally. Doing this indicates that they are rational, communicative, and emotional beings. Those beings in Heaven are free to ask God questions, which indicates they are in God's presence. These beings know what is happening on Earth. Those in Heaven are distinct individuals, "Then each of them was given a white robe...". The wearing of white robes suggests the possibility of having physical forms...not disembodied spirits.
- Clue No. 2 (Luke 9:28-36): Moses and Elijah appeared physically with Christ at the Transfiguration. They were not disembodied spirits.
- Clue No. 3: (Luke 16:19-31): The story of the rich man who asked to have Lazarus put a drop of water on his tongue. He was not a disembodied spirit.<sup>31</sup>

False views of the eternal state:

- **Soul sleep**: (Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh-day Adventism doctrine) when a person dies his soul "sleeps" (remains unconscious) until the time of the future resurrection.
- **Purgatory**: (in Roman Catholic doctrine) a place or state of suffering inhabited by the souls of sinners who are expiating their sins before going to heaven.<sup>32</sup>
- **Annihilationism**: (also known as extinctionism or destructionism) is the belief that those who are wicked will perish or be no more.
- **Universalism**: the view that all human beings will ultimately be saved and restored to a right relationship with God.



## B. TEXT: (15:35-58 ESV)

"But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come? You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. <sup>37</sup> And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. <sup>38</sup> But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.

<sup>39</sup> For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. <sup>40</sup> There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. <sup>41</sup> There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

<sup>42</sup> So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. <sup>43</sup> It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. <sup>44</sup> It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

<sup>45</sup> Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. <sup>46</sup> But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. <sup>47</sup> The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. <sup>48</sup> As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. <sup>49</sup> Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. <sup>50</sup> I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

<sup>51</sup> Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." <sup>55</sup> "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" <sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

<sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>58</sup> Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." (1 Cor. 15:36-58 ESV)

## C. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### 1. In what ways is a seed analogous to our present physical bodies (15:36-38)?

- It must first die (be put into the ground). This body is not suitable for eternal life in heaven. It must be changed.
- God will make it grow (be resurrected) (15:38)
- It will produce the same kind of plant (grains of wheat will not produce roses when they are planted. There is continuity with the present. When we die, we don't come back as a fish.

### 2. Fill in the table below based on verses 42-47:



1 Corinthians	Our present (Adam-like) body	Our future (Christ-like) body
15:42	→ It will die	→ It will never die
15:43a	→ Sown in dishonor (sin)	→ Raised in glory (sinless)
15:43b	→ Sown in weakness → (physical/moral weaknesses; vulnerable to a small virus, etc.)	→ Raised in power → (physical and moral strength)
15:44	→ Natural body → (Limited in time and space)	→ Spiritual body → (consistent with the character of Holy Spirit)
15:47	→ From the dust	→ From heaven
Summary <sup>33</sup>	→ No more sickness and death. → No more shame because of sin (dishonor). → No more frailty in temptation ("weakness") → No more limits to time and space ("natural body")	

3. In what ways can this passage encourage believers as they grow older?
4. If we are going to receive a new glorified body, can we do whatever we want with this temporary body? What does 1 Corinthians 15:34 and Titus 2:11-12 tell us about this?
5. List at least three things that stand out most to you from this passage (1 Corinthians 15:35-58):

#### D. KEY POINTS

1. The analogy of a seed shows that the resurrection brings **radical change** but does not eliminate **continuity with the present**.
2. Our salvation will not be complete until the **return of the Lord Jesus Christ**.
3. The resurrection believers will experience, because of Jesus Christ, is the **greatest hope** they could ever share with someone who does not know him.

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## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> (Vang 3)

<sup>2</sup> Divisions, Gk. ἀχίσματα; schism, a tearing of fabric rendering it unsightly or unusable.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Luther was upset when his followers were called "Lutherans." He did not want people to be devotees of the preacher but instead to follow Christ (Vang 26)

<sup>4</sup> (Barclay 15)

<sup>5</sup> (BibleWorks, LLC, Version 10)

<sup>6</sup> (Vang 3)

<sup>7</sup> (Guzik)

<sup>8</sup> (Vang 120-121)

<sup>9</sup> (MacArthur, 1 Corinthians: Godly Solutions for Church Problems 73)

<sup>10</sup> (Smallman 88-89)

<sup>11</sup> (Smallman 88)

<sup>12</sup> "Can Christians eat meat sacrificed to idols?" Nathan Esala, < [https://lbt.org/sermon-topic-can-christians-eat-meat-sacrificed-to-idols-by-nathan-esala/?https://lbt.org/&qclid=EAlalQobChMlg\\_SY34iq6glVmx-tBh2S6QlrEAYASAAEgK1uvD\\_BwE](https://lbt.org/sermon-topic-can-christians-eat-meat-sacrificed-to-idols-by-nathan-esala/?https://lbt.org/&qclid=EAlalQobChMlg_SY34iq6glVmx-tBh2S6QlrEAYASAAEgK1uvD_BwE)>

<sup>13</sup> (Smallman 90). Some of these practices become especially vexing for missionaries who create a Christian culture in a pagan culture.

<sup>14</sup> (Barclay 76)

<sup>15</sup> Edward Adams, *The Church at Corinth*, Bible Odyssey < <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/places/related-articles/church-at-corinth>>. Accessed July 8, 2020.

<sup>16</sup> For more about spiritual gifts the reader is invited to go to: <https://www.taylornotes.info/bible-studies>.

<sup>17</sup> (Guzik)

<sup>18</sup> To make firm distinctions between *phileo* love and *agape* love is incorrect, for the meanings of the two words overlap (Mounce 428).

<sup>19</sup> Before Jesus Christ came, the word *agape* was a colorless word without any great depth of meaning, and was often used as a synonym of *eros* and *phileo*. (Mounce 427)

<sup>20</sup> (Leadership Ministries Worldwide 1288)

<sup>21</sup> (Barclay 137)

<sup>22</sup> (MacArthur, 1 Corinthians: Godly Solutions for Church Problems 100)

<sup>23</sup> (Barclay 137)

<sup>24</sup> (Barclay 143)

<sup>25</sup> (Barclay 152)

<sup>26</sup> For more about this the reader is invited to go to: <https://www.taylornotes.info/bible-studies>

<sup>27</sup> (Barclay 137)

<sup>28</sup> Erwin Lutzer, p. 69.

<sup>29</sup> (Smith 155).

<sup>30</sup> (Alcorn 65-67).

<sup>31</sup> (MacArthur and Mayhue, Bible Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth 839-842)

<sup>32</sup> For more about purgatory go to: [https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don\\_stewart/don\\_stewart\\_123.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_123.cfm)

<sup>33</sup> (MacArthur, The MacArthur Bible Commentary 1608)