

1 Corinthians

1

Summary: *Paul opens his letter to the Corinthian church with a standard apostolic greeting, affirming his calling and the sanctified status of his readers. He gives thanks for the spiritual gifts present in Corinth, then immediately addresses the central crisis: the church has fractured into rival factions claiming allegiance to Paul, Apollos, Cephas, or Christ himself. Paul argues that Christ cannot be divided and that the cross — foolishness to the world — is the true power and wisdom of God. He reminds the Corinthians that God chose what the world considers foolish, weak, and insignificant to shame the wise and strong.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *Paul's opening establishes the theological framework for the entire letter: the cross inverts worldly values. The Corinthian factions reflect a culture obsessed with rhetorical skill and social status — values Paul systematically dismantles. The phrase 'the word of the cross' (ho logos tou staurou) in verse 18 is startling in its original context: crucifixion was so shameful that Roman writers avoided detailed discussion of it. Paul places this scandal at the center of God's wisdom.*

Translation Friction: *The Greek schismata (v. 10) literally means 'tears' or 'rips' — the same word used for tearing cloth. We render it as 'divisions' for clarity. The phrase 'Christ crucified' (Christon estauromenon, v. 23) uses the perfect passive participle, indicating a past event with ongoing significance — Christ is not merely 'one who was crucified' but remains 'the crucified one.' The relationship between sophia ('wisdom') and logos ('word/message') in this chapter is complex and resists neat English equivalents.*

Connections: *Paul's argument about divine wisdom overturning human wisdom draws on Isaiah 29:14 (quoted in v. 19) and Jeremiah 9:23-24 (echoed in vv. 26-31). The theme of God choosing the weak to shame the strong echoes the Old Testament pattern seen in David vs. Goliath, Gideon's reduced army, and the election of Israel itself. The baptism discussion (vv. 14-17) will be revisited in chapters 10 and 12.*

¹Paul, called as an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, ²To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called as saints, together with all who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place — their Lord and ours: ³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴I always thank my God for you because of the grace of God that was given to you in Christ Jesus, ⁵Through him you have been made rich in every way — in all your speaking and in all your knowledge. ⁶Indeed as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: ⁷As a result, you are not lacking any spiritual gift while you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to

return. ⁸He will also sustain you to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful, by whom you were called into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. ¹⁰Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. ¹¹For it has been reported to me about you, my brothers and sisters, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. ¹²What I mean is this: each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." ¹³Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were you baptized by the authority of Paul? ¹⁴I am grateful to God that I did not baptize any of you, but Crispus and Gaius; ¹⁵Lest any should say that I had immersed in mine own identity. ¹⁶I did baptize the household of Stephanas as well. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else. ¹⁷For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel — and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ would not be emptied of its power. ¹⁸For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will set aside." ²⁰Where is the wise person? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has God not made the wisdom of the world foolish? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was pleased through the foolishness of the proclamation to save those who believe. ²²For Jews ask for signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³However, we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness; ²⁴And the wisdom of god, but to them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God. ²⁵For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. ²⁶For consider your calling, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong, ²⁸Base matters of the age, and matters which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and matters which are not, to bring to nought things that are:. ²⁹Indeed, that no flesh should glory in his presence. ³⁰It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God — our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption — ³¹That, in keeping with as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The Greek *kletos apostolos* ('called apostle') lacks the infinitive 'to be' — Paul is not 'called to become' an apostle but 'a called apostle,' one whose identity is defined by divine summons. Sosthenes may be the synagogue ruler mentioned in Acts 18:17, though this identification is uncertain.
2. The Greek *hegiasmenois* ('having been sanctified') is a perfect passive participle — sanctification is something God has already done to them, not something they achieved. As with *kletos* in verse 1, *kletois hagios* ('called saints') lacks the infinitive 'to be.' They are not 'called to become saints' but are 'called-saints' — their identity is established by God's call. The final phrase *autōn kai hēmōn* ('theirs and ours') is grammatically ambiguous: it could modify 'place' (every place, theirs and ours) or 'Lord' (their Lord and ours). We follow the latter reading as it reinforces the letter's unity theme.
3. Paul's greeting combines the Greek *charis* ('grace') with the Hebrew-rooted *eirēnē* ('peace,' corresponding to *shalom*). This dual greeting bridges the Greek and Jewish worlds represented in the Corinthian congregation. The pairing of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ as co-source of grace and peace reflects early high Christology.
4. Paul's thanksgiving section (vv. 4-9) is diplomatically crafted — he thanks God for what God has done among them, not for what they have accomplished. The grace (*charis*) is described as 'given' (*dotheisē*, aorist passive) — a definite past act of divine generosity.
5. The verb *eploutisthēte* ('you were enriched') is aorist passive — God did the enriching. The two areas of enrichment, *logos* ('speech/word') and *gnōsis* ('knowledge'), are precisely the gifts the Corinthians valued most and would later abuse. Paul's thanksgiving subtly sets up his critique.
6. The Greek *martyrion tou Christou* ('testimony of/about Christ') could be an objective genitive ('testimony about Christ') or subjective genitive ('testimony from Christ'). We take it as objective — the apostolic witness about Christ was validated in their experience. The verb *ebebaiōthē* ('was confirmed') is a legal term for establishing or guaranteeing something.
7. The Greek *charisma* ('gift of grace') will become a major topic in chapters 12-14. Paul acknowledges the Corinthians' giftedness while framing it eschatologically — gifts serve the community while they await Christ's return. The word *apokalypsis* ('revelation, unveiling') refers to Christ's return, not a private spiritual experience.
8. The verb *bebaiōsei* ('will confirm/sustain') echoes *ebebaiōthē* in verse 6 — the same God who confirmed the testimony will confirm the believers. The word *anenklētous* ('blameless, without accusation') is a legal term: they will stand unindicted on judgment day. 'The day of our Lord Jesus Christ' refers to the final judgment, corresponding to the Old Testament 'day of the LORD.'

9. The declaration *pistos ho theos* ('faithful is God') anchors the entire thanksgiving — the Corinthians' security rests not on their performance but on God's faithfulness. The word *koinōnia* ('fellowship, participation, sharing') denotes a deep, mutual participation in Christ's life, not merely social association. This term will recur at 10:16 in connection with the Lord's Supper.
10. The Greek *schismata* ('divisions, tears') is the word from which English 'schism' derives — it literally means rips or tears in fabric. The church is being torn apart. The verb *katērtismenoi* ('restored, mended, made complete') is used in Mark 1:19 for mending fishing nets — Paul envisions the torn community being stitched back together. The Greek *adelphoi* ('brothers') is rendered 'brothers and sisters' since Paul addresses the entire congregation, as the context of the letter makes clear.
11. Chloe is named without further identification, suggesting she was well-known to both Paul and the Corinthians. The phrase *tōn Chloēs* ('those of Chloe') likely refers to members of her household — slaves, freedpersons, or family members who had traveled to Paul. That Paul names his source openly suggests he is not trafficking in gossip but acting on reliable intelligence. The word *erides* ('quarrels, strife') indicates active verbal conflict, not merely differing opinions.
12. The four slogans reveal faction lines in the Corinthian church. Apollo was an eloquent Alexandrian Jew (Acts 18:24) whose rhetorical skill likely attracted those who valued sophisticated speech. Cephas (Aramaic for 'rock,' = Peter) may represent a more Jewish-oriented faction. The 'Christ party' is the most debated — they may have claimed a direct, unmediated relationship with Christ that bypassed apostolic authority. Paul's point is that all four slogans are equally problematic.
13. Three rhetorical questions, each expecting a negative answer. The first — *memeristic ho Christos* ('Has Christ been divided?') — could also be read as a statement: 'Christ has been divided!' (an outraged exclamation). Either way, the implication is that factional loyalty tears apart the one body of Christ. The second and third questions establish the logic: only the one who was crucified for them and in whose name they were baptized has any claim on their allegiance.
14. Crispus was the synagogue ruler who believed (Acts 18:8). Gaius is likely the Gaius of Romans 16:23 who hosted the whole church in Corinth. Paul's relief at having baptized so few reveals how baptism was being used as a badge of factional identity — 'I was baptized by Paul' became a status claim.
15. Paul is grateful in retrospect — not that baptism is unimportant, but that the Corinthians' misuse of it to form factions was limited by the fact that he personally baptized so few of them.
16. The correction mid-thought ('I did baptize the household of Stephanas as well') adds an unpolished, authentic quality — Paul is dictating and remembering as he goes. Stephanas's household will be mentioned again at 16:15 as the 'firstfruits of Achaia.' The Greek *oikos* ('household') would include family members, slaves, and dependents.
17. The phrase *ouk en sophia logou* ('not in wisdom of speech/word') targets the Corinthian obsession with rhetorical skill. Corinth was a city that prized sophisticated oratory. Paul insists that clever rhetoric actually undermines the gospel by shifting attention from the cross to the speaker. The verb *kenōō* ('to empty, to make void') is striking — human eloquence can drain the cross of its power by making the message about the messenger.
18. The Greek *ho logos tou staurou* ('the word/message of the cross') is Paul's programmatic statement. Both participles — *apollymenois* ('perishing') and *sōzomenois* ('being saved') — are present tense, indicating ongoing processes rather than fixed states. The word *mōria* ('foolishness, stupidity') is blunt — the cross is not merely misunderstood by outsiders but actively regarded as idiotic.
19. Paul quotes Isaiah 29:14 (from the Septuagint). The original context is God's judgment against Jerusalem's leaders who relied on political alliances rather than trusting God. Paul applies it more broadly to all human wisdom that operates independently of God. The verb *athetēsō* ('I will set aside, reject, nullify') is stronger than the KJV's 'bring to nothing' — it implies active divine rejection.
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 29:14. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
20. Three rhetorical questions echo Isaiah 33:18. The 'wise person' (*sophos*) represents Greek philosophical culture, the 'scribe' (*grammateus*) represents Jewish legal scholarship, and the 'debater' (*syzētētēs*) may represent either or both — anyone who relies on human argumentation. The phrase *tou aiōnos toutou* ('of this age') frames worldly wisdom as temporary and passing.
20. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 33:18 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
21. The phrase *en tē sophia tou theou* ('in the wisdom of God') suggests that the failure of human wisdom was itself part of God's design — God arranged things so that unaided human intellect would prove insufficient. The Greek *kērygma* ('proclamation, preaching') refers to the content proclaimed, not the act of preaching — it is 'the foolishness of what is proclaimed,' not 'the foolishness of the act of proclaiming.'
22. Paul identifies two cultural orientations: the Jewish demand for miraculous validation (*sēmeia*, 'signs') and the Greek pursuit of philosophical insight (*sophia*, 'wisdom'). Both are legitimate desires misdirected — God does give signs and does offer wisdom, but not in the forms these cultures expect.
23. The phrase *Christon estaurōmenon* ('Christ crucified') uses the perfect passive participle — Christ remains permanently 'the crucified one.' This is not merely a past event but an abiding identity. The word *skandalon* ('stumbling block, snare, offense') gives us 'scandal' — a crucified Messiah was an oxymoron in Jewish expectation, since Deuteronomy 21:23 declares anyone hung on a tree to be under God's curse. For Greeks, the idea that ultimate wisdom would manifest in an executed criminal was simply *mōria* ('stupidity').
23. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Deuteronomy 21:23 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.

24. The 'called' (kletois) — the same word from verses 1-2 — now transcend ethnic and cultural categories. What Jews sought in signs (power) and Greeks sought in philosophy (wisdom), both find in the crucified Christ. The sentence structure is compressed: 'Christ [is] the power of God and the wisdom of God' — no verb in the Greek, creating a declarative force.
25. Paul uses the neuter substantive adjectives to mōron ('the foolish thing') and to asthenes ('the weak thing') of God — not attributes God actually possesses, but what human beings perceive as foolish and weak in God's actions. The comparative forms (sophōteron, ischyroteron) create an understatement: God's apparent foolishness exceeds all human wisdom, and God's apparent weakness exceeds all human strength.
26. The verb blepete ('look at, consider') invites the Corinthians to examine the sociological evidence of their own congregation. Paul does not say 'none' (oudeis) but 'not many' (ou polloi) — there were some wealthy and educated members (like Erastus, the city treasurer, Romans 16:23), but the majority were from lower social strata. The phrase kata sarka ('according to the flesh') means 'by worldly standards.'
27. The verb exelegeto ('chose') is the aorist middle of eklegomai — God's deliberate, purposeful selection. The repetition of 'God chose' emphasizes divine initiative. The verb kataischynē ('to put to shame, to humiliate') is stronger than 'confound' — God's choices actively embarrass worldly power structures.
28. The Greek ta agenē ('the low-born, the insignificant') and ta exouthenēmena ('the despised, the things counted as nothing') escalate the social inversion. The climax is ta mē onta ('the things that are not') — God chose what has no existence or standing in the world's eyes. This echoes God's creation from nothing (creatio ex nihilo) and His calling of Abraham from obscurity. The verb katargēsē ('to render inoperative, to nullify, to abolish') is one of Paul's favorite words for describing how God dismantles existing power structures.
29. The Greek pasa sarx ('all flesh') is rendered 'no human being' (with the negative) for natural English. The verb kauchēsētai ('to boast, to glory') is a key term in Paul's theology — the human impulse to claim credit is the root of the problem. The entire argument from verses 26-29 builds to this single purpose clause: God's method of salvation is designed to eliminate human boasting.
30. The phrase ex autou ('from him') places the origin of the believers' union with Christ entirely in God's initiative. Christ himself is identified as sophia ('wisdom') from God, directly countering the Corinthians' pursuit of worldly wisdom. The three terms that follow — dikaiosynē ('righteousness'), hagiasmos ('sanctification'), and apolytrōsis ('redemption') — may be appositional to 'wisdom,' explaining what God's true wisdom looks like in practice.
31. Paul paraphrases Jeremiah 9:23-24 (via the Septuagint), where the prophet contrasts boasting in wisdom, strength, and riches with boasting in knowing the LORD who practices steadfast love (chesed), justice, and righteousness. The allusion perfectly caps the chapter: the only legitimate boast is in what God has done, not in human achievement, rhetorical skill, or factional loyalty.
31. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Jeremiah 9:24. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.

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Summary: *Paul continues his argument about the cross and wisdom, now with personal testimony. He reminds the Corinthians that he came to them not with impressive rhetoric but in weakness, choosing to know nothing among them except Christ crucified. Yet he does speak wisdom — a hidden wisdom of God, revealed by the Spirit, which the rulers of this age failed to recognize. The chapter culminates in the distinction between the 'natural person' (psychikos) who cannot receive spiritual things and the 'spiritual person' (pneumatikos) who has 'the mind of Christ.'*

What Makes This Remarkable: *Paul's admission of personal weakness (vv. 1-5) is remarkable for a culture that prized self-confidence in public speakers. His description of divine wisdom as 'hidden' and 'decreed before the ages' (v. 7) introduces a concept of divine mystery that will shape later Christian theology. The quotation in verse 9 ('What no eye has seen...') may draw on Isaiah 64:4 but does not match any known Old Testament text exactly — its precise source remains debated. The Spirit-searches-everything claim in verse 10 is among the most profound pneumatological statements in Paul's letters.*

Translation Friction: *The term psychikos (v. 14) is notoriously difficult to translate. 'Natural' (KJV, ESV) misses the Greek nuance; 'unspiritual' (NRSV) is too negative. We render it as 'natural person' and explain the Greek in the notes. The phrase 'the deep things of God' (ta bathē tou theou, v. 10) may be language the Corinthians themselves used in a proto-Gnostic way; Paul co-opts it for his own purposes.*

Connections: The 'hidden wisdom' theme connects to Daniel's revelation language (Daniel 2:22, 28) and to Jewish apocalyptic literature. 'The rulers of this age' (v. 8) who crucified Christ echo the principalities and powers of Colossians 1:16 and Ephesians 6:12. The 'mind of Christ' (v. 16) will be developed further in Philippians 2:5-11.

¹When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come with superior speech or wisdom as I proclaimed to you the mystery of God. ²For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ — and him crucified. ³I came to you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. ⁴My speech and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵Indeed, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the authority of God. ⁶Yet we do speak wisdom among the mature — though not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are being brought to nothing. ⁷Rather, we speak God's wisdom in a mystery — the wisdom that was hidden, which God predetermined before the ages for our glory. ⁸None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹But as it is written: "What no eye has seen, and no ear has heard, and no human heart has imagined — these are the things God has prepared for those who love him." ¹⁰But God has revealed these things to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹For who among humans knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person within them? In the same way, no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand the things freely given to us by God. ¹³And we speak about these things not in words taught by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual realities to those who are spiritual. ¹⁴The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to that person, and they cannot understand them because they are discerned spiritually. ¹⁵The spiritual person discerns all things but is not subject to anyone else's judgment. ¹⁶For "who has known the mind of the Lord, so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The SBLGNT reads *mystērion* ('mystery') rather than *martyrion* ('testimony'), though manuscripts are divided. 'Mystery' fits the chapter's theme better — Paul is about to describe God's hidden wisdom. The phrase *kath' hyperochēn logou ē sophias* ('with superiority of speech or wisdom') targets the very skills Corinthian culture prized most. Paul deliberately chose not to compete on their terms.
2. The verb *ekrina* ('I decided, I determined') indicates a deliberate choice, not inability. Paul could have displayed rhetorical brilliance but chose instead to make Christ crucified his single message. The emphatic *kai touton estaurōmenon* ('and this one crucified') uses the perfect passive participle again — the crucified state is ongoing and definitive.
3. Paul's triple description of his condition — *astheneia* ('weakness'), *phobos* ('fear'), *tromos* ('trembling') — is a shocking self-portrait for someone claiming apostolic authority. The combination *phobos kai tromos* ('fear and trembling') appears elsewhere in Paul (2 Corinthians 7:15; Philippians 2:12; Ephesians 6:5) and may reflect awareness of standing before God's calling rather than mere stage fright. Paul arrived in Corinth after being beaten in Philippi and mocked in Athens (Acts 16-17).
4. The Greek *peithois sophias logos* ('persuasive words of wisdom') is textually uncertain — *peithois* is a rare word, possibly coined by Paul. The contrast is between human persuasion techniques and *apodeixis pneumatos* ('demonstration of the Spirit') — a term from rhetoric (*apodeixis* means 'proof') now applied to spiritual reality. Paul uses the rhetorician's own vocabulary to subvert rhetorical culture.
5. This purpose clause reveals why Paul chose weakness over eloquence — a faith built on impressive rhetoric would collapse when a better speaker came along. Only faith grounded in God's power endures. This is particularly pointed for the Corinthians, who were apparently swayed by Apollos's more polished speaking style (Acts 18:24-28).
6. The shift is significant: Paul is not anti-wisdom per se — he does speak *sophia*, but only among the *teleioi* ('mature, complete'). The term may ironically echo Corinthian self-descriptions; the Corinthians considered themselves advanced, but Paul will soon call them infants (3:1). The *archontes tou aiōnos toutou* ('rulers of this age') could refer to human political authorities, demonic powers, or both — the ambiguity may be deliberate.
7. The phrase *en mystērō* ('in a mystery') modifies how wisdom is spoken — it comes wrapped in divine secrecy, requiring revelation to understand. The verb *proōrisen* ('predetermined, foreordained') places this wisdom in eternity past — it was not an afterthought or improvisation. The phrase *eis doxan hēmōn* ('for our glory') is stunning: the destiny of believers is glory (*doxa*), the very attribute of God.
8. The title *ton kyrion tēs doxēs* ('the Lord of glory') is extraordinary — it applies to the crucified Jesus a title that in the Old Testament belongs to YHWH alone (Psalm 24:7-10). The irony is devastating: the rulers thought they were executing a criminal; in reality they were crucifying the cosmic Lord. Their ignorance was not exculpatory but revelatory — it exposed the bankruptcy of worldly power and wisdom.

8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Psalm 24:7-10 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
9. The quotation loosely combines Isaiah 64:4 and Isaiah 65:17 but does not match any known Old Testament text exactly. Some scholars suggest Paul draws on an otherwise unknown Jewish source. The phrase *epi kardian anthrōpou ouk anebē* ('has not ascended upon the human heart') is a Semitic idiom meaning 'has not entered the mind' or 'has never been imagined.' The point is not about heaven but about the incomprehensibility of God's plan apart from revelation.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 64:4. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 65:17. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
10. The verb *apekalypsen* ('revealed, unveiled') is the aorist of *apokalypō* — God has already disclosed His hidden wisdom. The agent of revelation is the Spirit (*dia tou pneumatōs*). The claim that the Spirit *eraunā* ('searches, explores') even *ta bathē tou theou* ('the deep things of God') is a remarkable statement about the Spirit's access to the inner life of God. The Corinthians may have used 'the deep things' as spiritual self-congratulation; Paul relocates the concept entirely in the Spirit's activity, not human spiritual achievement.
11. Paul uses an analogy from human self-knowledge to explain divine self-knowledge. Just as only a person's own spirit knows their inner thoughts, only God's Spirit knows God's inner reality. The argument establishes that knowledge of God requires God's own Spirit as mediator — human intellect alone cannot penetrate divine reality, no matter how brilliant.
12. The contrast between 'the spirit of the world' (*to pneuma tou kosmou*) and 'the Spirit from God' (*to pneuma to ek tou theou*) parallels the wisdom contrast of chapter 1. The verb *charisthenta* ('freely given, graciously bestowed') shares the root of *charis* ('grace') — everything believers possess is gift, not achievement. The purpose clause *hina eidōmen* ('so that we may know') establishes that the Spirit's role is specifically cognitive — enabling understanding of what God has given.
13. The phrase *pneumatikōis pneumatika synkrinontes* is highly debated. *Synkrinō* can mean 'to compare,' 'to combine,' or 'to interpret' (as in Genesis 40:8 LXX). *Pneumatikōis* could be neuter ('spiritual things with spiritual') or masculine ('spiritual realities to spiritual people'). We follow the interpretation that Paul means 'interpreting/explaining spiritual realities to spiritual people,' which best fits the context of the mature versus immature distinction.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Genesis 40:8 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
14. The Greek *psychikos* ('natural, soulish') derives from *psychē* ('soul/life') and describes someone operating on merely human capacities without the Spirit's illumination. It does not mean 'sinful' but 'limited to natural human faculties.' The verb *anakrinetai* ('are discerned, examined, judged') is a legal/judicial term — spiritual realities require a spiritual faculty of judgment that the *psychikos* person simply does not possess.
15. The *pneumatikos* ('spiritual person') possesses Spirit-given discernment that operates on a different plane than human evaluation. The claim that the spiritual person is 'judged by no one' (*hyp' oudenōs anakrinetai*) does not mean they are above accountability but that their Spirit-informed judgments cannot be evaluated by those lacking the Spirit. Paul will ironically undercut the Corinthians' self-identification as *pneumatikoi* in the next chapter (3:1).
16. Paul quotes Isaiah 40:13 (LXX) — the original context is the incomprehensibility of God's wisdom. The expected answer is 'no one can know or instruct the Lord.' But then Paul makes a stunning claim: *hēmeis de noun Christou echomen* ('but we have the mind of Christ'). Through the Spirit, believers have access to Christ's own way of thinking. This is not omniscience but a Spirit-given orientation toward reality that aligns with God's purposes.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 40:13. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.

3

Summary: Paul confronts the Corinthians directly: despite their claims to spiritual maturity, their factionalism proves they are still infants in Christ, operating by merely human standards. He reframes the relationship between himself and Apollos as fellow workers in God's field, God's building. Paul then introduces the metaphor of building on the foundation of Jesus Christ — some build with gold and silver, others with wood and straw, and the fire of judgment day will test each person's work. The chapter closes with a warning against destroying God's temple (the community itself) and a final appeal to stop boasting about human leaders.

What Makes This Remarkable: *The agricultural and architectural metaphors in this chapter establish Paul's theology of ministry: ministers are servants, not celebrities. The temple imagery (vv. 16-17) is corporate, not individual — the Corinthian community as a whole is God's temple, and those who destroy the community through division are desecrating sacred space. The judgment-by-fire passage (vv. 12-15) has generated extensive debate about purgatory, rewards, and the nature of post-mortem judgment.*

Translation Friction: *The phrase 'as to people of the flesh' (hōs sarkinois, v. 1) is distinct from sarkikoi (v. 3) — sarkinois means 'made of flesh' (a description of human nature) while sarkikoi means 'characterized by flesh' (a moral critique). This nuance is difficult to capture in English. The 'fire' of verse 13 has been variously interpreted as literal eschatological fire, metaphorical testing, or purgatorial purification; we render the Greek straightforwardly without importing any particular tradition.*

Connections: *The temple imagery connects to Exodus 25-40 (tabernacle construction), 1 Kings 6-8 (Solomon's temple), and Ezekiel 40-48 (eschatological temple). The 'fire will test' language echoes Malachi 3:2-3. The agricultural metaphor draws on Jesus's parables of sowing and growth (Mark 4). The closing quotation combines Job 5:13 and Psalm 94:11.*

¹And I, brothers and sisters, could not speak to you as spiritual people but as people of the flesh — as infants in Christ. ²I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. And even now you are still not ready, ³For you are yet carnal — for whereas there is in the midst of you envying, and strife, and divisions, are you not carnal, and walk as men? ⁴For when someone says, "I follow Paul," and another says, "I follow Apollos," are you not merely human? ⁵What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. ⁷So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸The one who plants and the one who waters are one, and each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. ⁹For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. ¹⁰According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. But each one must be careful how he builds on it. ¹¹For no one can lay a foundation other than the one that has been laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, ¹³Indeed, every man's work will be made manifest — for the day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire. And the fire will try every man's work of what sort it is. ¹⁴If what anyone has built on the foundation survives, that person will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone's work is burned up, that person will suffer loss, though the person will be saved — but only as through fire. ¹⁶Do you not know that you are God's temple and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. ¹⁸Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, let him become a fool so that he may become truly wise. ¹⁹For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness," ²⁰And again the Scripture says, "The Lord knows that the reasoning of the wise is worthless." ²¹So let no one boast in human leaders. For all things belong to you: ²²Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the present age, or life, or death, or matters present, or things to come. All are yours; ²³You are Christ's. And Christ is God's.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The Greek sarkinois ('made of flesh, fleshly') describes their condition at the time of Paul's first visit — they were new believers, still operating from natural capacities. The word *nēpiois* ('infants, babies') is not pejorative in itself — newborn faith is expected — but the problem, as verse 2 will reveal, is that they have not grown. Paul had addressed them as 'saints' in 1:2; now he calls them babies. The tension is deliberate.
2. The milk/solid food metaphor appears also in Hebrews 5:12-14. *Gala* ('milk') represents foundational teaching, *brōma* ('food') represents mature doctrine. The sting is in the final clause: 'even now you are still not ready' (all' oude eti nyn dynasthe). Years have passed since Paul's initial visit, but the Corinthians remain spiritual infants.
3. Paul shifts from sarkinois (v. 1, 'made of flesh' — a description) to sarkikoi ('characterized by flesh' — a critique). The evidence of their immaturity is not theological ignorance but relational failure: *zēlos* ('jealousy') and *eris* ('strife'). The phrase *kata anthrōpon peripateit* ('walking according to human standards') means behaving no differently from those without the Spirit.

4. Paul reduces the four slogans of 1:12 to two — focusing on himself and Apollos, the figures he can address without causing offense. The question *ouk anthrōpoi este* ('are you not merely human?') equates factionalism with sub-Christian behavior. To be 'merely human' for Paul is to fall short of what the Spirit makes possible.
5. The Greek *ti* ('what') rather than *tis* ('who') is deliberate — Paul does not ask about their personal identity but their functional role. They are *diakonoi* ('servants, ministers') — the word from which 'deacon' derives, originally meaning table waiters. This radically deflates the Corinthians' celebrity culture around leaders. The phrase *hekastō hōs ho kyrios edōken* ('as the Lord gave to each') attributes all ministry effectiveness to divine assignment.
6. The agricultural metaphor assigns complementary roles: Paul as church planter and Apollos as nurturer. The imperfect tense *ēuxanen* ('was causing growth') for God's action — versus the aorist (punctiliar) for human actions — suggests that God's growth-giving is continuous and ongoing while human contributions are discrete, limited events.
7. The phrase *oute...estin ti* ('is not anything') is deliberately stark — Paul and Apollos are 'nothing' in comparison to God's agency. This is not false humility but theological precision: in agriculture, the farmer contributes labor but cannot make a seed grow. The parallel to ministry is exact.
8. The Greek *hen eisin* ('are one') means 'are one thing' — they share a single purpose and status. This undercuts any ranking system the Corinthians have constructed. Yet individuality is preserved: each receives *misthos* ('reward, wages') according to their own *kopos* ('labor, toil'). Unity of purpose does not erase individual accountability.
9. Three possessive genitives — *theou synergoi* ('God's co-workers'), *theou geōrgion* ('God's field'), *theou oikodomē* ('God's building') — all emphasize that God is the owner and ultimate agent. *Synergoi* does not mean Paul and Apollos are God's equals but that they work alongside each other in God's service. The shift from agricultural to architectural metaphor (*geōrgion* to *oikodomē*) transitions to the next section.
10. The Greek *architekton* ('master builder, architect') is the origin of the English word. Paul claims the role not by self-promotion but *kata tēn charin* ('according to the grace') — his skill is a gift. The warning *blepetō pōs* ('let him watch how') shifts responsibility to subsequent builders. The foundation is already laid (aorist *ethēka*); the construction continues (present *epoikodomei*).
11. This is a categorical statement: the foundation is non-negotiable and irreplaceable. The present participle *keimenon* ('the one lying, the one that has been laid') indicates a foundation already in place — Jesus Christ is not one option among many but the only possible basis for the community's life.
12. Six building materials descend in value and fire-resistance: gold, silver, and precious stones survive fire; wood (*xyla*), hay (*chorton*), and straw (*kalamēn*) do not. The metaphor concerns the quality of ministry work built upon the Christ-foundation, not the personal salvation of the builders. *Kalamē* ('straw, stubble') was used for cheap construction and burns almost instantly.
13. The definite article *hē hēmera* ('the Day') refers to the eschatological day of judgment without needing further specification — a concept well established in both Old Testament prophetic literature (the 'day of the LORD') and early Christian expectation. The verb *dokimasei* ('will test, will prove') is used for testing metals by fire — the metaphor is of assaying, not punishment. The fire reveals quality, not guilt.
14. The verb *menei* ('remains, survives, endures') is the test — will the work still be standing after the fire? The *misthos* ('reward') is distinct from salvation itself; it concerns the recognition of effective, lasting ministry. The nature of this reward is not specified.
15. This verse has been central in debates about purgatory. The Greek *zēmiothēsetai* ('will suffer loss') refers to the loss of the work and its reward, not the loss of salvation — as the next clause clarifies: *autos de sōthēsetai* ('the person will be saved'). The phrase *houtōs de hōs dia pyros* ('but as through fire') suggests a barely-escaped salvation, like someone fleeing a burning building with nothing but their life. The emphasis is on the waste of poor-quality ministry, not on post-mortem purification.
16. The Greek *naos* ('temple, sanctuary') refers specifically to the inner sanctuary where God's presence dwelt — not the broader temple complex (*hieron*). The pronoun 'you' (*este, oikei en hymin*) is plural throughout — this is not about individual bodies (as in 6:19) but about the community as a whole being God's dwelling place. The question *ouk oidate* ('do you not know') implies this should be obvious.
17. The verb *phtheirō* means 'to corrupt, to ruin, to destroy' — Paul uses the same verb in both clauses, creating a precise retributive parallel: the one who destroys will be destroyed. In context, 'destroying the temple' means tearing apart the community through factionalism. The word *hagios* ('holy') echoes the Hebrew *qadosh* — the temple is set apart, consecrated. To violate it is to invite divine judgment.
18. The imperative *mōros genesthō* ('let him become a fool') demands a voluntary surrender of worldly-wisdom status. This is not anti-intellectualism but a call to abandon the specific kind of rhetorical-philosophical posturing that was fracturing the Corinthian church. True wisdom, in Paul's paradoxical theology, begins with accepting the 'foolishness' of the cross.
19. Paul quotes Job 5:13 — the only direct quotation from Job in the New Testament. The original speaker is Eliphaz, whose theology is partly refuted by the end of Job, yet Paul adopts this particular statement as valid. The verb *drassomenos* ('catching, seizing') pictures God grabbing the wise in the very trap of their own cunning (*panourgia*, 'craftiness, shrewdness').
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Job 5:13. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
20. Paul quotes Psalm 94:11 (93:11 LXX), slightly modifying it — the psalm has 'the thoughts of humans' (*anthrōpōn*) while Paul substitutes 'the wise' (*sophōn*), sharpening the application to the Corinthian situation. The word *mataioi* ('futile, empty, vain') denotes not just incorrectness but ultimate pointlessness.

20. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalms 94:11 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
21. The conclusion *mēdeis kauchasthō en anthrōpois* ('let no one boast in human beings') directly addresses the faction problem. Paul's reasoning is paradoxically generous: you do not need to choose between leaders because all of them — and everything else — already belong to you in Christ. Factional loyalty actually diminishes what the Corinthians already possess.
22. The list expands breathtakingly from named individuals to cosmic categories. Paul, Apollos, and Cephas are placed alongside life, death, present, and future — all belong to the believers. This is not a claim to ownership but to inheritance: in Christ, believers have access to everything God has provided through every servant and every circumstance.
23. The chain of belonging — all things you Christ God — establishes a hierarchy that dissolves factionalism. You cannot say 'I belong to Paul' when you belong to Christ. The final link, *Christos de theou* ('Christ belongs to God'), is not a subordinationist statement but a declaration of the Son's perfect alignment with the Father's purposes. The entire argument circles back to 1:31: the only legitimate boast is in the Lord.

4

Summary: *Paul defines apostles as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries, accountable only to the Lord's judgment — not to human evaluation. He exposes the Corinthians' arrogance with biting irony: 'Already you are full! Already you have become rich! You have begun to reign without us!' He contrasts their self-satisfaction with the apostles' actual experience of suffering, hunger, and humiliation. The chapter closes with a fatherly appeal — Paul is their spiritual father through the gospel — and a warning that he may come with authority if they do not change.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The 'spectacle' passage (vv. 9-13) is one of Paul's most vivid self-descriptions, drawing on Roman triumphal procession imagery where condemned prisoners were paraded last before execution. The ironic contrast between the Corinthians' self-perceived royalty and the apostles' degradation is devastating rhetoric. Paul's claim to spiritual fatherhood (v. 15) is unique in his letters and establishes an authority claim distinct from mere teaching.*

Translation Friction: *The Greek hyperphronein in verse 6 ('to think beyond what is written') has no clear referent — 'what is written' could mean Scripture, Paul's earlier letter, or a maxim. We render the phrase and note the ambiguity. The word perikatharma (v. 13, 'scum, offscouring') may be a technical term for human scapegoats in Greek purification rituals, adding a sacrificial dimension to Paul's self-description.*

Connections: *The stewardship language (vv. 1-2) connects to Jesus's parables about faithful and unfaithful stewards (Luke 12:42-48). The 'spectacle' imagery echoes 2 Corinthians 2:14 and anticipates the suffering catalogs of 2 Corinthians 4, 6, and 11. The father-child relationship language anticipates Galatians 4:19 and 1 Thessalonians 2:11.*

¹This is how a person should regard us: as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ²Now what is required of stewards is that they be found faithful. ³But it is a very small thing to me that I should be evaluated by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even evaluate myself. ⁴For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not acquitted by this. The one who evaluates me is the Lord. ⁵Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes. He will bring to light the things hidden in darkness and will reveal the purposes of hearts. And then each person will receive commendation from God. ⁶Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that through us you may learn the meaning of the saying, "Nothing beyond what is written," so that none of you will be puffed up in favor of one against another. ⁷For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as though you did not? ⁸Already you are satisfied! Already you have become rich! You have begun to reign — and that without us! I wish you really had begun to reign, so that we could reign with you! ⁹For I think that God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as though sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world — to angels and to human beings alike. ¹⁰We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are held in honor, but we are dishonored! ¹¹To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are poorly clothed, we are roughly treated, and we are homeless. ¹²We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we respond with

blessing. When we are persecuted, we endure it. ¹³While defamed, we intreat — we are fashioned as the filth of the age, and are the offscouring of all matters to this day. ¹⁴I am not writing these things to shame you but to admonish you as my beloved children. ¹⁵For even if you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I fathered you in Christ Jesus through the gospel. ¹⁶I urge you, therefore, become imitators of me. ¹⁷For this reason I have sent Timothy to you. He is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways in Christ Jesus, just as I teach them everywhere in every church. ¹⁸Some of you have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. ¹⁹But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. ²⁰For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. ²¹What do you want? Should I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The Greek hypēretas ('servant, attendant') originally referred to an under-rower in a galley — one who takes orders. The oikonomos ('steward, household manager') manages resources that belong to someone else. Both terms deflate any celebrity status. The 'mysteries of God' (mystērion theou) are the divine secrets entrusted to the apostles for proclamation, not private mystical experiences.
2. The word pistos ('faithful, trustworthy') echoes the faithfulness vocabulary (emunah in Hebrew, pistis in Greek) central to covenant theology. A steward's primary virtue is not brilliance or popularity but fidelity to the owner's instructions.
3. The verb anakrinō ('to examine, to investigate, to evaluate') is a judicial term used for preliminary investigation. The phrase anthrōpinēs hēmeras ('human day') literally means 'a human day [of judgment]' — Paul contrasts any human evaluation with the Lord's eschatological judgment day (v. 5). His refusal to evaluate even himself is not false humility but a recognition that only God has full knowledge of motives.
4. Paul's clean conscience does not equal innocence — ouden gar emautō synoida ('I am conscious of nothing against myself') is not a claim to sinlessness but an honest assessment of his ministry. The verb dedikaiōmai ('I am justified/acquitted') is passive — acquittal comes from outside, from the Lord who alone sees truly.
5. The verb phōtisei ('will bring to light, will illuminate') and phanerosei ('will reveal, will make visible') are both future — ultimate evaluation is reserved for the Lord's return. The phrase tas boulas tōn kardiōn ('the purposes/intentions of the hearts') suggests that God judges motives, not just outcomes. The word epainos ('praise, commendation') is surprisingly positive — Paul assumes that the faithful will receive divine approval, not merely avoid punishment.
6. The verb meteschēmatisa ('I have applied, I have transferred the form') means Paul has used himself and Apollos as illustrations of a principle that applies more broadly — the real targets may be unnamed local leaders. The phrase to mē hyper ha gegraptai ('not beyond what is written') remains one of the most debated phrases in the letter. It may be a slogan, a maxim, or a reference to the Scripture quotations in chapters 1-3. The verb physiouthe ('you are puffed up, inflated') pictures arrogance as hot air — inflation without substance.
7. Three questions demolish the basis for Corinthian arrogance. The first (tis se diakrinei, 'who distinguishes you?') challenges the premise of superiority. The second (ti echeis ho ouk elabes, 'what do you have that you didn't receive?') undercuts self-made accomplishment. The third draws the logical conclusion: if everything is received, boasting is absurd. This verse became foundational in Augustinian theology of grace.
8. Paul's irony is at full force. The three declarations — kekoresmenoi ('satiated'), eploutēsate ('you became rich'), ebasileusate ('you began to reign') — mock the Corinthians' spiritual self-satisfaction using the language of eschatological fulfillment. They think they have already arrived at the consummation. The final wish (ophelon ge ebasileusate) pierces through the sarcasm with genuine longing — Paul would love it if the kingdom had fully come.
9. The imagery is drawn from the Roman triumphal procession (pompa), where conquered prisoners were paraded through the streets before being executed in the arena. The word eschatous ('last') means the apostles occupy the place of the condemned at the end of the parade. Theatron ('spectacle, theater') is the origin of English 'theater' — the apostles' suffering is a public display. The audience includes the entire cosmos: angels and humans.
10. The three contrasts are dripping with irony — the terms applied to the Corinthians (phronimoi, 'prudent'; ischyroi, 'strong'; endoxoi, 'honored') are what they claim for themselves, while the terms for the apostles (mōroi, 'fools'; astheneis, 'weak'; atimoi, 'dishonored') echo the very values of the cross Paul preached in chapters 1-2. The Corinthians have embraced the world's values while their apostle lives out the cross.
11. Five present-tense verbs describe ongoing apostolic hardship: peinōmen ('we hunger'), dipsōmen ('we thirst'), gymniteuomen ('we are insufficiently clothed'), kolaphizometha ('we are struck with fists'), astatoumen ('we are unsettled/homeless'). These are not past sufferings but current reality — 'to this very hour' (achri tēs arti hōras). This catalog anticipates the more extensive hardship lists in 2 Corinthians.
12. Paul's manual labor (tais idiais chersin, 'with our own hands') was a point of contention — in Greco-Roman culture, manual work was degrading for an intellectual or teacher. Paul worked as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3) to avoid burdening the Corinthians, but some saw this as proof he was not a real apostle. The three responses to mistreatment — blessing when reviled, enduring when persecuted, responding gently when slandered — echo Jesus's teaching in Matthew 5:44 and Luke 6:27-28.

13. The words perikatharmata ('scum, off-scourings') and peripsēma ('refuse, scrapings') are among the most degrading terms Paul could choose. Perikatharma may carry sacrificial connotations — in some Greek cities, human scapegoats (peripsēmata) were expelled or killed to purify the community. If Paul intends this allusion, the apostles' suffering has a vicarious, purifying dimension.
14. The shift from biting irony to tender affection is abrupt and deliberate. The verb nouthetōn ('admonishing, counseling, warning') combines nous ('mind') and tithēmi ('to place') — it means to set someone's mind right, combining correction with care. The term tekna agapēta ('beloved children') establishes the parental relationship Paul will develop in the next verse.
15. The paidagōgos was a household slave who supervised a child's conduct and escorted them to school — not a teacher but a guardian. Paul's point: there may be many supervisors, but only one father. The verb egennēsa ('I fathered, I begot') claims a unique generative relationship — Paul brought the Corinthian church into existence through his gospel proclamation. This is the basis of his authority: not rank or office but spiritual parentage.
16. The Greek mimētai ('imitators') is the origin of English 'mimic.' Paul is not being egotistical — the call to imitate him is grounded in his fatherhood (v. 15) and will be qualified in 11:1 ('Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ'). In the ancient world, a father's character was the primary model for his children.
17. Timothy is also called teknon ('child'), extending the family metaphor — he is Paul's spiritual son, sent to Paul's spiritual children. The phrase tas hodous mou tas en Christō ('my ways in Christ') refers to Paul's pattern of life and teaching, not merely his doctrines. The claim to teach pantachou en pasē ekklēsia ('everywhere in every church') asserts consistency — Paul's message and lifestyle are the same everywhere.
18. The verb ephysiōthēsan ('they were puffed up, they became inflated') returns from verse 6. Some Corinthians assumed Paul would not dare to return in person and grew bolder in his absence. The construction hōs mē erchomenou mou ('as though I were not coming') implies they are wrong — Paul does intend to come.
19. The qualification ean ho kyrios thelēḗ ('if the Lord wills') is not a polite formula but a genuine submission of travel plans to divine sovereignty (cf. James 4:15). The contrast between logos ('talk, speech') and dynamis ('power') echoes the chapter 1-2 argument: the Corinthians are all words and no power. Paul will test substance, not rhetoric.
20. The phrase hē basileia tou theou ('the kingdom of God') is relatively rare in Paul's letters compared to the Gospels. Here it serves as the ultimate standard of evaluation. The kingdom operates not on the level of logos ('word, talk, rhetoric') but dynamis ('power') — the transformative power of God that actually changes lives and communities.
21. The rhabdos ('rod, staff') evokes a father's right to discipline — not abuse, but the corrective authority that belongs to a parent. The choice Paul offers is genuine: the Corinthians' response to this letter will determine whether his visit is confrontational or gentle. The word prautētōs ('gentleness, meekness') is not weakness but strength under control.

5

Summary: *Paul addresses a shocking case of sexual immorality in the Corinthian church: a man is living with his father's wife, and the congregation — far from being grieved — is arrogant about it. Paul demands the man's expulsion from the community, using Passover imagery to explain why: Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed, so the community must purge the old leaven of sin. The chapter closes with a clarification about Paul's earlier letter: he did not mean they should avoid all sinners in the world, but that they must not tolerate flagrant sin within the church.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The command to 'deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved' (v. 5) is one of the most debated passages in Paul's letters. The Passover typology (vv. 6-8) is one of the earliest Christian interpretations of Christ's death through the lens of Exodus. Paul's distinction between judging insiders and outsiders (vv. 12-13) establishes a principle of church discipline that has shaped Christian practice for centuries.*

Translation Friction: *The phrase 'his father's wife' (tēn gynaika tou patros, v. 1) likely refers to a stepmother, not the man's biological mother. Whether the father was dead or still living is unclear. The phrase 'for the destruction of the flesh' (eis olethron tēs sarkos, v. 5) could mean physical suffering, physical death, or the destruction of the sinful nature. We render the Greek literally and note the interpretive options.*

Connections: *The Passover lamb imagery connects to Exodus 12 and John 1:29. The leaven metaphor draws on Exodus 12:15-20 and Jesus's warning about the leaven of the Pharisees (Mark 8:15). The expulsion command echoes the Deuteronomic formula 'purge the evil from among you' (Deuteronomy 17:7, 19:19, 22:21, 24:7), which Paul quotes in verse 13.*

¹It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you — and of a kind that is not found even among the Gentiles — that a man has his father's wife. ²And you are arrogant! Should you not instead have mourned, so that the one who did this would be removed from among you? ³For though I am absent in body, I am present in spirit, and I have already pronounced judgment on the one who has done such a thing, as though I were present. ⁴When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus — and my spirit is present with the power of our Lord Jesus — ⁵Hand this man over to Satan so that his sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord Jesus. ⁶Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole batch of dough? ⁷Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with the old leaven or with the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. ⁹I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people — ¹⁰Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this present age, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters. For then must you needs go out of the present age. ¹¹But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother or sister if that person is sexually immoral, or greedy, or an idolater, or verbally abusive, or a drunkard, or a swindler — not even to eat with such a person. ¹²For what business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Is it not those inside that you are to judge? ¹³God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The Greek *porneia* ('sexual immorality') is the broad term for illicit sexual conduct. The phrase *gynaixa tina tou patros echein* ('to have a certain woman of the father') uses *echain* ('to have') as a euphemism for an ongoing sexual relationship. Leviticus 18:8 prohibits sexual relations with a father's wife, and Roman law also forbade such unions. Paul's point that even pagans consider this unacceptable heightens the scandal.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Leviticus 18:8. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
2. The verb *pephysiōmenoi* ('puffed up') recurs from 4:6, 18 — the Corinthians' arrogance now manifests as tolerance of flagrant sin, possibly justified by a misunderstanding of Christian freedom. The verb *epenthēsate* ('mourned, grieved') is striking — the appropriate response to sin in the community is grief, not indifference or celebration.
3. Paul's language *apōn tō sōmati parōn de tō pneumati* ('absent in body, present in spirit') is not mystical out-of-body experience but an assertion of apostolic authority that operates regardless of physical location. The perfect tense *kekrika* ('I have already judged') indicates a settled verdict — Paul is not deliberating but announcing a decision.
4. The syntax of verses 3-5 is notoriously tangled in Greek, with multiple phrases that can attach to different clauses. The assembly 'in the name of our Lord Jesus' carries judicial authority — they act not on their own behalf but under Christ's name. Paul's spirit (*tou emou pneumatos*) participates in the assembly despite his physical absence.
5. The phrase *paradounai ton toiouton tō satana* ('to hand over such a one to Satan') likely means excommunication — removing the person from the protective sphere of the community into the domain Satan rules (the fallen world). The purpose *eis olethron tēs sarkos* ('for the destruction of the flesh') is debated: it may mean physical suffering, death, or the destruction of the sinful nature. The ultimate goal is redemptive: *hina to pneuma sōthē* ('so that the spirit may be saved'). Even this severe action aims at restoration.
6. Paul transitions to Passover imagery. The proverb about leaven (*zymē*) was widely known — a small amount of yeast permeates an entire batch. In Jewish Passover practice, all leaven was removed from the house before the festival (Exodus 12:15). The Corinthians' tolerance of this sin is like leaving leaven in the dough — it will spread and corrupt the whole community.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Exodus 12:15. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. The imperative *ekkatharate* ('clean out thoroughly') echoes the Passover preparation command. The logic is paradoxical: 'become what you already are' — they are unleavened (*azymoi*) in their identity in Christ, so they must live out that identity by removing the leaven of sin. The declaration to *pascha hēmōn etythē Christos* ('Christ our Passover [lamb] was sacrificed') is one of the earliest Passover-typological interpretations of Christ's death, connecting the cross to the Exodus 12 lamb.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 12. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The verb *heortazōmen* ('let us celebrate the feast') suggests the entire Christian life is a perpetual Passover festival. The old leaven is identified as *kakia* ('malice, wickedness') and *ponēria* ('evil, depravity'), while the unleavened bread represents *eilikrineia* ('sincerity, purity' — literally, 'tested by sunlight') and *alētheia* ('truth'). Paul transforms a Jewish ritual calendar into a metaphor for ongoing Christian existence.

9. The phrase *en tē epistolē* ('in the letter') refers to a previous letter, now lost, that predates our 1 Corinthians. This means our '1 Corinthians' is actually at least the second letter Paul wrote to this church. The Corinthians apparently misunderstood his instruction, applying it to outsiders rather than insiders.
10. Paul corrects their misunderstanding with practical logic: complete separation from sinners outside the church would require leaving the world entirely, which is impossible. The four categories — *pornoi* ('sexually immoral'), *pleonektai* ('greedy'), *harpaxin* ('swindlers, predators'), *eidōlōlatrai* ('idolaters') — represent common vices in Corinthian society.
11. The key qualifier is *adelphos onomazomenos* ('one called/named a brother') — the issue is not outsiders but insiders who claim Christian identity while living in flagrant contradiction. The six vices expand the earlier list to include *loidoros* ('reviler, verbally abusive person') and *methysos* ('drunkard'). The prohibition *mēde synesthlein* ('not even to eat with') would include exclusion from the Lord's Supper and from fellowship meals, effectively cutting off social bonds.
12. Paul establishes a clear jurisdictional boundary: the church judges its own members (*tous esō*, 'those inside') but has no authority over outsiders (*tous exō*, 'those outside'). This distinction was foundational for later Christian thinking about church discipline and the relationship between church and society.
13. The command *exarate ton ponēron ex hymōn autōn* ('remove the evil one from among you') quotes the Deuteronomic formula that appears repeatedly in Deuteronomy (17:7, 19:19, 22:21, 22:24, 24:7) as the conclusion to laws requiring capital punishment. Paul applies the formula to excommunication rather than execution, but the gravity of the language is unmistakable — this is a community-survival matter.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Deuteronomy 17:7 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.

6

Summary: *Paul addresses two issues: lawsuits between believers in secular courts (vv. 1-11) and sexual immorality (vv. 12-20). He is astonished that Christians who will one day judge the world and angels cannot resolve disputes among themselves. He then confronts the Corinthian slogan 'All things are lawful for me' by insisting that the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord. The body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, bought at a price, and must be used to glorify God.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *Paul quotes and then corrects Corinthian slogans in verses 12-13, making this one of the earliest examples of a Christian leader engaging with libertine theology. The statement that the body is a 'temple of the Holy Spirit' (v. 19) shifts the temple language from corporate (3:16) to individual, establishing a theology of the body that has profoundly shaped Christian ethics. The vice list in verses 9-10 has been extensively debated, particularly the terms *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*.*

Translation Friction: *The terms *malakoi* ('soft ones') and *arsenokoitai* ('man-bedders') in verse 9 are among the most contested words in New Testament scholarship. We render them with their most likely meaning in context while documenting the debate. The Corinthian slogans in verses 12-13 are not always clearly delineated from Paul's own words — we follow the scholarly consensus on where the quotations begin and end.*

Connections: *The 'body as temple' language connects to 3:16-17 and to Jesus's statement about destroying and rebuilding the temple (John 2:19-21). The vice list echoes similar catalogs in Romans 1:29-31 and Galatians 5:19-21. The 'bought with a price' language (v. 20) connects to the redemption vocabulary of 1:30 and anticipates 7:23.*

¹When one of you has a dispute with another, how dare you take it to court before the unrighteous instead of before the saints? ²Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? ³Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life! ⁴So if you have disputes about everyday matters, do you appoint as judges those who have no standing in the church? ⁵I say this to your shame. Is there really no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between brothers and sisters? ⁶Instead, brother goes to court against brother, and this before unbelievers! ⁷The very fact that you have lawsuits against one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? ⁸But instead, you yourselves do wrong and cheat — and you do this to your own brothers and sisters! ⁹Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice passive homosexual acts, nor men who practice active homosexual acts, ¹⁰Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, will

receive God's kingdom. ¹¹And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. ¹²"All things are lawful for me" — but not all things are beneficial. "All things are lawful for me" — but I will not be mastered by anything. ¹³"Food is for the stomach, and the stomach for food" — and God will do away with both. But the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. ¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Absolutely not! ¹⁶Do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it says, "The two will become one flesh." ¹⁷But the one who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. ¹⁸Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. ¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰For you are bought with a price — as a result glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The verb *tolma* ('dares') expresses indignation. The contrast is between *tōn adikōn* ('the unrighteous' — pagan judges) and *tōn hagiōn* ('the saints' — fellow believers). In the Roman colony of Corinth, courts were presided over by pagan magistrates. Paul's objection is not to the legal system per se but to believers airing their disputes before outsiders when the community should be capable of internal resolution.
2. The expectation that saints will judge the world draws on Daniel 7:22 and possibly Jesus's promise to the twelve in Matthew 19:28. Paul's argument moves from the greater to the lesser: if you will judge cosmic matters, surely you can handle small disputes (*kritērion elachistōn*, 'the most trivial courts/cases').
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Daniel 7:22. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
3. The claim that believers will judge angels is stated without explanation — Paul treats it as something the Corinthians should already know. The background may be Jewish traditions about the final judgment of fallen angels (cf. Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4). The word *biōtika* ('matters pertaining to daily life') is dismissive — everyday disputes are trivial compared to the cosmic judgment believers will exercise.
4. This verse is grammatically ambiguous — *kathizete* could be indicative ('you appoint') or imperative ('appoint!'). If indicative, Paul is rebuking them for using pagan judges (who have no standing in the church). If imperative, he is sarcastically saying even the least qualified church member would be better than a pagan court. The indicative reading fits the context of rebuke better.
5. The phrase *pros entropēn* ('to shame') is ironic — in 4:14 Paul said he was not writing to shame them, but here the issue warrants it. The word *sophos* ('wise') is pointed: the Corinthians prided themselves on wisdom (1:17-2:16), yet they cannot produce a single person wise enough to arbitrate an internal dispute.
6. The phrase *adelphos meta adelphou krinetai* ('brother is judged with brother') emphasizes the family bond being violated. The phrase *kai touto epi apistōn* ('and this before unbelievers') adds the scandal of public spectacle — the church's dirty laundry is displayed before those outside the faith.
7. The word *hētēma* ('defeat, failure, loss') reveals Paul's perspective: even winning a lawsuit is a loss for the community. The two rhetorical questions echo Jesus's teaching about turning the other cheek (Matthew 5:39-40). Paul suggests it would be better to absorb injustice than to damage the community's witness and unity through litigation.
8. The twist is devastating: not only are they suing fellow believers, but they are the ones doing the wronging (*adikeite*) and cheating (*apostereite*). They are both the perpetrators and the prosecutors. The emphatic *hymeis* ('you yourselves') and the final phrase *kai touto adelphous* ('and this to brothers') drive home the moral failure.
9. The vice list begins with the warning *mē planasthe* ('do not be deceived') — some Corinthians apparently believed that grace eliminated moral consequences. The terms *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* are heavily debated. *Malakoi* (literally 'soft ones') in this context most likely refers to the passive partner in male homosexual intercourse, though some scholars argue for a broader meaning of 'morally weak' or 'self-indulgent.' *Arsenokoitai* (a compound of *arsēn* 'male' + *koitē* 'bed') appears to be coined from the Septuagint of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, referring to the active partner in male homosexual intercourse. Both terms refer to specific sexual behaviors, not to orientation as a modern concept.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Leviticus 18:22. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
10. The list concludes with five more categories: *kleptai* ('thieves'), *pleonektai* ('greedy/covetous'), *methysoi* ('drunkards'), *loidoroi* ('verbal abusers, revilers'), *harpages* ('swindlers, robbers'). The total of ten vices covers sexual, religious, economic, and social sins, suggesting a comprehensive moral vision rather than targeting any single group.
11. The pivotal conjunction *alla* ('but') marks the transition from past identity to present reality. Three aorist passive verbs — *apelousasthe* ('you were washed'), *hēgiasthēte* ('you were sanctified'), *edikaiōthēte* ('you were justified') — describe what God has already accomplished. The order is surprising — washing (baptism) comes first, then sanctification, then justification — which does not match later systematic theology but reflects

Paul's rhetorical emphasis. The dual agency 'in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God' is implicitly trinitarian.

12. The phrase *panta moi exestin* ('all things are lawful/permissible for me') is likely a Corinthian slogan, possibly derived from Paul's own teaching about freedom from the law. Paul quotes it twice and qualifies it twice: first with *ou panta sympherei* ('not all things are beneficial/profitable'), then with *ouk egō exousiasthēsomai hypo tinos* ('I will not be dominated by anything'). Freedom that leads to slavery is not true freedom.
13. Another Corinthian slogan: 'Food for the stomach, stomach for food.' The Corinthians apparently reasoned that just as eating is a morally neutral bodily function, so is sex. Paul agrees that food and stomach are temporary (God will destroy both) but denies the analogy for the body (*sōma*): the body has an eternal destiny and belongs to the Lord. The stunning reciprocal phrase 'the Lord for the body' (*ho kyrios tō sōmati*) declares that the Lord is devoted to the body, not indifferent to it.
14. The bodily resurrection of Jesus is the guarantee of believers' bodily resurrection. The verb *exegerei* ('will raise') is future — the body has a destiny beyond this life, which is why sexual conduct matters. The Corinthian dismissal of bodily ethics rested on a dualism (body temporary/spirit eternal) that Paul rejects.
15. Paul's argument rests on the reality of union with Christ — believers' bodies are *melē Christou* ('members/limbs of Christ'). Sexual union with a prostitute would therefore make Christ's own members part of that union. The exclamation *mē genoito* ('may it never be!') is Paul's strongest expression of horror and rejection — it occurs fifteen times in his letters.
16. Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 (via the Septuagint) to argue that sexual union creates a real, ontological bond — not merely a physical act but a union of persons. The verb *kollōmenos* ('joining, clinging, being united') is the same word used in the Septuagint for the marriage bond in Genesis 2:24. Paul's argument assumes that sexual intercourse, even with a prostitute, creates the 'one flesh' reality that Genesis describes for marriage.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Genesis 2:24. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
17. The parallel is precise: union with a prostitute creates one body (*hen sōma*); union with the Lord creates one spirit (*hen pneuma*). The two unions are incompatible — one cannot simultaneously be united to the Lord in spirit and to a prostitute in body, because the body belongs to the Lord.
18. The imperative *pheugete* ('flee!') demands immediate, decisive action — not negotiation or gradual withdrawal. The claim that *porneia* uniquely sins 'against one's own body' (*eis to idion sōma*) is debated — other sins also affect the body (drunkenness, gluttony). Paul's point may be that sexual sin uniquely involves the body as the instrument and site of the transgression, creating a union (v. 16) that violates the body's belonging to Christ.
19. Here the temple language shifts from corporate (3:16, 'you [plural] are God's temple') to individual — each believer's body is a *naos* ('sanctuary') of the Holy Spirit. The declaration *ouk este heautōn* ('you are not your own') directly challenges the Corinthian individualism and their slogan 'all things are lawful for me.' Autonomy is replaced by belonging.
20. The verb *ēgorasthēte* ('you were bought') is from the marketplace — specifically the slave market. The *timē* ('price') is not specified here but is elsewhere identified as Christ's blood (cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 1:18-19). The imperative *doxasate ton theon en tō sōmati hymōn* ('glorify God in/with your body') makes the body the instrument of worship. The SBLGNT does not include the phrase 'and in your spirit, which are God's' found in later manuscripts and the KJV — we follow the shorter, earlier text.

7

Summary: Paul responds to the Corinthians' letter about marriage and singleness. He addresses multiple situations: married couples should maintain sexual relations; the unmarried and widows may stay single (Paul's preference) or marry; believers should not divorce unbelieving spouses if the unbeliever is willing to stay; each person should remain in the condition in which they were called. Paul counsels virgins and those betrothed, arguing that singleness allows undivided devotion to the Lord, though marriage is not sin. Throughout, he distinguishes between the Lord's command and his own pastoral advice, and frames everything in light of the 'present distress' and the shortness of the remaining time.

What Makes This Remarkable: This is the longest sustained discussion of marriage and singleness in the New Testament. Paul's repeated distinction between 'I, not the Lord' (v. 12) and 'the Lord, not I' (v. 10) is remarkable transparency — he clearly differentiates between direct dominical command and his own Spirit-guided counsel. The eschatological urgency ('the appointed time has grown short,' v. 29) shapes all his advice. His affirmation that both marriage and singleness are legitimate callings was countercultural in both Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts.

Translation Friction: The phrase 'it is good for a man not to touch a woman' (v. 1) may be another Corinthian slogan that Paul is quoting and then qualifying, not his own assertion. The meaning of 'virgin' (parthenos) in verses 25-38 is debated — it could refer to a man's betrothed, his unmarried daughter, or a 'spiritual marriage' partner. The 'present distress' (v. 26) is unidentified — it could be famine, persecution, or eschatological expectation.

Connections: Paul's teaching on divorce (vv. 10-11) directly references Jesus's prohibition (Mark 10:2-12). The 'remain as you are' principle (vv. 17-24) anticipates Paul's theology of contentment in Philippians 4:11-13. The slave/freedom discussion (vv. 21-23) connects to Philemon and Galatians 3:28.

¹Now concerning the matters you wrote about: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." ²But because of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. ³The husband should fulfill his obligation to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. ⁴The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. ⁵Do not deprive each other, except perhaps by mutual consent for a set time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again, so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. ⁶I say this as a concession, not as a command. ⁷I wish that all people were as I am. But each has a particular gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. ⁸To the unmarried and to widows I say: it is good for them to remain as I am. ⁹But if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with desire. ¹⁰To the married I give this charge — not I, but the Lord — that a wife should not separate from her husband ¹¹(but if she does separate, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband), and a husband should not divorce his wife. ¹²To the rest I say — I, not the Lord — if any brother has an unbelieving wife and she is willing to live with him, he should not divorce her. ¹³And if any woman has an unbelieving husband and he is willing to live with her, she should not divorce him. ¹⁴For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her brother in the faith. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. ¹⁵But if the unbelieving partner separates, let that person go. The brother or sister is not bound in such cases. God has called you to peace. ¹⁶For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife? ¹⁷Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned and to which God has called that person. This is my rule in all the churches. ¹⁸Was anyone already circumcised when called? Let him not undo his circumcision. Was anyone uncircumcised when called? Let him not be circumcised. ¹⁹Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing; what matters is keeping the commandments of God. ²⁰Each person should remain in the condition in which they were called. ²¹Were you a slave when called? Do not let it concern you. But if you can gain your freedom, take the opportunity. ²²For the one who was called in the Lord as a slave is the Lord's freedperson, and likewise the one who was free when called is Christ's slave. ²³You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of human beings. ²⁴Brothers and sisters, let each person remain with God in the condition in which they were called. ²⁵Now concerning virgins, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. ²⁶I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as they are. ²⁷Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife. ²⁸But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. ²⁹This is what I mean, brothers and sisters: the appointed time has grown short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, ³⁰Those who mourn should live as though they do not grieve. Those who are happy should live as though they have no joy. Those who buy something should live as though it is not theirs to keep. ³¹They that use this age, as not abusing it — for the fashion of this age passeth off. ³²I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is concerned about the things of the Lord — how to please the Lord. ³³But the married man is concerned about worldly things — how to please his wife, ³⁴Indeed, there is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit — but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. ³⁵I say this for your own benefit, not to put a restraint on you, but to promote good order and undivided devotion to the Lord. ³⁶If anyone thinks he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, and if his passions are strong and it must be so, let him do

as he wishes — he does not sin. Let them marry. ³⁷But the one who stands firm in his heart, being under no compulsion but having control over his own desire, and has determined in his heart to keep her as his betrothed — he will do well. ³⁸So then, the one who marries his betrothed does well, and the one who refrains from marriage will do even better. ³⁹A wife is bound as long as her husband lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, only in the Lord. ⁴⁰But in my judgment she is more blessed if she remains as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The phrase *peri de hōn egrapsate* ('now concerning what you wrote') marks the first of several responses to the Corinthians' letter (cf. 7:25, 8:1, 12:1, 16:1). The statement *kalon anthrōpō gynaikos mē haptesthai* ('it is good for a man not to touch a woman') is likely a Corinthian slogan — some members advocated sexual asceticism, possibly even within marriage. The verb *haptesthai* ('to touch') is a euphemism for sexual intercourse. Paul will qualify rather than endorse this absolutist position.
2. Paul's concession *dia de tas porneias* ('because of the acts of sexual immorality') is pragmatic rather than idealistic — marriage provides a legitimate context for sexual expression. The reciprocity is notable: both husband and wife have equal standing in this instruction. The verb *echetō* ('let him/her have') is present imperative, suggesting an ongoing relationship.
3. The word *opheilēn* ('debt, obligation, what is owed') frames marital sexual relations as a mutual obligation, not a one-sided right. The remarkable reciprocity — *homoiōs de kai hē gynē tō andri* ('and likewise also the wife to the husband') — was progressive in the ancient world, where sexual obligations were typically unilateral.
4. The verb *exousiazēi* ('has authority over, exercises power over') is used symmetrically — each spouse has authority over the other's body. This mutual surrender of bodily autonomy within marriage is extraordinary in the first-century context. While the first half alone (wife does not control her own body) would have been culturally expected, the second half (husband does not control his own body) was revolutionary.
5. The verb *apostereite* ('deprive, defraud') is the same word used in 6:7-8 for financial fraud — withholding sexual relations from a willing spouse is framed as a form of cheating. Any abstinence must be *ek symphōnou* ('from agreement, by mutual consent'), *pros kairon* ('for a limited time'), and for a specific purpose (prayer). Paul's realism about *akrasia* ('lack of self-control') is characteristically honest.
6. The word *syngnōmēn* ('concession, allowance, pardon') indicates Paul is granting permission rather than issuing a mandate. What exactly is the concession — marriage itself, or the temporary abstinence for prayer? Most likely the latter: Paul is saying the abstinence provision is an allowance, not a requirement.
7. Paul reveals his personal preference for singleness but immediately qualifies it: both singleness and marriage are *charismata* ('gifts') from God. The phrase *ho men houtōs ho de houtōs* ('one in this way, another in that way') treats both states as equally valid divine callings. Neither is spiritually superior.
8. The *agamois* ('unmarried') could include the never-married, the divorced, or widowers. Paul recommends his own state (celibacy) as *kalon* ('good, advantageous') but does not command it. This suggests Paul was either never married or, more likely given his Pharisaic background, was widowed or divorced.
9. The verb *pyrousthai* ('to burn') most likely refers to burning with sexual passion, not to eschatological fire. Paul's pragmatism is evident: singleness is his preference, but marriage is far better than uncontrolled desire. The comparison *kreisson gar estin* ('for it is better') does not denigrate marriage — it positions it as a positive good for those not gifted with celibacy.
10. Paul explicitly attributes this command to the Lord, referencing Jesus's prohibition of divorce (Mark 10:9-12; Matthew 19:6). The verb *chōrithēnai* ('to separate, to be separated') is the standard term for divorce in Greek legal usage. Addressing the wife first may reflect a specific situation in Corinth where wives were initiating separations, possibly motivated by the ascetic teaching of verse 1.
11. The parenthetical concession acknowledges that separation sometimes happens despite the prohibition. In such cases, two options remain: singleness (*menetō agamos*) or reconciliation (*katallagētō*). Remarriage to someone else is not offered as an option. The verb *aphienai* ('to release, to divorce') is the legal term for a husband divorcing his wife.
12. Paul now addresses mixed marriages — a situation Jesus's teaching did not directly cover, hence 'I, not the Lord.' This is not a lesser authority claim but an honest acknowledgment that no dominical saying exists on this topic. Paul gives his own Spirit-guided instruction. The verb *syneudokei* ('consents, is pleased, agrees') makes the unbelieving spouse's willingness the key factor.
13. The instruction is perfectly symmetrical: neither believing husband nor believing wife should initiate divorce if the unbelieving partner is willing to remain. Paul addresses women as autonomous agents capable of initiating divorce — a legal reality in Roman (though not traditional Jewish) law that applied in Corinth as a Roman colony.
14. The verb *hēgiastai* ('has been sanctified') does not mean the unbeliever is saved but that the marriage relationship is consecrated — set apart, not defiled — by the believing partner's faith. Paul argues from the children's status: if the marriage were unclean (*akathartha*), the children would be too; but the Corinthians accept their children as *hagia* ('holy, set apart'). The logic assumes the Corinthians already recognize their children's sanctified status.

15. This is the 'Pauline privilege' — if the unbeliever initiates the departure, the believer is not enslaved (ou dedoulōtai, 'is not bound as a slave') to the marriage. Whether 'not bound' means free to remarry has been debated since the early church; the language suggests genuine release from the marriage bond. The closing phrase en de eirēnē keklēken hymas ho theos ('God has called you in peace') may support either maintaining the marriage (for peace) or accepting the separation (peace from conflict).
16. This rhetorical question is ambiguous in tone: it could mean 'you might save your spouse, so stay' (optimistic) or 'you cannot be sure of saving your spouse, so do not stay in an intolerable situation for that reason alone' (realistic). Given the context of verse 15 (letting the unbeliever go), the realistic reading seems more likely — hope of conversion is not sufficient grounds to force a reluctant spouse to stay.
17. This verse introduces the 'remain as you are' principle that governs the next section (vv. 17-24). The verb emerisen ('assigned, apportioned') and keklēken ('has called') both point to God's sovereign arrangement of life circumstances. Paul claims this is not unique counsel for Corinth but his standard teaching en tais ekklēsiais pasais ('in all the churches').
18. The verb epispasthō ('let him not draw over [the foreskin]') refers to epispasm, a surgical procedure some Hellenistic Jews underwent to reverse circumcision and appear Greek in the gymnasium. Paul's point is that external religious markers are irrelevant to one's standing before God — neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters after being called.
19. This statement is theologically striking: circumcision — the foundational covenant sign of Genesis 17 — is declared 'nothing' (ouden). Paul does not mean it was never important but that in Christ it no longer defines covenant membership. What matters is tērēsis entolōn theou ('keeping God's commandments'), which for Paul means the ethical commands as fulfilled through love (cf. Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:14).
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Genesis 17. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
20. The word klēsis ('calling') here means not vocation in the modern sense but the life circumstance in which a person was when God called them. The imperative menetō ('let them remain') does not forbid all change but counsels against change motivated by the assumption that a different social status would be spiritually superior.
21. The phrase mallon chrēsai ('rather make use of [it]') is famously ambiguous: 'make use of' what — your slavery or your opportunity for freedom? Most scholars now read it as 'take the opportunity for freedom' rather than 'make use of your slavery,' since Paul's counsel throughout this section is pragmatic, not masochistic. The verb meletō ('let it concern') counsels against anxiety, not against seeking improvement.
22. Paul creates a paradoxical reversal: the slave is the Lord's apeleutheros ('freedperson' — a specific legal status in the Roman world), while the free person is Christ's doulos ('slave'). This does not endorse slavery but relativizes all social categories by redefining them in terms of relationship to Christ.
23. Echoing 6:20, Paul declares that believers' purchase price (Christ's death) makes them God's property. The prohibition mē ginesthe douloi anthrōpōn ('do not become slaves of people') may mean: do not voluntarily surrender your freedom to human masters or human opinions. In context, it warns against allowing social pressure or human leaders to override one's calling from God.
24. The addition of para theō ('with God, before God, in God's presence') transforms the 'remain as you are' principle from passive resignation into active trust — remaining in one's circumstances is not settling but living before God wherever one is.
25. The word parthenōn ('virgins') introduces a new topic. Paul again distinguishes between dominical command (epitagēn kyriou ouk echō, 'I do not have a command from the Lord') and his own gnōmē ('opinion, counsel, judgment'). He grounds his authority not in a direct word from Jesus but in being ēleēmenos ('having received mercy') and pistos ('trustworthy').
26. The phrase tēn enestōsan anankēn ('the present distress/necessity') is unspecified — it could refer to persecution, famine, general eschatological tribulation, or the ordinary difficulties of living in a fallen world. Whatever the specific reference, it shapes Paul's pragmatic preference for singleness: fewer attachments mean less suffering in times of crisis.
27. The verb dedesai ('you are bound') and the perfect passive lelytai ('you have been released') use binding/loosing language that echoes Jewish divorce terminology. 'Released' could mean divorced, widowed, or never married. Paul's counsel — do not seek change — applies the 'remain as you are' principle to marital status.
28. Paul emphatically clarifies: ouch hēmartēs ('you have not sinned'). Marriage is not sin. His preference for singleness is practical, not moral. The phrase thlipsin de tē sarki ('tribulation in the flesh') refers to the inevitable difficulties of married life — especially in times of distress (v. 26). The verb pheidomai ('I spare, I am trying to protect') reveals pastoral motivation.
29. The phrase ho kairos synestalmenos estin ('the time has been compressed/shortened') expresses eschatological urgency. The perfect passive participle synestalmenos suggests the time has already been shortened — the compression is underway. The series of 'as though not' (hōs mē) clauses (vv. 29-31) describe a posture of detachment from worldly attachments, not abandonment of responsibilities.
30. The 'as though not' (hōs mē) pattern describes eschatological detachment — not emotional suppression but a refusal to let any temporal experience become ultimate. Grief, joy, and commerce are all real but relativized by the nearness of Christ's return.
31. The verb parage ('is passing away') is present tense — the passing is already in progress. The word schēma ('form, outward appearance, shape') suggests the world's current configuration is temporary, like a stage set being dismantled. This does not devalue the world but locates it within a larger eschatological framework.

32. The adjective amerimnous ('free from anxiety, without worry') introduces Paul's practical argument for singleness. The verb merimna ('is anxious about, is concerned with') is the same word Jesus used in Matthew 6:25-34. Paul is not condemning married people but observing a practical reality: the unmarried person has undivided attention for the Lord's work.
33. The concern for 'worldly things' (ta tou kosmou) is not sinful but simply the practical demands of marriage — providing for a household, maintaining a relationship. Paul describes a real tension, not a moral failing.
34. The phrase kai memeristai ('and he/she is divided') is the hinge: marriage divides one's attention. Paul applies the same analysis to women as to men, maintaining the symmetry he has shown throughout this chapter. The phrase hagia kai tō sōmati kai tō pneumati ('holy in both body and spirit') refers to undivided consecration, not to sexual purity alone.
35. Paul clarifies his intent: ouch hina brochon hymin epibalō ('not to throw a noose on you'). The image of the brochon ('noose, snare') suggests that Paul's advice about singleness should not become another legalistic burden. The goal is euschēmon ('seemly, proper, good order') and euparedron ('constant attendance, devotion') to the Lord aperispastōs ('without distraction').
36. The identity of 'his virgin' (tēn parthenon autou) is debated: it could be a man's fiancée/betrothed, his virgin daughter, or a partner in a 'spiritual marriage' (celibate cohabitation). The word hyperakmos could mean 'past the bloom of youth' (of the woman) or 'with strong passions' (of the man). We follow the betrothed/fiancée interpretation as most natural in context. The emphatic ouch hamartanei ('he does not sin') again underscores that marriage is not sin.
37. Three conditions for choosing not to marry: standing firm (hestēken hedraios, 'established, stable'), having no necessity (mē echōn anankēn, no external pressure), and having control over one's own will (exousian echei peri tou idiou thelēmatos). The decision must be free, settled, and sustainable.
38. The Greek gamizōn can mean 'marrying' or 'giving in marriage.' If the subject is a father giving his daughter in marriage, the interpretation shifts, but we follow the reading where the man himself is the one choosing to marry or not. Paul's conclusion is characteristically balanced: marrying is kalōs ('well'), not marrying is kreisson ('better'). Neither choice is wrong.
39. The verb dedetai ('is bound') describes the marriage bond as lasting until death. The verb koimēthē ('falls asleep') is the standard early Christian euphemism for death. The phrase monon en kyriō ('only in the Lord') is understood to mean the new husband should be a fellow believer, though some interpret it as 'in a manner consistent with the Lord's will.'
40. Paul closes with the comparative makariotēra ('more blessed, happier') — widows who remain unmarried are more blessed in his estimation. The final clause dokō de kagō pneuma theou echein ('and I think I too have the Spirit of God') is likely ironic — some Corinthians apparently claimed Spirit-authority for views contradicting Paul, and his response is understated: 'I think I too have the Spirit.' The modesty of the claim masks its force.

8

Summary: *Paul addresses the question of eating food offered to idols. He begins by distinguishing knowledge from love: knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. He acknowledges that idols are nothing and there is only one God, so technically idol-food is harmless. But not everyone has this knowledge — some believers with a 'weak conscience' still associate the food with actual idol worship. The 'strong' who eat freely may cause the 'weak' to stumble. Paul concludes that if food causes a brother to fall, he will never eat meat again.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *Paul's christological monotheism in verse 6 is remarkable: he reformulates the Jewish Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4) to include Christ as the one Lord 'through whom are all things.' This is one of the highest Christological statements in Paul's letters, embedded almost casually in a discussion about dietary practices. The chapter establishes the principle that rights must yield to love — a theme that will dominate chapters 8-10.*

Translation Friction: *The 'weak' and 'strong' terminology can be misleading in English — the 'weak' are not morally inferior but have a conscience shaped by their pagan past. The phrase syneidēsis ('conscience') is a key Pauline concept that does not map perfectly onto modern psychological usage. We render it consistently as 'conscience' and explain the term in notes.*

Connections: *The idol-food discussion continues through chapters 9-10. The 'one God, one Lord' formula (v. 6) connects to Deuteronomy 6:4 and Philippians 2:9-11. The weak-conscience concept anticipates Romans 14-15. The willingness to limit freedom for others' sake connects to Christ's self-emptying in Philippians 2:5-8.*

¹Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. ²If anyone thinks they know something, they do not yet know as they ought to know. ³But if anyone loves God, that person is known by God. ⁴As concerning as a result the eating of those matters that are offered in sacrifice to idols, we know that an idol is not a thing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. ⁵For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth — as indeed there are many 'gods' and many 'lords' — ⁶However, to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all matters, and we in him. And one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all matters, and we by him. ⁷But not everyone possesses this knowledge. Some, through former association with idols, still eat food as if it were really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. ⁸Food will not bring us closer to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. ⁹But be careful that this right of yours does not become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰For if someone with a weak conscience sees you — the one who has knowledge — reclining at table in an idol's temple, will not that person be encouraged to eat food offered to idols? ¹¹For by your knowledge the weak person is destroyed — the brother or sister for whom Christ died. ¹²In this way, by sinning against your brothers and sisters and wounding their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. ¹³Therefore, if food causes my brother or sister to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother or sister to stumble.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The phrase *peri de* ('now concerning') marks another response to the Corinthians' letter. The statement *pantes gnōsin echomen* ('all of us possess knowledge') is likely a Corinthian slogan — they claimed universal knowledge about idols being nothing. Paul quotes it and then immediately qualifies it: *gnōsis physioi* ('knowledge puffs up/inflates') uses the same verb as 4:6, 18; 5:2. Love (*agapē*), by contrast, *oikodomei* ('builds up') — the same construction metaphor from chapter 3.
2. Paul deflates intellectual pride: the person who thinks they have arrived at knowledge (*dokei egnōkenai*, 'thinks they have known') has not yet begun to know properly (*oupō egnō kathōs dei gnōnai*). True knowledge is humble, recognizing its own limitations.
3. The shift is remarkable: Paul does not complete the expected pattern ('if anyone loves God, that person truly knows'). Instead, he switches to the passive — *egnōstai hyp' autou* ('is known by him'). What matters is not that we know God but that God knows us. Being known by God is more foundational than knowing about God.
4. Paul agrees with the Corinthian position in principle: *ouden eidōlon en kosmō* ('an idol is nothing in the world') and *oudeis theos ei mē heis* ('there is no God except one'). These statements reflect sound Jewish-Christian monotheism. The problem is not the theology but its application — correct knowledge does not automatically produce loving behavior.
5. Paul acknowledges the cultural reality: the Greco-Roman world was full of *legomenoi theoi* ('so-called gods'). The phrase *hōsper eisin theoi polloi* ('as indeed there are many gods') does not affirm their actual divinity but acknowledges their social and spiritual reality — these entities, whether demonic powers or human constructs, function as gods in people's lives.
6. This verse reformulates the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4, 'Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one') to include Christ. The one God is the Father (*ex hou ta panta*, 'from whom all things' — the source) and the one Lord is Jesus Christ (*di' hou ta panta*, 'through whom all things' — the agent). Christ is included within the identity of the one God of Israel, not added as a second deity. This is one of the earliest and most explicit christological reformulations of Jewish monotheism.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Deuteronomy 6:4. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. The Greek *synētheia* ('familiarity, former association, habit') — some manuscripts read *syneidēsei* ('conscience') — describes the ingrained habits of former pagans. Their past worship experience means they cannot separate the meat from its idol-worship context. Their *syneidēsis* ('conscience') is *asthenes* ('weak') — not morally inferior but conditioned by their history. The verb *molynetai* ('is defiled, stained') indicates real spiritual damage, not mere discomfort.
8. This may be another Corinthian slogan that Paul partially endorses. The verb *parastēsei* ('will present, will commend') is a legal term for presenting someone before a judge. Food has no bearing on one's standing before God — Paul agrees with this principle. But the application matters: the 'strong' cannot use this truth to override others' consciences.
9. The word *exousia* ('right, authority, freedom, power') — the same word used for power and authority elsewhere in Paul — is applied to the Corinthians' freedom to eat. Paul does not deny they have this right but warns that rights exercised without love become *proskomma* ('stumbling blocks, obstacles') for weaker believers.
10. Paul paints a specific scenario: a 'knowledgeable' Corinthian reclines (*katakeimenon*, the standard dining posture) in an *eidōleion* ('idol's temple'). Temple dining halls were common venues for social events, business meals, and celebrations in Corinth. The verb *oikodomēthēsetai* ('will be built up') is used ironically — the same word that describes love 'building up' (v. 1) is here used for building up someone toward sin.

11. The verb *apollytai* ('is being destroyed, is perishing') is the same word used in 1:18 for those who are 'perishing.' Paul raises the stakes dramatically: exercising knowledge without love can spiritually destroy a fellow believer. The appositional phrase *ho adelphos di' hon Christos apethanen* ('the brother for whom Christ died') is the theological knockout — how can you use your freedom to destroy someone Christ valued enough to die for?
12. Paul draws a direct line: sinning against a brother's conscience = sinning against Christ. The verb *typtontes* ('striking, beating, wounding') is physical violence language applied to spiritual harm — damaging someone's conscience is an act of assault. Because believers are members of Christ's body (6:15), wounding them wounds Christ himself.
13. Paul's personal pledge — *ou mē phagō krea eis ton aiōna* ('I will never ever eat meat') — uses the strongest possible negation in Greek (the double negative *ou mē* with the aorist subjunctive). This is not a hypothetical but a real commitment: Paul would permanently surrender his own freedom rather than damage a fellow believer. The verb *skandalizō* ('to cause to stumble, to cause to fall into sin') frames the issue as causing another person's spiritual ruin, not merely offending their sensibilities.

9

Summary: Paul uses himself as an example of voluntarily surrendering rights for the gospel's sake. He defends his apostleship and his right to financial support, citing Scripture, common practice, and the Lord's command. Yet he has not used any of these rights — he preaches the gospel free of charge. He becomes 'all things to all people' to save some. The chapter closes with athletic imagery: Paul disciplines his body like a runner training for a prize, lest after preaching to others he himself be disqualified.

What Makes This Remarkable: This chapter is Paul's most extended defense of apostolic rights, but its purpose is paradoxical — he lists his rights only to show he has waived them. The 'all things to all people' statement (v. 22) has been both celebrated and criticized throughout church history. The athletic imagery (vv. 24-27) draws on the Isthmian Games held near Corinth, making the metaphor locally resonant.

Translation Friction: The phrase 'a sister, a wife' (*adelphēn gynaika*, v. 5) is debated — does Paul claim the right to bring a believing wife on his journeys, or a 'sister-wife' (celibate female companion)? The traditional reading of a believing spouse is most natural. The word *adokimos* (v. 27, 'disqualified') has generated debate about whether Paul feared loss of salvation or loss of reward.

Connections: The ox quotation (v. 9) from Deuteronomy 25:4 anticipates Paul's hermeneutical method in 1 Timothy 5:18. The 'all things to all people' ethic connects to Romans 14-15 and the weak/strong discussion. The athletic imagery was common in Greco-Roman moral philosophy (Epictetus, Seneca) and connects to Philippians 3:12-14 and 2 Timothy 4:7-8.

¹Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? ²If I am not an apostle to others, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. ³This is my defense to those who would examine me. ⁴Do we not have the right to eat and drink? ⁵Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? ⁶Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working? ⁷Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its fruit? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? ⁸Am I saying this merely on human authority? Does not the Law say the same thing? ⁹For it is written in the Law of Moses: "You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is God concerned about oxen? ¹⁰Or does he speak entirely for our sake? It was indeed written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope, and the thresher should thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. ¹¹If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? ¹²If others share this right over you, do we not even more? But we have not made use of this right. Instead, we endure everything so that we may not put any obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. ¹³Do you not know that those who serve in the temple eat food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? ¹⁴In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living from the gospel. ¹⁵But I have not used any of these rights, nor am I writing this so that it may be done for me. For I would rather die than — no one will deprive me of my ground for boasting! ¹⁶For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting, since an obligation is laid on me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! ¹⁷For if I do this willingly, I have a reward. But if unwillingly, I am still entrusted with a stewardship. ¹⁸What then is my reward? That in my preaching I

may offer the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel. ¹⁹For though I am free from all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law — though I myself am not under the law — so that I might win those under the law. ²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law — not being outside God's law but under Christ's law — so that I might win those outside the law. ²²To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that by all possible means I might save some. ²³I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings. ²⁴Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. ²⁵Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one. ²⁶So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. ²⁷But I discipline my body and bring it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. Four rapid rhetorical questions, all expecting 'yes.' The SBLGNT order places 'free' before 'apostle,' connecting this chapter to the freedom discussion of chapter 8. The claim to have seen the Lord (heōraka Iēsoun ton kyrion hēmōn) refers to the Damascus road encounter (Acts 9; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:8) — the qualification for apostleship. The Corinthians themselves are Paul's proof: they are his ergon ('work, product') in the Lord.
2. The word sphragis ('seal') was a mark of authentication — like a wax seal on a document. The Corinthians' very existence as a church validates Paul's apostolic ministry. The concessive 'if I am not an apostle to others' suggests some questioned his credentials.
3. The word apologia ('defense') is a legal term for a courtroom defense speech. The verb anakrinousin ('examine, investigate') is the same judicial language from 2:14-15 and 4:3. Paul is under trial by some in Corinth; the following verses are his evidence.
4. The word exousia ('right, authority, power') — the same word from 8:9 — now applies to Paul himself. 'Eating and drinking' refers to being materially supported by the churches, not merely having food.
5. The phrase adelphēn gynaika ('a sister-wife,' i.e., a believing wife) indicates that the other apostles, Jesus's brothers (including James), and Cephas (Peter) all traveled with their wives at church expense. This verse is significant evidence that Peter was married and that Jesus's brothers held leadership roles. Paul mentions this right but does not exercise it — he apparently remained unmarried or traveled without a wife.
6. The mention of Barnabas suggests he, like Paul, supported himself through manual labor. This may reflect a Corinthian critique: because Paul works with his hands (an un-apostolic practice in their view), he must not be a real apostle. Paul reframes it: he works by choice, not necessity.
7. Three analogies from common life — soldier, farmer, shepherd — all make the same point: workers are entitled to benefit from their labor. The opsoinia ('wages, rations') of a soldier was expected; the karpos ('fruit') of a vineyard belonged to the farmer; the gala ('milk') of a flock belonged to the shepherd. Paul argues from universal human practice.
8. Paul escalates his argument from common sense (kata anthrōpon, 'according to human reasoning') to Scripture (ho nomos, 'the Law'). If even human practice supports the worker's right to compensation, how much more does divine revelation?
9. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 25:4. The original command protected working animals from cruel treatment. Paul's rhetorical question mē tōn boōn melei tō theō ('Is God not concerned about oxen?') does not deny God's care for animals but argues that the principle extends beyond the literal ox to human workers — a hermeneutical move common in Jewish interpretation.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Deuteronomy 25:4. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
10. Paul's hermeneutical claim — di' hēmas gar egraphē ('it was written for our sake') — asserts that Scripture's deeper intention applies to apostolic workers. The principle: workers (whether plowing or threshing) should labor with a reasonable expectation of benefiting from their work. Paul applies this to gospel ministry.
11. The contrast between ta pneumatika ('spiritual things') and ta sarkika ('fleshly/material things') frames financial support as a trivially small return on the spiritual investment Paul made in founding the church. The implication: the Corinthians are getting the better deal.
12. The 'others' (alloi) who receive financial support are probably Apollos or other traveling teachers. Paul's waiver of rights — ouk echrēsametha tē exousia tautē ('we have not used this right') — is the point of the entire chapter. The verb stegomen ('we endure, we cover, we bear') and the purpose clause hina mē tina enkopēn dōmen ('so that we may not give any hindrance') reveal his motivation: nothing must obstruct the gospel.
13. Paul cites temple practice — whether the Jerusalem temple or pagan temples (both practiced priestly sustenance from offerings). The principle is universal: those who perform sacred service are sustained by it. The parallel between temple service and gospel ministry elevates the status of apostolic work.
14. Paul cites a command of the Lord (ho kyrios dietaxen) — referencing Jesus's instruction to the disciples in Luke 10:7 ('the laborer deserves his wages') and Matthew 10:10. This is the highest authority Paul can invoke: a direct dominical command. Yet even this command Paul chooses not to exercise.

15. The sentence breaks mid-thought — Paul starts to say 'I would rather die than have anyone empty my boast' but interrupts himself with the emphatic declaration to *kauchēma mou oudeis kenōsei* ('no one will empty/void my boast'). The *anacoluthon* (broken sentence) reveals raw emotion. His 'boast' is that he preaches the gospel free of charge. This is his singular distinction, and he guards it fiercely.
16. Preaching is not Paul's choice but his compulsion — *anankē gar moi epikeitai* ('for necessity is placed upon me'). The Damascus road call was not an invitation but a commission. The exclamation *ouai gar moi estin* ('for woe to me!') echoes prophetic language — Paul sees himself in the tradition of the Hebrew prophets who spoke under divine compulsion (cf. Jeremiah 20:9, Amos 3:8).
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Jeremiah 20:9. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Amos 3:8. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
17. The logic: if Paul chose to preach, he would deserve wages (*misthos*). But since he preaches under divine compulsion (*akōn*, 'unwillingly' in the sense of having no choice), he has been entrusted with an *oikonomia* ('stewardship, management') — the responsibility of a household manager (*oikonomos*, cf. 4:1-2). The reward he claims is not payment but the privilege of offering the gospel free of charge.
18. Paul's 'reward' (*misthos*) is paradoxical — it is the opportunity to give up reward. His compensation is the freedom to offer the gospel *adapanon* ('without cost, free of charge'). The phrase *mē katachrēsasthai* ('not to make full use of') echoes 7:31 — restraint in exercising rights is a mark of eschatological wisdom.
19. The paradox of freedom: Paul is *eleutheros* ('free') from all people, owing nothing to anyone, yet he voluntarily enslaves himself (*emauton edoulōsa*, 'I enslaved myself') to all. The verb *kerdēsō* ('I might gain, I might win') is commercial language — Paul 'profits' people for the gospel. This verse introduces the 'all things to all people' passage (vv. 19-23).
20. Paul's cultural flexibility is extraordinary for a Pharisee: he observes Jewish customs when among Jews (cf. Acts 16:3, where he circumcises Timothy; Acts 21:26, where he takes a Nazirite vow) even though he considers himself no longer 'under the law' (*mē ōn autos hypo nomon*). The distinction between 'Jews' and 'those under the law' may separate ethnic identity from legal observance.
21. The parenthetical qualification is crucial: *mē ōn anomos theou all' ennomos Christou* ('not being lawless toward God but in-lawed to Christ'). Paul's cultural flexibility is not moral relativism — he lives under 'Christ's law' (*ennomos Christou*), a law of love (cf. Galatians 6:2, 'the law of Christ'). His adaptability has ethical boundaries.
22. The climactic statement *tois pasin gegona panta* ('to all I have become all things') summarizes Paul's missionary strategy: radical cultural adaptation in service of the gospel. The word 'some' (*tinās*) is realistic — not all will respond, but some will. The purpose clause *hina pantōs tinās sōsō* ('so that by all means I might save some') reveals Paul's motivation: salvation of people, not preservation of cultural identity.
23. The word *synkoinōnos* ('co-sharer, fellow participant') connects to *koinōnia* (1:9). Paul is not merely a messenger of the gospel but a participant in its benefits. His sacrifice is not self-punishment but investment in a shared reality.
24. The Isthmian Games were held every two years near Corinth — this metaphor would have been vivid and local. The word *stadion* ('stadium, racecourse') and *brabeion* ('prize') come directly from athletic competition. Paul does not mean only one Christian will be saved but urges the kind of total commitment that an athlete brings to competition.
25. The verb *agōnizomenos* ('competing, striving') gives us 'agonize.' The *enkrateuetai* ('exercises self-control') refers to the strict training regimen athletes followed — diet, sleep, abstinence. The Isthmian Games prize was a pine wreath (*stephanos*), which would quickly wither. Paul contrasts this *phtharton* ('perishable') crown with the *aphtharton* ('imperishable') crown believers receive.
26. Paul switches from running to boxing (*pykteuo*, 'I box, I fight with fists'). The phrase *ouk adēlōs* ('not aimlessly, not without clear direction') and *ouk aera derōn* ('not beating the air') describe focused, purposeful effort — every punch lands, every step counts. This is not exercise but combat with a real opponent.
27. The verb *hypōpiazō* (literally 'I strike under the eye, I give a black eye') is boxing language — Paul treats his body as a sparring partner that must be subdued. The verb *doulagōgō* ('I make a slave of, I bring into servitude') echoes the slavery language of verse 19, now applied to his own physical desires. The word *adokimos* ('disqualified, failing the test, rejected') is an athletic term for failing to meet competition standards. Whether Paul fears loss of salvation or loss of reward is debated, but the severity of the warning is unmistakable.

10

Summary: *Paul uses Israel's wilderness experience as a warning: the Israelites all enjoyed spiritual privileges (passing through the sea, eating manna, drinking from the rock) yet most were destroyed because of idolatry, sexual immorality, testing God, and grumbling. He warns the Corinthians that they cannot participate in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. The chapter concludes with practical guidelines: eat whatever is sold in the market without asking questions, accept dinner invitations freely, but if someone specifically identifies food as idol-offered, abstain for the sake of the other's conscience. Do everything for the glory of God.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *Paul's typological reading of the Exodus narrative (vv. 1-4) is one of his most sophisticated hermeneutical passages. The identification of the 'spiritual rock' that followed Israel with Christ (v. 4) is a stunning christological claim. The principle 'God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability' (v. 13) has become one of the most quoted Pauline texts. The practical distinction between marketplace meat, dinner invitations, and explicitly identified idol-food (vv. 25-30) provides a nuanced ethical framework.*

Translation Friction: *The phrase 'spiritual food' and 'spiritual drink' (vv. 3-4) has been interpreted both sacramentally (as types of the Eucharist) and more broadly (as divine provision). The 'rock was Christ' identification (v. 4) draws on Jewish traditions about a mobile well that followed Israel. The command to 'flee from idolatry' (v. 14) stands in tension with the permission to eat marketplace meat (v. 25) — Paul distinguishes between direct participation in idol worship and incidental contact with idol-associated food.*

Connections: *The wilderness narrative draws on Exodus 13-17, Numbers 11, 14, 21, 25, and Psalm 78. The 'cup of blessing' and 'bread' language (v. 16) connects to the Last Supper traditions (11:23-26) and the Passover meal. The 'table of demons' concept (v. 21) draws on Deuteronomy 32:17. The 'do everything for the glory of God' principle (v. 31) anticipates Romans 14:6-8 and Colossians 3:17.*

¹For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ²They were all united with Moses through baptism in the cloud and in the sea. ³Did all consume the same spiritual meat. ⁴Did all partake of the same the identical supernatural drink — since they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. ⁵Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness. ⁶Now these things took place as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil things as they did. ⁷Do not be idolaters, as some of them were. As it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel." ⁸We must not engage in sexual immorality, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. ¹⁰And do not grumble, as some of them grumbled, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹Now these things happened to them as examples, and they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹²So let the one who thinks they stand take care lest they fall. ¹³No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to humanity. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, so that you may be able to endure it. ¹⁴The refore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. ¹⁵I speak to you as sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. ¹⁸Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? ¹⁹What am I saying then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰No, but what they sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. ²¹You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. ²²Are we trying to provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? ²³"All things are lawful," but not all things are beneficial. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. ²⁴Let no one seek their own good, but the good of the other person. ²⁵Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, ²⁶Because the world is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. ²⁷If an unbeliever invites you to a meal

and you want to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising questions of conscience. ²⁸But if someone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience — ²⁹I mean the other person's conscience, not your own. For why should my freedom be judged by someone else's conscience? ³⁰If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something for which I give thanks? ³¹So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. ³²Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, ³³Indeed as I as well please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of numerous, that they may be saved.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The phrase *ou thelō hymas agnoein* ('I do not want you to be ignorant') is a standard Pauline disclosure formula. The 'cloud' (*nephēlē*) is the pillar of cloud from Exodus 13:21-22. Paul says 'our ancestors' (*hoi pateres hēmōn*) even though most Corinthians were Gentiles — he identifies the church with Israel's story. The fivefold repetition of *pantes* ('all') in verses 1-4 is emphatic: everyone received the blessings, yet most fell.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Exodus 13:21-22. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
2. Paul reads the Red Sea crossing typologically as a 'baptism' — immersion into a new identity under Moses's leadership, just as Christian baptism brings immersion into Christ. The passive *ebaptisanto* ('were baptized') can also be read as middle voice ('baptized themselves'). The phrase *eis ton Mōusēn* ('into Moses') parallels 'into Christ' in Romans 6:3 and Galatians 3:27.
3. The 'spiritual food' (*pneumatikon brōma*) is the manna of Exodus 16. Paul calls it 'spiritual' not because it was immaterial but because it came from the Spirit's provision. The parallel with the Lord's Supper is likely intentional.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Exodus 16 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. The claim *hē petra de ēn ho Christos* ('the rock was Christ') identifies the pre-incarnate Christ as the source of Israel's sustenance in the wilderness. The 'rock that followed' (*akolouthousēs petras*) draws on a Jewish rabbinic tradition (found in *Tosefta Sukkah* 3:11 and later sources) that the well of Miriam (based on Numbers 20:1-11 and 21:16-18) traveled with Israel through the desert. Paul christianizes this tradition by identifying the rock with Christ.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Numbers 20:1-11. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. The understatement *ouk en tois pleiosin* ('not with most of them') is darkly ironic — of the entire Exodus generation, only Joshua and Caleb entered the promised land (Numbers 14:29-30). The verb *katestrōthēsan* ('they were spread out, laid low') pictures corpses scattered across the desert floor (Numbers 14:29).
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Numbers 14:29-30 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
6. The word *typoi* ('types, examples, patterns') establishes Paul's hermeneutical method: Old Testament events are typological patterns that prefigure and instruct the church. The reference to 'desiring evil things' (*epithumētas kakōn*) echoes Numbers 11:4-34, where Israel's craving for meat brought divine punishment.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Numbers 11:4-34. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. Paul quotes Exodus 32:6, the golden calf incident. The verb *paizein* ('to play, to revel') in context implies both feasting and sexual activity associated with the idol worship. The connection to the Corinthian situation is direct: participating in temple meals (8:10) is the same pattern of idolatrous feasting that destroyed Israel.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 32:6. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The reference is to the Baal Peor incident (Numbers 25:1-9), where Israelite men had sexual relations with Moabite women and worshiped their gods. Numbers 25:9 gives the death toll as 24,000; Paul says 23,000, possibly distinguishing those who died 'in one day' from the total, or following a different tradition.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Numbers 25:1-9 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
9. The SBLGNT reads 'Christ' (*ton Christon*) rather than 'the Lord' — Paul identifies the pre-incarnate Christ as the one Israel tested in the wilderness (cf. v. 4, 'the rock was Christ'). The reference is to Numbers 21:5-6, where Israel's complaints about food and water resulted in venomous serpent attacks.

9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Numbers 21:5-6. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
10. The verb *gongyzō* ('to grumble, to murmur') is onomatopoeic — it sounds like what it describes. The 'destroyer' (*olothreutēs*) may refer to the angel of death from Exodus 12:23 or to the plague of Numbers 16:41-50. The reference is probably to Korah's rebellion and its aftermath (Numbers 16-17), where grumbling against God's appointed leaders brought deadly consequences — directly relevant to the Corinthians' disrespect of Paul.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Exodus 12:23 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Numbers 16:41-50 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Numbers 16-17 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. The phrase *eis hous ta telē tōn aiōnōn katēntēken* ('upon whom the ends of the ages have arrived') reveals Paul's eschatological framework: the church lives at the climax of history, the point toward which all previous ages were directed. The 'ends' (*telē*) is plural — multiple ages converge in the present eschatological moment.
12. A single, devastating sentence aimed at Corinthian overconfidence. The person who 'thinks they stand' (*ho dokōn hestanaī*) — who considers themselves spiritually secure — is precisely the one most at risk. Israel thought their spiritual privileges guaranteed safety; they were wrong.
13. The word *peirasmos* can mean 'temptation' (enticement to sin) or 'trial/testing' (hardship that tests faith). The declaration *pistos de ho theos* ('but God is faithful') echoes 1:9. God's faithfulness guarantees three things: temptation will not exceed capacity, an escape route (*ekbasis*, literally 'a way out') will be provided, and endurance (*hypenekenin*, 'to bear up under') will be possible. Note: the promise is endurance, not removal of the temptation.
14. The address *agapētoi mou* ('my beloved') softens the command with affection. The imperative *pheugete* ('flee!') — the same urgent command as 6:18 regarding sexual immorality — demands immediate, decisive separation. Paul does not say 'be careful around idolatry' but 'run from it.'
15. The phrase *hōs phronimois legō* ('I speak as to sensible/prudent people') may be mildly ironic — the Corinthians pride themselves on wisdom, so Paul appeals to that self-image. The imperative *krinate* ('judge, evaluate') invites their own assessment of his argument.
16. The phrase to *potērion tēs eulogias* ('the cup of blessing') is a technical term from the Jewish Passover meal — the third cup, over which a blessing was pronounced. The word *koinōnia* ('participation, communion, sharing') from 1:9 now describes the believers' relationship to Christ's blood and body through the Lord's Supper. This is not merely a memorial but genuine participation in Christ's sacrifice. Paul mentions the cup before the bread, which may reflect Corinthian liturgical order.
17. The logic moves from Eucharistic participation to ecclesial unity: shared bread creates shared body. The plural *hoi polloi* ('the many') becoming *hen sōma* ('one body') is the Eucharistic foundation of Paul's body-of-Christ theology (developed further in chapter 12).
18. The phrase *ton Israēl kata sarka* ('Israel according to the flesh') means ethnic/historical Israel. Paul draws on the principle that eating sacrificial food creates *koinōnia* with the altar — and by extension, with the deity worshiped there. This establishes the analogy for idol-feasts in the next verses.
19. Paul anticipates the objection: 'Are you contradicting chapter 8, where you said idols are nothing?' He is not. The idol is indeed nothing (8:4), but that does not mean idol-worship is harmless.
20. Paul draws on Deuteronomy 32:17 (LXX): 'They sacrificed to demons (*daimoniois*) and not to God.' While idols themselves are nothing, the spiritual reality behind pagan worship is demonic. Participation in temple feasts creates *koinōnia* with these demonic powers — the same kind of real participation that the Lord's Supper creates with Christ.
20. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Deuteronomy 32:17 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
21. The parallel structure — *potērion kyriou / potērion daimoniōn, trapezēs kyriou / trapezēs daimoniōn* — makes the incompatibility absolute. The 'table of the Lord' (*trapezēs kyriou*) echoes Malachi 1:7, 12, where it refers to the altar. Paul draws a direct equivalence between the Lord's Supper and temple meals: both create real spiritual bonds, and the two bonds are mutually exclusive.
21. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Malachi 1:7. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
22. The verb *parazēloumen* ('to provoke to jealousy') echoes Deuteronomy 32:21, where Israel provoked God's jealousy through idol worship. The final question — *mē ischyroteroi autou esmen* ('are we stronger than he?') — is chilling: do you really want to compete with God?
22. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Deuteronomy 32:21. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
23. Paul returns to the Corinthian slogan from 6:12, now with a new second qualifier: *ou panta oikodomei* ('not all things build up'). The criterion shifts from personal freedom to community edification. The verb *oikodomeō* ('to build up') has been a key word since 3:9-17 — the question is always: does this action build the community or damage it?

24. This concise principle — *mēdeis to heautou zēteitō alla to tou heterou* ('let no one seek their own but that of the other') — summarizes the entire ethical argument of chapters 8-10. Rights yield to love; freedom serves the neighbor.
25. The Greek *makellon* (from Latin *macellum*) is the public meat market. Archaeological remains of the *macellum* have been found in Corinth. Paul's practical ruling: buy and eat marketplace meat freely — do not investigate whether it was previously offered to an idol. The phrase *mēden anakrinontes* ('not examining, not investigating') uses the judicial verb from 2:14-15, here meaning 'don't interrogate the meat's history.'
26. Paul quotes Psalm 24:1 (23:1 LXX). The theological principle: since everything belongs to the Lord, no food is inherently contaminated. God's ownership of all creation provides the basis for Christian freedom in dietary matters.
26. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalms 24:1. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
27. Second practical scenario: a dinner invitation from a pagan. Paul permits acceptance (*kai thelete poreuesthai*, 'and you wish to go' — attendance is optional, not required). The same rule applies: eat without investigating. Social meals with pagans are not forbidden — Paul does not advocate separation from the wider culture.
28. Third scenario: someone at the meal explicitly identifies the food as *hierothyton* ('offered in sacrifice' — a more neutral term than *eidōlothyton*, 'idol-offered'). The speaker might be a pagan host who thinks the religious origin adds value, or a weak believer troubled by the association. Either way, Paul says abstain — not because the food is inherently contaminated but *di' ekeinon* ('for the sake of that person').
29. Paul clarifies: it is the other person's conscience (*tēn tou heterou*) that matters in this situation, not your own. The rhetorical question about freedom being judged by another's conscience (vv. 29b-30) may voice the Corinthians' own objection, which Paul has been anticipating.
30. This continues the Corinthian objection: 'If I pray over the food and eat with gratitude, why should anyone criticize me?' Paul allows the objection to stand but redirects the conversation to the overriding principle in the next verse.
31. This verse provides the supreme criterion that resolves all the cases: *panta eis doxan theou poieite* ('do everything for the glory of God'). The word *doxa* ('glory') corresponds to the Hebrew *kavod* — to glorify God is to treat God as the weightiest reality in every decision. Eating, drinking, and all of life become acts of worship when oriented toward God's glory.
32. The adjective *aproskopoi* ('blameless, giving no offense, not causing to stumble') extends the principle to three audiences: Jews, Greeks, and the church. Paul envisions a life so shaped by love that it creates no unnecessary obstacles for anyone — the same missionary flexibility described in 9:19-23.
33. Paul's final appeal points back to his own example (chapter 9): he seeks to *tou sympheron* ('the advantage') of *tōn pollōn* ('the many') rather than his own. The purpose clause *hina sōthōsin* ('so that they may be saved') reveals the ultimate motivation behind all of Paul's ethical teaching on food, freedom, and rights: the salvation of people.

11

Summary: *Paul addresses two worship-related issues. First, he discusses head coverings during prayer and prophecy (vv. 2-16), arguing from creation, nature, and church practice that women should have a covering on their heads when praying or prophesying. Second, he rebukes the Corinthians' practice of the Lord's Supper (vv. 17-34), which has degenerated into a meal that reinforces social divisions — the wealthy eat and drink to excess while the poor go hungry. Paul recites the words of institution ('This is my body... this cup is the new covenant in my blood') and warns that eating and drinking without discerning the body brings judgment.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The Lord's Supper tradition (vv. 23-26) is the earliest written account of the institution, predating even the Gospels. Paul claims to have 'received from the Lord' this tradition, placing it in the chain of authoritative teaching. The phrase 'new covenant in my blood' (v. 25) explicitly connects Jesus's death to Jeremiah's new covenant prophecy (Jeremiah 31:31-34). The head covering passage assumes women are actively praying and prophesying in the assembly — Paul does not silence them but regulates how they participate.*

Translation Friction: *The head covering passage (vv. 2-16) is among the most debated in Paul's letters. The Greek *kephalē* ('head') may mean 'authority over' or 'source/origin' — the choice dramatically affects interpretation. The word *exousia* ('authority') in verse 10 is also debated: is it the woman's own authority or a sign of being under authority? We render the Greek and note the options. The Lord's Supper section has fewer textual difficulties but raises profound theological questions about 'discerning the body' (v. 29).*

Connections: The creation argument (vv. 7-9) draws on Genesis 1:26-27 and 2:18-23. The Lord's Supper words connect to Exodus 24:8 (blood of the covenant), Jeremiah 31:31-34 (new covenant), and the Synoptic institution narratives (Mark 14:22-25, Matthew 26:26-29, Luke 22:14-20). The warning about judgment (vv. 29-32) anticipates the final judgment themes of chapter 15.

¹Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. ²Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I delivered them to you. ³But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. ⁴Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. ⁵But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for it is the same as if her head were shaved. ⁶For if a woman will not cover her head, she should cut her hair short. But if it is disgraceful for a woman to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head. ⁷A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of the man. ⁸For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. ⁹Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man. ¹⁰For this reason a woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. ¹¹Nevertheless, in the Lord, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. ¹²For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman. But all things come from God. ¹³Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? ¹⁴Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair, it is a disgrace to him, ¹⁵However, if a lady possess long hair, it is a glory to her — for her hair is given her for a covering. ¹⁶If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice — nor do the churches of God. ¹⁷But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and I believe it in part. ¹⁹Indeed, there must be factions among you, so that those who are genuine may be recognized among you. ²⁰When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat. ²¹For when the time comes to eat, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry while another gets drunk. ²²Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you in this? I will not commend you. ²³For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴Indeed, following he had given thanks, he brake it, and stated, Take, eat — this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. ²⁵In the same way he also took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. ²⁷Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸Let a person examine himself, and then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For the one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. ³¹But if we judged ourselves properly, we would not be judged. ³²But when we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. ³³So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. ³⁴If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. The other matters I will address when I come.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. This verse likely concludes the argument of chapter 10 (chapter divisions are later additions). Paul's call to imitation is now explicitly grounded: *mimētai mou ginesthe kathōs kagō Christou* ('imitate me as I imitate Christ'). The chain of imitation — Christ Paul Corinthians — prevents both hero worship (Paul is not the ultimate model) and autonomy (the Corinthians cannot claim to follow Christ while ignoring apostolic example).
2. The word *paradosēis* ('traditions, teachings handed down') is technical language for authoritative tradition passed from teacher to student. Paul praises their general faithfulness before addressing the specific problems. The verb *paredōka* ('I delivered, I handed over') will recur in verse 23 for the Lord's Supper tradition.
3. The Greek *kephalē* ('head') is the crux of this passage. It can mean 'authority over' (as in most traditional readings) or 'source/origin' (as some scholars argue from its usage in Greek literature). The order — Christ/man, man/woman, God/Christ — is not hierarchical (God is mentioned last, not first) but likely traces the 'source' relationship. The Greek *anēr* can mean 'man' or 'husband,' and *gynē* can mean 'woman' or 'wife' — in this

context about married couples at worship, 'husband' and 'wife' are likely.

4. The phrase kata kephalēs echōn ('having [something] down from the head') likely refers to a cloth draped over the head. Roman men of high status sometimes covered their heads during religious rituals (*capite velato*), so Paul may be opposing a specific Roman practice rather than giving a universal rule. The double meaning of 'head' — the man's physical head and Christ as his metaphorical head — creates deliberate ambiguity.
5. Crucially, Paul assumes women pray and prophesy in the assembly — the issue is not whether they participate but how. The word *akatakalyptō* ('uncovered, unveiled') describes the absence of a head covering. Paul equates an uncovered head with a shaved head (*exurēmēnē*) — in the ancient world, a shaved female head was associated with shame, mourning, or the punishment of adulteresses.
6. Paul uses a *reductio ad absurdum*: if being uncovered is acceptable, then so is being shorn (*keirasthō*) or shaved (*xyrasthai*). But since the Corinthians agree that a shaved/shorn woman is shameful (*aischron*), they should agree that covering is appropriate. The argument assumes shared cultural values about female appearance.
7. Paul draws on Genesis 1:26-27. The statement that man is *eikōn kai doxa theou* ('image and glory of God') reflects Genesis 1:27. That woman is *doxa andros* ('glory of man') does not deny she bears God's image (Genesis 1:27 includes both male and female) but adds a relational dimension from the Genesis 2 narrative. The word *doxa* ('glory') here may mean 'that which reflects the glory of' — as the moon reflects the sun's light.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Genesis 1:26-27. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. Paul references Genesis 2:21-22 (woman created from man's rib/side). The preposition *ek* ('from, out of') emphasizes origin. Note that Paul will qualify this in verse 12: 'as woman came from man, so man comes through woman' — the dependency is mutual.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Genesis 2:21-22 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
9. Paul references Genesis 2:18 ('It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make a helper suitable for him'). The phrase *dia ton andra* ('for the sake of the man') echoes the 'helper' (*ezer*) concept. In Hebrew, *ezer* does not imply subordination — God himself is called Israel's *ezer* (Psalm 33:20, 70:5).
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Genesis 2:18. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Psalm 33:20. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
10. This verse is notoriously difficult. The Greek *exousian echein epi tēs kephalēs* ('to have authority on the head') could mean: (1) a sign of being under authority (traditional reading, requiring 'symbol of' as an interpretive addition), (2) the woman's own authority to pray and prophesy (the covering as her authorization), or (3) authority over her own head (the right to decide about covering). The phrase *dia tous angelous* ('because of the angels') may reference angels as guardians of worship order, or the Genesis 6:1-4 tradition, or angelic presence in the assembly. The ambiguity is genuine.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Genesis 6:1-4 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. The qualifier *en kyriō* ('in the Lord') is crucial — whatever hierarchical or source-relationship Paul has established, it is mutual in Christ. The double negative *oute...chōris...oute...chōris* ('neither without...nor without') creates complete interdependence. This verse significantly qualifies verses 7-9.
12. Paul balances his earlier creation argument: if woman originated from man (Genesis 2), every man since has been born through (*dia*) a woman. The final clause *ta de panta ek tou theou* ('but all things are from God') places both sexes under divine sovereignty, preventing either from claiming ultimacy over the other.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Genesis 2. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
13. Paul appeals to the Corinthians' own sense of propriety (*prepon*, 'fitting, proper, appropriate'). This is an argument from cultural sensibility, not from divine command — a weaker form of argumentation that suggests Paul recognizes the cultural specificity of the practice.
14. The appeal to *physis* ('nature') is an argument from what seems natural or customary. The claim that long hair on men is *atimia* ('disgrace, dishonor') reflects Greco-Roman cultural norms, not universal biology — many ancient Near Eastern men wore long hair (Nazirites, Spartans). Paul is arguing from cultural convention, which weakens the argument's universal applicability.
15. The statement that long hair is given (*dedotai*, divine passive — given by God) as a *peribolaion* ('covering, wrap') creates a potential problem for Paul's argument: if long hair is a natural covering, why require an additional artificial covering? Some scholars argue Paul is saying long hair is the only covering needed; others that the natural covering teaches the principle of covering, which should be honored with an additional veil.
16. Paul's final argument is from church practice: *hēmeis toiautēn synētheian ouk echomen* ('we have no such custom'). The ambiguity is whether 'no such custom' means 'no custom of women being uncovered' or 'no custom of being contentious about it.' The appeal to universal church practice (*hai ekklesiāi tou theou*) serves as Paul's trump card when other arguments may not persuade.
17. The shift from praise (v. 2, 'I commend you') to criticism (*ouk epainō*, 'I do not commend you') signals a more serious problem. The Corinthians' assemblies are actually making things worse (*eis to hēsson*) rather than better (*eis to kreisson*) — their worship is counter-productive.

- 18.** The word *schismata* ('divisions') recurs from 1:10. The phrase *meros ti pisteuō* ('I partly believe') is diplomatically restrained — Paul does not dismiss the reports entirely but also does not accept every detail uncritically. The 'first of all' (*prōton men*) implies a list, but the second item is never explicitly stated (it may be the spiritual gifts discussion in chapters 12-14).
- 19.** The word *haireseis* ('factions, parties, sects' — the origin of 'heresies') in this context means party divisions, not formal theological heresy. Paul's statement that factions 'must' (*dei*) exist is not endorsement but recognition of a divine purpose: divisions reveal who is *dokimoi* ('tested, approved, genuine'). The furnace of conflict refines character.
- 20.** The phrase *kyriakon deipnon* ('the Lord's Supper') appears only here in the New Testament — Paul may have coined the term. The adjective *kyriakos* ('belonging to the Lord') marks this meal as distinct from ordinary dining. Paul's judgment is blunt: what they do when they gather is not the Lord's Supper at all. Their behavior has invalidated the meal.
- 21.** The verb *prolambanei* ('takes beforehand, goes ahead with') indicates that wealthier members, who could arrive earlier and bring better food, were eating before the poorer members arrived (slaves and laborers who could not leave work early). The result: *hos men peina hos de methyei* ('one hungers, another is drunk'). The Lord's Supper, which was supposed to enact equality in Christ, was instead reinforcing Corinthian social stratification.
- 22.** Paul's indignation builds through four questions. The key accusation: *kataphroneite tēs ekklēsias tou theou* ('you despise the church of God') and *kataischynete tous mē echontas* ('you humiliate those who do not have'). The 'have-nots' (*tous mē echontas*) are poor members who arrive with little or no food. The wealthy are not merely eating their own food but humiliating the poor by creating a two-tier meal that mirrors the social hierarchy the gospel was supposed to dissolve.
- 23.** The technical language *parelabon...paredōka* ('I received...I delivered') is the standard terminology for transmitting authoritative tradition in both Jewish and early Christian circles. Paul claims to have received this tradition *apo tou kyriou* ('from the Lord') — whether through a direct revelation or through a chain of tradition originating from Jesus is debated. The phrase *en tē nykti hē paredideto* ('on the night he was being handed over/betrayed') uses *paredideto*, which can mean 'betrayed' (by Judas) or 'handed over' (by God — cf. Romans 8:32). The ambiguity may be intentional.
- 24.** The verb *eucharistēsas* ('having given thanks') is the origin of 'Eucharist.' The words *touto mou estin to sōma* to *hyper hymōn* ('this is my body which is for you') are among the most debated in Christian history — 'is' (*estin*) has been interpreted as literal identity, symbolic representation, spiritual presence, and more. The SBLGNT does not include 'broken' (*klōmenon*), which appears in later manuscripts. The command *touto poieite* ('do this') establishes the meal as a repeated practice, not a one-time event. The word *anamnēsis* ('remembrance') is more than mere memory — in Jewish Passover theology, it means making the past event present and effective.
- 25.** The phrase *meta to deipnēsai* ('after supper') indicates the cup came after the meal, not during it — the original context was a full Passover meal. The declaration *touto to potērion hē kainē diathēkē estin en tō emō haimati* ('this cup is the new covenant in my blood') explicitly invokes Jeremiah 31:31-34, where God promises a new covenant to replace the Sinai covenant. Jesus's blood is the ratifying sacrifice of this new covenant, just as the blood of Exodus 24:8 ratified the old.
- 25.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 25.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Exodus 24:8 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 26.** Paul adds his own interpretive comment to the tradition. The verb *katangallete* ('you proclaim, you announce publicly') means the Lord's Supper is a proclamation — every celebration is a sermon in action. The temporal marker *achri hou elthē* ('until he comes') gives the meal an eschatological horizon: it looks backward to the cross and forward to the return. The meal exists in the tension between 'already' (Christ has died) and 'not yet' (Christ has not yet returned).
- 27.** The adverb *anaxiōs* ('unworthily, in an unworthy manner') modifies the manner of eating, not the worthiness of the eater. In context, 'unworthily' means eating in a way that perpetuates social divisions (vv. 21-22). The word *enochos* ('guilty, liable, answerable for') is a legal term — eating without regard for others makes one liable for the very body and blood the meal commemorates.
- 28.** The verb *dokimazatō* ('let him test, let him examine') is from the metallurgical testing vocabulary — test yourself as you would test metal for quality. The self-examination is not a general inventory of sins but specifically: am I participating in a way that honors the body of Christ (both the crucified body and the community)?
- 29.** The phrase *mē diakrinōn to sōma* ('not discerning the body') is ambiguous: 'the body' could mean Christ's body in the bread, the church as Christ's body, or both. Given the context of social divisions at the meal, 'the body' most likely refers to the community — failing to recognize the gathered church as Christ's body leads to judgment. The SBLGNT does not include 'unworthily' or 'of the Lord' in this verse, following the earliest manuscripts.
- 30.** Paul attributes actual physical illness and death in the Corinthian community to their abuse of the Lord's Supper. The verb *koimōntai* ('sleep') is the Christian euphemism for death (cf. 7:39; 15:6, 18, 20, 51). Whether Paul means divine punishment, natural consequences of social dysfunction, or a spiritual-physical connection is debated, but the severity of the statement is unmistakable.

31. The wordplay between *diekrinomen* ('we were judging/discerning ourselves') and *ekrinometha* ('we would be judged') connects back to verse 29's *diakrinōn* ('discerning'). Self-examination prevents divine judgment — the discipline is restorative, not retributive.
32. The verb *paideuometha* ('we are disciplined, educated, trained') uses the vocabulary of parental correction — God's judgment on the community is disciplinary (corrective) not condemnatory (destructive). The purpose clause *hina mē syn tō kosmō katakrithōmen* ('so that we may not be condemned with the world') distinguishes between divine discipline within the family and final condemnation.
33. The practical solution is remarkably simple: *allēlous ekdecheste* ('wait for one another'). The entire problem — rich eating before poor arrive, social stratification at the Lord's table — is solved by the basic act of waiting. The verb *ekdecheste* means 'welcome, receive, wait for' — it implies hospitality, not mere delay.
34. Paul's second practical instruction: if you cannot wait, eat at home (*en oikō esthietō*). The purpose clause *hina mē eis krima synerchēste* ('so that you may not come together for judgment') reframes their gatherings as potentially judicial events — assemblies that should bring blessing can instead bring *krima* ('judgment'). The closing phrase *ta de loipa* ('the remaining matters') indicates Paul has more to say but will handle it in person.

12

Summary: *Paul addresses 'spiritual things' (pneumatika) — the gifts of the Spirit and their proper use in the community. He establishes that the fundamental confession 'Jesus is Lord' is the Spirit's work, then describes the diversity of gifts given by the one Spirit, one Lord, and one God. Using the extended metaphor of the human body, Paul argues that every member is necessary, that no one can claim superiority or independence, and that God has specially honored the weaker members. The chapter closes with a list of roles God has appointed in the church and a series of rhetorical questions emphasizing that no one has all gifts.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The body-of-Christ metaphor is Paul's most developed ecclesiological image. The emphasis on the 'weaker' and 'less honorable' members receiving greater honor (vv. 22-25) directly addresses Corinthian social stratification. The triad of 'Spirit, Lord, God' in verses 4-6 is one of the earliest trinitarian patterns in Christian literature. The nine gifts listed in verses 8-10 have shaped charismatic theology for centuries.*

Translation Friction: *The distinction between pneumatika ('spiritual things') and charismata ('grace-gifts') in this chapter is debated — Paul may use them interchangeably or may distinguish them. The gift list is not exhaustive (cf. Romans 12:6-8 for a different list). The phrase 'varieties of tongues' (*genē glōssōn*) and 'interpretation of tongues' (*hermēneia glōssōn*) will be further discussed in chapter 14. Whether the 'body of Christ' is metaphor or ontological reality is a perennial theological question.*

Connections: *The body metaphor was common in Greco-Roman political rhetoric (e.g., Livy's fable of the belly) but Paul transforms it christologically. The gift lists parallel Romans 12:6-8 and Ephesians 4:11. The 'weaker members' theme connects to the weak-conscience discussion of chapters 8-10. The chapter leads directly into the love hymn of chapter 13, which provides the governing principle for all gift use.*

¹Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. ²You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. ³Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says "Jesus is cursed," and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. ⁴But the same spirit, and now there are diversities of gifts. ⁵There are various kinds of administrations, but the same Lord. ⁶There are different kinds of working, but the same God is at work in all of them and in everyone. ⁷To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another person faith by that same Spirit, and to yet another gifts of healing by that one Spirit. ¹⁰To another performing miracles. To another prophecy. To another distinguishing between spirits. To another speaking in various languages. To another interpreting those languages: ¹¹All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who distributes to each person individually as the Spirit wills. ¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body — so it is with Christ. ¹³For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and we were all given one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that

does not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that does not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many members but one body. ²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²²On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³The parts of the body that seem less important we treat with special honor, and our less presentable parts receive a dignity that our more attractive parts do not need. ²⁴For our comely parts possess no need — but God has tempered the body as one, possessing granted more abundant honour to that part which lacked. ²⁵so that there would be no division in the body, but instead every part would show equal concern for the others. ²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. ²⁷Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it. ²⁸And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, and various kinds of tongues. ²⁹Is everyone an apostle? Is everyone a prophet? Is everyone a teacher? Does everyone perform miracles? ³⁰Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The phrase *peri de* ('now concerning') marks another response to the Corinthians' letter. The Greek *pneumatikōn* could be neuter ('spiritual things/gifts') or masculine ('spiritual people'). Most translations take it as neuter, referring to the gifts, though Paul may intentionally leave it ambiguous. The disclosure formula *ou thelō hymas agnoein* ('I do not want you to be ignorant') signals an important correction of misunderstanding.
2. Paul reminds the Corinthians of their pre-Christian experience with idolatry. The adjective *aphōna* ('mute, voiceless, speechless') contrasts the silent idols with the speaking Spirit. The phrase *hōs an ēgesthe apagomenoi* ('however you were being led away') describes the directionless, passive experience of pagan religion — they were dragged along by forces they did not understand.
3. Paul provides the foundational test for authentic spiritual experience: the confession *kyrios Iēsous* ('Jesus is Lord'). The phrase *anathema Iēsous* ('Jesus is cursed') may reflect actual occurrences in Corinthian worship where ecstatic speakers uttered shocking statements, or it may be a hypothetical extreme. The declaration that only the Holy Spirit enables the lordship confession establishes the Spirit as the source of all genuine Christian experience. This is the christological criterion for evaluating spiritual claims.
4. The word *diabaseis* ('varieties, distributions, apportionments') emphasizes diversity within unity. The *charismata* ('gifts of grace') — from *charis* ('grace') — are the Spirit's concrete manifestations in the community. The trinitarian pattern begins: one Spirit distributes diverse gifts.
5. The word *diakoniōn* ('services, ministries') shifts from gifts to their expression in service. The 'same Lord' (*ho autos kyrios*) is Christ, continuing the trinitarian pattern: Spirit gifts, Lord service.
6. The word *energēmatōn* ('workings, activities, effects') and the verb *energōn* ('working, empowering') share the root from which English 'energy' derives. The trinitarian pattern completes: Spirit/gifts, Lord/service, God/empowerment. The phrase *ta panta en pasin* ('all things in all') emphasizes God's comprehensive activity — every genuine spiritual manifestation in every person traces back to the one God.
7. Two crucial points: first, *hekastō* ('to each one') — every believer receives a manifestation, not just an elite spiritual class. Second, *pros to sympheron* ('for the benefit, for what is advantageous') — the purpose is corporate benefit, not individual prestige. The word *phanerōsis* ('manifestation, disclosure, making visible') means the Spirit becomes visible through the gifts.
8. The gift list begins with *logos sophias* ('word/utterance of wisdom') and *logos gnōseōs* ('word/utterance of knowledge'). These are not general qualities but specific Spirit-enabled capacities for speaking wisdom and knowledge in the assembly. The distinction between them is not entirely clear — wisdom may be more practical/applied while knowledge may be more revelatory/doctrinal.
9. The 'faith' (*pistis*) mentioned here is not saving faith (which all believers share) but a special gift of extraordinary trust — the kind that moves mountains (13:2). The plural *charismata iamatōn* ('gifts of healings') is doubly plural, suggesting diverse types of healing for diverse conditions, not a single blanket ability.
10. Five more gifts complete the list of nine. *Energēmata dynamōn* ('workings of powers/miracles') overlaps with healing but may include non-medical supernatural acts. *Prophēteia* ('prophecy') is Spirit-inspired speech that builds up the community (14:3). *Diakriseis pneumatōn* ('discernments of spirits') is the ability to evaluate whether a spiritual manifestation is genuinely from God. *Genē glōssōn* ('kinds of tongues') refers to Spirit-inspired speech in languages unknown to the speaker. *Hermēneia glōssōn* ('interpretation of tongues') makes tongue-speech intelligible to the community. Tongues and interpretation are placed last — possibly reflecting Paul's assessment of their relative importance in the assembly.

11. The summary statement reaffirms unity in diversity: *to hen kai to auto pneuma* ('the one and the same Spirit') is the single source of all gifts. The phrase *kathōs bouletai* ('as he wills') assigns sovereignty to the Spirit — gifts are not earned, chosen, or competed for but distributed according to the Spirit's own decision. This directly undercuts any Corinthian hierarchy of gifts.
12. The body metaphor was familiar in Greco-Roman rhetoric, but Paul's conclusion is startling: instead of saying 'so it is with the church,' he says *houtōs kai ho Christos* ('so also is Christ'). The church does not merely resemble a body — it is Christ's body. The identification is ontological, not merely illustrative.
13. Baptism by the Spirit creates the one body, transcending the most fundamental social divisions of the ancient world: ethnic (Jews/Greeks) and status (slaves/free). The verb *epotisthēmen* ('we were given to drink, we were drenched') may refer to the Spirit's infilling as a baptismal experience (being immersed) or to the ongoing experience of the Spirit as spiritual drink (echoing 10:4, drinking from the spiritual rock). Both images — baptism and drinking — convey saturation in the Spirit.
14. This simple statement introduces the extended body analogy (vv. 14-26). A body that was only one part would not be a body at all. The implication: a church where everyone has the same gift or speaks in tongues is not truly functioning as Christ's body.
15. Paul personifies body parts to address those who feel excluded because their gifts seem less impressive. The foot's self-exclusion ('I am not a hand') is absurd — one's identity as a body member does not depend on having a particular function. This addresses believers who feel inferior because they do not speak in tongues or exercise more visible gifts.
16. The second example reinforces the point with a different pair: ear and eye. The logic is the same — difference of function does not diminish membership.
17. Paul uses absurdist humor: a body that was entirely an eye could see everything but hear nothing. The Corinthians' obsession with one spectacular gift (likely tongues) would produce a monstrously dysfunctional body. Diversity is not a concession to weakness but a design requirement.
18. The verb *etheto* ('placed, arranged, appointed') assigns the body's design to God's deliberate choice (*kathōs ēthelēsen*, 'as he wished'). No member chose its own placement, and no member can claim its position is accidental. This parallels the Spirit's sovereignty in distributing gifts (v. 11).
19. The question is rhetorical — a body that is all one part is not a body. Uniformity destroys the very thing it claims to perfect.
20. The summary statement: *polla men melē, hen de sōma* ('many members, one body'). Unity and diversity are not in tension — they are the two essential characteristics of a body.
21. Paul now addresses the opposite problem: not those who feel excluded but those who exclude others. The 'eye' and 'head' — presumably the more prominent members who possess impressive gifts — cannot dismiss the 'hand' and 'feet' as unnecessary. If verses 15-16 address inferiority, verses 21-25 address superiority.
22. The word *asthenestera* ('weaker') echoes the 'weak' members of chapters 8-10. Paul now makes a counterintuitive claim: the *ta dokounta melē* ('the members that seem') weaker are actually *anankaia* ('necessary, indispensable'). Internal organs — invisible and seemingly fragile — are more essential to survival than external, visible parts.
23. The metaphor extends to how we treat body parts: those considered 'less honorable' (*atimōtera*) receive more covering and attention — we clothe them with greater honor (*timēn perissoterein*). The 'unpresentable parts' (*ta aschēmona*) are given *euschēmosynēn* ('presentability, propriety'). Paul implies the community should operate the same way: those with less visible gifts should receive greater honor.
24. The verb *synekerasen* ('composed, blended, combined') describes God as the master designer who deliberately structured the body so that the less honored receive more. This is divine social engineering against hierarchy — God's own design favors the disadvantaged.
25. The purpose of God's design: *hina mē ē schisma en tō sōmati* ('so that there may be no schism/division in the body'). The word *schisma* returns from 1:10 and 11:18 — the body metaphor is Paul's answer to the division problem that has plagued the entire letter. The positive counterpart: *hyper allēlōn merimnōsin* ('they may care for one another equally').
26. The body's interdependence manifests in shared experience: sympathy (*sympaschei*, 'suffer with') and shared joy (*synchairei*, 'rejoice with'). The prefix *syn-* ('with, together') appears in both verbs, emphasizing solidarity. A church where some celebrate while others suffer is as dysfunctional as a body where one hand is healthy while the other is paralyzed.
27. The application is direct: *hymeis de este sōma Christou* ('you are Christ's body'). The phrase *melē ek merous* ('members from a part,' i.e., 'individually members') preserves both the corporate identity (you are the body) and individual significance (each person is a member). The Corinthians are not merely like a body — they are Christ's actual body in Corinth.
28. This second list is ordered with numerical markers (*prōton, deuteron, triton* — 'first, second, third'), suggesting a ranking by importance. Apostles, prophets, and teachers are foundational roles. Then come miracles and healing (gifts from vv. 9-10), followed by two new items: *antilēmpseis* ('acts of helping, forms of assistance') and *kybernēseis* ('acts of guidance, forms of leadership/administration' — from the word for steering a ship). Tongues appear last — pointedly, given the Corinthians' apparent elevation of this gift.
29. Seven rhetorical questions, all introduced by *mē* (expecting a 'no' answer). The point is inescapable: no one has all gifts, and not everyone has the same gift. The Corinthian assumption that everyone should speak in tongues is demolished.

30. The final three questions specifically target the gifts the Corinthians most prized: healing, tongues, and interpretation. The implied answer to each is emphatically 'no.' The diversity that Paul has celebrated is not optional but divinely mandated.
31. The imperative *zēloute* ('earnestly desire, strive for') could also be indicative ('you are striving for') — if indicative, Paul is observing their behavior rather than commanding it. The phrase *kath' hyperbolēn hodōn* ('a way beyond all comparison') introduces chapter 13 — the 'more excellent way' is the way of love. This is one of the most celebrated transitions in all of Paul's letters: from the gifts of the Spirit to the supremacy of love.

13

Summary: *1 Corinthians 13 is Paul's celebrated exposition on love (agape), set within his larger argument about spiritual gifts. After listing the gifts in chapter 12 and before returning to their regulation in chapter 14, Paul inserts this passage to demonstrate that love is the indispensable context for all spiritual gifts. Without love, even the most spectacular abilities — tongues, prophecy, mountain-moving faith — are empty. Paul personifies love with fifteen characteristics (vv. 4-7), then argues that love alone endures when all other gifts pass away. The chapter closes with the triad of faith, hope, and love, declaring love the greatest.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *This chapter is often read in isolation at weddings and funerals, but its original context is a rebuke. The Corinthians were using spiritual gifts competitively, and Paul's praise of love is simultaneously an indictment of their lovelessness. The fifteen attributes of love in verses 4-7 are all verbs in Greek — love is defined by what it does, not what it feels. Several of the negative descriptions ('love does not envy, does not boast, is not arrogant') directly mirror the Corinthian problems catalogued elsewhere in the letter. The 'mirror' image in verse 12 refers to the polished bronze mirrors of Corinth, famously manufactured there but yielding only dim reflections.*

Translation Friction: *The Greek agape is rendered 'love' throughout, not the KJV's 'charity' (which reflected Latin caritas via the Vulgate). While 'charity' in 1611 could mean 'love,' in modern English it means 'almsgiving,' which distorts Paul's meaning. The verb forms in verses 4-7 resist smooth English translation; we preserve the verbal character as much as possible.*

Connections: *This chapter bridges chapters 12 and 14, which together form Paul's extended treatment of spiritual gifts. The eschatological vision of 'seeing face to face' (v. 12) echoes Moses's face-to-face encounter with God (Exodus 33:11, Numbers 12:8). The triad of faith, hope, and love appears also in 1 Thessalonians 1:3, 5:8, and Colossians 1:4-5.*

1If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2And if I have prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3And if I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. 4Love is patient, love is kind, love does not envy. Love does not boast, it is not arrogant. 5It does not act dishonorably, it does not seek its own interests, it is not provoked, it does not keep a record of wrongs. 6It does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices together with the truth. 7It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8Love never falls. But if there are prophecies, they will be set aside; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be set aside. 9Since we know in part, and we prophesy in part. 10However, when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part will be done away. 11When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became an adult, I set aside childish things. 12For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, just as I have been fully known. 13And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. Paul begins with an extreme case: even angelic speech without love is mere noise. The Greek *chalkos echon* ('sounding bronze') and *kumbalon alalazon* ('wailing cymbal') evoke the percussion instruments of pagan worship in Corinth — the sound is loud but meaningless. The KJV's 'tinkling' is too gentle; *alalazon* means 'wailing, clashing.'

2. Paul escalates: prophecy, comprehensive knowledge, and miracle-working faith — all gifts the Corinthians prized — count for nothing without love. The mountain-moving faith echoes Jesus's teaching (Mark 11:23). The blunt 'I am nothing' (outhen eimi) is a deliberate shock, deflating the Corinthian fascination with spectacular gifts.
3. The SBLGNT reads kauchesomai ('that I may boast') rather than kauthesomia ('to be burned'), which is a variant reading reflected in the KJV. The critical text suggests that even martyrdom motivated by self-glory rather than love is worthless. The verb psomiso ('I feed by hand, I dole out') emphasizes the laborious, hands-on nature of the giving — and still it profits nothing without love.
4. Paul now defines love with fifteen verbs — love is described by what it does, not by what it feels. The first two are positive (patient, kind), then a cascade of negatives follows. The Greek perperuesthai ('to boast, brag') occurs only here in the New Testament. The word physioutai ('is puffed up') echoes 4:6, 18, 19 and 8:1, targeting the Corinthians' specific vice.
5. The phrase ou zetei ta heoutes ('does not seek its own') directly echoes 10:24 and 10:33, where Paul made the same point about himself. The verb logizetai ('reckon, calculate') is an accounting term — love does not maintain a ledger of offenses. The KJV adds 'easily' before 'provoked,' softening what in Greek is absolute: love is not provoked.
6. The prefix syn- in synchairei ('rejoices with/together') suggests communal celebration — love joins in the truth's triumph rather than savoring another's failure. The contrast between adikia ('wrongdoing, injustice') and aletheia ('truth') pairs moral and intellectual integrity.
7. The fourfold panta ('all things') creates a powerful rhetorical climax. The verb stegēi can mean 'covers' (as a roof covers a house) or 'bears' (as in bearing a load) — both senses apply. The sequence moves from passive endurance (bears) through trust and hope to active persistence (endures). Love's coverage is total.
8. The verb piptēi ('falls') means 'collapses, fails' — love never loses its structural integrity. Paul now contrasts love's permanence with the temporary nature of gifts the Corinthians most valued. The verb katargeō ('to abolish, set aside, render inoperative') indicates that prophecy and knowledge serve a purpose that will be completed, after which they are no longer needed. Tongues 'will cease' (pauōntai) uses a different verb, but Paul is not making a theological distinction between different modes of cessation.
9. The phrase ek merous ('from a part, partially') frames all present knowledge and prophecy as incomplete. This is not false or wrong but fragmentary — we see truly but not fully.
10. The Greek to teleion ('the complete, the perfect, the mature') is neuter, referring to a state or condition rather than a person. In context, this refers to the eschatological consummation when face-to-face knowledge replaces partial knowledge (v. 12). We render it 'the complete' rather than 'the perfect' to avoid confusion with moral perfection.
11. The analogy does not demean childhood but illustrates the natural supersession of one stage by another. The three verbs — speaking, thinking, reasoning — correspond loosely to the three gifts mentioned in verse 8 (tongues, prophecy, knowledge). The word aner ('adult male, man') is rendered 'adult' here since the contrast is maturity versus immaturity, not gender.
12. The Greek esoptron ('mirror') refers to the polished bronze mirrors for which Corinth was famous — clear enough to show a reflection but never as sharp as direct sight. The phrase en ainigmati ('in a riddle, dimly') echoes Numbers 12:8 (LXX), where God speaks to Moses 'not in riddles' but face to face — the very vision Paul anticipates for all believers at the consummation. The shift from ginōsko ('I know') to epiginōsko ('I will fully know') marks the difference between partial and complete knowledge.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Numbers 12:8. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
13. The triad of faith, hope, and love is a Pauline signature (cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:3, 5:8). The verb menei ('remains, abides') contrasts with the passing away of gifts in verse 8. Why love is greatest is debated: perhaps because God himself is love (1 John 4:8), or because love alone continues unchanged into eternity while faith becomes sight and hope becomes possession. The declaration 'the greatest of these is love' is the climax of the entire three-chapter argument on spiritual gifts.

14

Summary: 1 Corinthians 14 applies the love principle of chapter 13 to the specific question of tongues and prophecy in corporate worship. Paul argues consistently that prophecy is superior to uninterpreted tongues because prophecy builds up the whole congregation, while unintelligible speech edifies only the speaker. He establishes practical regulations: tongues must be interpreted, prophets must speak in order, and everything must be done for building up. The chapter culminates in a call for orderly worship, grounded in the character of God, who is a God of peace, not confusion.

What Makes This Remarkable: Paul's insistence on intelligibility over ecstatic experience was counter-cultural in Corinth, where pagan worship at temples of Dionysus and Apollo featured frenzied, unintelligible utterances. His argument that uninterpreted tongues make the speaker a 'foreigner' (barbaros, v. 11) to fellow worshippers inverts the Corinthian pride in this gift. The Old Testament quotation from Isaiah 28:11-12 (v. 21) is used in a surprising way — tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, and a negative sign at that, signaling judgment rather than blessing.

Translation Friction: Verses 34-35, which command women to be silent in the churches, stand in tension with 11:5, where Paul assumes women pray and prophesy in the assembly. Proposals include: (a) Paul is quoting a Corinthian slogan he will then refute, (b) the silence concerns only the evaluation of prophecy, (c) the verses are a later interpolation (some manuscripts place them after v. 40). We render the SBLGNT text as given and note the interpretive difficulty.

Connections: This chapter completes the spiritual gifts discussion begun in chapter 12 and framed by chapter 13. The Isaiah 28 quotation connects Corinthian tongue-speaking to the prophetic tradition of judgment oracles. The worship regulations parallel those in 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22. The closing principle 'God is not a God of disorder but of peace' (v. 33) grounds liturgical practice in theology proper.

¹Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. ²For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God, for no one understands, but he speaks mysteries in the Spirit. ³But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their building up, encouragement, and consolation. ⁴The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. ⁵Now I want all of you to speak in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be built up. ⁶Now, brothers and sisters, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? ⁷Even lifeless instruments that produce sound, whether flute or harp — if they do not produce distinct notes, how will anyone recognize the tune being played on the flute or the harp? ⁸And if the trumpet produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare for battle? ⁹So it is with you. Unless you produce intelligible speech with your tongue, how will anyone know what is being said? For you will be speaking into the air. ¹⁰There are doubtless many different kinds of languages in the world, and none is without meaning. ¹¹So if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker will be a foreigner to me. ¹²So with you. Since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church. ¹³Therefore, let the one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. ¹⁴For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. ¹⁵What then? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind. I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will also sing praise with my mind. ¹⁶Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can the outsider say "Amen" to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying? ¹⁷For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not built up. ¹⁸I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. ¹⁹But in the church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue. ²⁰Brothers and sisters, do not be children in your thinking. In evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature. ²¹In the Law it is written: "By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord." ²²So then, tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. ²³So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? ²⁴But if all prophesy and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is examined by all, ²⁵Thus are the secrets of his inner self fashioned manifest. And so falling below on his face he will bow down before God, and report that God is in you of a truth. ²⁶What then, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. ²⁷If anyone speaks in a tongue, let it be two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. ²⁸But if there is no interpreter, let him be silent in the church and speak to himself and to God. ²⁹Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others evaluate what is said. ³⁰If a revelation is given to another person sitting there, let the first be silent. ³¹For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be encouraged. ³²The prophets have control over their own prophetic spirits. ³³For God is not a God of disorder but

of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, ³⁴Indeed, let your women keep silence in the churches — since it is not permitted to them to speak. Yet they are commanded to be under obedience, as also says the law. ³⁵If they want to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home, for it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church. ³⁶Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached? ³⁷If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, he should recognize that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord. ³⁸But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. ³⁹So, my brothers and sisters, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. ⁴⁰But let all things be done properly and in order.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The imperative diokete ('pursue, chase') is aggressive — love must be actively hunted, not passively awaited. The transition from chapter 13 is seamless: love is supreme, but gifts still matter. Paul's preference for prophecy over tongues will dominate the chapter.
2. The KJV adds 'unknown' before 'tongue,' which is not in the Greek. Paul's point is not that tongues are bad but that they are vertically directed (to God) and therefore unintelligible to the horizontal audience without interpretation. The word *mysteria* ('mysteries') carries positive connotation — genuine spiritual content that lacks a human audience.
3. Three purposes of prophecy are named: *oikodome* ('building up,' from the construction metaphor Paul favors), *paraklesis* ('encouragement, exhortation'), and *paramythia* ('consolation, comfort'). Prophecy serves the community; tongues without interpretation do not.
4. Paul concedes that tongues do edify the individual speaker — this is not dismissed. But the standard for worship is communal edification. The verb *oikodomei* ('builds up') is used for both, but the object shifts from 'himself' to 'the church.'
5. Paul does not forbid or denigrate tongues — he wishes all spoke in tongues. But he ranks prophecy higher because of its communal benefit. The exception clause is critical: if tongues are interpreted, they become functionally equivalent to prophecy for building up the church.
6. Paul uses himself as an example. Four forms of intelligible speech are listed as alternatives to uninterpreted tongues: revelation, knowledge, prophecy, and teaching. All four communicate understandable content to the audience.
7. Paul draws an analogy from music. The word *diastole* ('distinction, difference') refers to the intervals between notes that create melody. Without distinguishable intervals, music becomes noise — precisely what unintelligible tongues are in worship.
8. The military analogy intensifies the point: an unclear trumpet call is not merely unhelpful but dangerous. In the Roman military context familiar to Corinth, different trumpet calls signaled advance, retreat, and various formations. An ambiguous signal could be fatal.
9. The phrase *eis aera lalountes* ('speaking into the air') is vivid — the words dissipate like breath in wind, reaching no one. The Greek *eusemon* ('clear, intelligible') literally means 'well-signed' or 'well-marked.'
10. The word *phone* can mean 'voice,' 'sound,' or 'language.' Paul's point is that every language, however foreign, carries meaning to its native speakers. The problem with uninterpreted tongues is not that they lack meaning but that their meaning is inaccessible.
11. The Greek *barbaros* ('barbarian, foreigner') was onomatopoeic — it mimicked the 'bar-bar' sound that foreign languages seemed to make to Greek ears. Paul's use is ironic: the Corinthians prized tongues as a spiritual achievement, but the practical effect is mutual incomprehension — they become barbarians to one another.
12. Paul redirects their zeal rather than quenching it. The word *pneumatōn* ('of spirits') is unusual — most translations supply 'spiritual gifts,' but the word may refer to spiritual manifestations more broadly. The imperative is clear: channel your enthusiasm toward what builds the community.
13. The connection between tongue-speaking and interpretation is presented as a matter of prayer. The tongue-speaker himself should seek the gift of interpretation, ensuring that his own utterance can serve the community.
14. Paul distinguishes between *pneuma* ('spirit') and *nous* ('mind'). In tongues-prayer, the human spirit engages God but the cognitive faculty (*nous*) produces no intelligible fruit for others. Paul does not dismiss spirit-prayer but insists that mind-engagement is also necessary in corporate settings.
15. Paul models the balanced approach: both spirit and mind are engaged. The verb *psalō* ('I will sing, I will make music') originally meant 'to pluck a stringed instrument' and came to mean 'to sing psalms or hymns.' Both prayer and singing should engage the full person.
16. The Greek *idiotes* ('outsider, layperson, uninstructed person') does not mean 'idiot' but refers to someone who lacks the specialized knowledge to understand — in this case, the unintelligible tongue. The congregational 'Amen' was a crucial element of early Christian worship (cf. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 65), requiring comprehension of what was said.
17. Again Paul affirms that tongues-prayer is genuine thanksgiving — 'well enough' (*kalos*) is not sarcastic. The problem is not quality but accessibility. Individual spiritual experience, however authentic, must serve the community in corporate worship.
18. Paul establishes his authority to regulate tongues by revealing that he himself exercises this gift abundantly. He cannot be accused of envying a gift he lacks. The claim 'more than all of you' is remarkable and may be hyperbolic, but it prevents the Corinthians from dismissing his instructions as sour grapes.

- 19.** The ratio is staggering: five intelligible words outweigh ten thousand unintelligible ones. The Greek *myrioi* ('ten thousand') is the largest number Greek had a single word for — it represents an overwhelming quantity. The verb *katecheso* ('I might instruct') is the root of 'catechism' — teaching that produces understanding.
- 20.** Paul calls the Corinthians' obsession with tongues childish. The wordplay is sharp: be babies (*nepiazō*) in evil but adults (*teleioi*, 'mature, complete') in thinking. The word *phresin* ('in understanding/thinking') refers to practical judgment, not abstract intellect.
- 21.** Paul quotes Isaiah 28:11-12, calling it 'the Law' (a common Jewish usage for the entire Old Testament). In Isaiah's original context, the 'strange tongues' were the Assyrian invaders — unintelligible speech was a sign of God's judgment on disobedient Israel. Paul applies this typologically to the Corinthian situation.
- 21.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 28:11-12. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
- 22.** This verse is notoriously difficult because the scenario in verses 23-25 seems to reverse the logic. If tongues are for unbelievers, why do unbelievers react negatively to tongues (v. 23)? The resolution may be that tongues are a negative sign (of judgment, as in the Isaiah passage) for unbelievers, while prophecy positively builds up believers.
- 23.** The verb *mainesthe* ('you are mad, you are raving') was commonly used for the frenzied ecstasies of pagan worship. Paul warns that a worship service dominated by unintelligible tongues will look indistinguishable from pagan mania to visitors. The early church gathered in homes open to passersby, making this a real concern.
- 24.** The verbs *elenchetai* ('is convicted, exposed') and *anakrinetai* ('is examined, investigated') describe prophetic speech penetrating to the conscience. Prophecy functions as a spiritual mirror, revealing what the visitor did not know about himself.
- 25.** The phrase 'God is truly among you' (*Ontos ho theos en hymin estin*) echoes Isaiah 45:14 and Zechariah 8:23, where Gentiles recognize God's presence among Israel. The entire sequence — conviction, exposure, prostration, worship, confession — describes a conversion event triggered by intelligible prophetic speech.
- 25.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 45:14 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 25.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Zechariah 8:23 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 26.** This verse provides a rare window into early Christian worship: it was participatory, with multiple members contributing different elements. The diversity of contributions — psalm, teaching, revelation, tongue, interpretation — suggests a dynamic, Spirit-led gathering. The governing principle is *oikodome* ('building up'): every contribution must serve the community.
- 27.** Paul imposes three regulations on tongues: (1) a maximum of three speakers per gathering, (2) they must speak sequentially (*ana meros*, 'in turn'), not simultaneously, and (3) interpretation is mandatory. These rules balance freedom with order.
- 28.** Without an interpreter, the tongue-speaker must be silent in the assembly — but may continue praying privately. The phrase *heauto laleitō kai tō theō* ('let him speak to himself and to God') dignifies private tongue-prayer while limiting its public exercise.
- 29.** Prophecy is also regulated: two or three per gathering, with communal evaluation (*diakrinetōsan*, 'let them discern, judge, evaluate'). The 'others' who evaluate may be other prophets or the congregation as a whole. This prevents any individual from claiming unquestionable prophetic authority.
- 30.** The prophetic gift is not an uncontrollable ecstatic seizure — the first prophet can and must yield to another. This implies that prophetic speech is under the speaker's control, a point Paul will make explicitly in verse 32.
- 31.** The 'one by one' (*kath' hena*) reinforces orderly sequence. The dual purpose — learning and encouragement — restates the communal focus. The word 'all' (*pantes*) appears three times, emphasizing the universal scope of both participation and benefit.
- 32.** This principle is foundational: the prophetic spirit does not overpower the prophet's will. Unlike pagan ecstasy, where the deity supposedly seized control of the human vessel, Christian prophecy operates within the prophet's conscious self-control. This makes the regulations of verses 27-31 enforceable.
- 33.** The theological grounding of worship order: God's own character is peace (*eirene*), not confusion (*akatastasia*, 'instability, disorder, tumult'). The phrase 'as in all the churches of the saints' may begin the next sentence (connecting to vv. 34-35) or conclude this one. The SBLGNT punctuation connects it forward.
- 34.** This passage is among the most debated in Paul's letters. It appears to contradict 11:5, where women pray and prophesy in the assembly. Major proposals: (1) the silence concerns only the evaluation of prophecy (v. 29), not all speech; (2) Paul is quoting a Corinthian position he will then refute in v. 36; (3) the verses are a later scribal interpolation (some manuscripts place them after v. 40). We render the SBLGNT text without resolving the tension, noting that Paul's own practice included women co-workers who prophesied and taught.
- 35.** The word *aischron* ('shameful, disgraceful') is strong. If this represents Paul's own view, it must be reconciled with his practice of partnering with women like Priscilla, Phoebe, and Junia in ministry. If it is a Corinthian quotation, verse 36 becomes the rebuttal. The instruction 'ask their own husbands at home' may address a specific disruption pattern in Corinth rather than establishing a universal rule.

36. Paul's rhetorical questions deflate any claim to exclusive authority. If vv. 34-35 are a Corinthian quotation, this verse is Paul's sharp rebuttal: 'You did not invent the gospel, and you are not its sole recipients.' The questions challenge Corinthian arrogance regardless of how one reads the preceding verses.
37. Paul asserts apostolic authority as a test of prophetic genuineness: a true prophet will recognize Paul's instructions as carrying the Lord's authority. The singular 'command' (entole) rather than plural suggests Paul has a specific regulation in mind — likely the worship order guidelines of the entire chapter.
38. The wordplay on agnoei ('does not know/recognize') and agnoeitai ('is not known/recognized') is untranslatable in its full force. Some manuscripts read agnoeito ('let him be ignorant'), a dismissive imperative. The SBLGNT's passive agnoeitai is more pointed: the person who refuses to acknowledge Paul's apostolic authority forfeits recognition in the community.
39. Paul's conclusion maintains the balance he has struck throughout: prophecy is preferred but tongues are not prohibited. The imperative zelōte ('earnestly desire') for prophecy is positive; the prohibition me kōluete ('do not forbid') for tongues is protective. Both gifts have their place when properly ordered.
40. The final summary: euschemonos ('properly, with good form, decently') and kata taxin ('according to arrangement, in order'). The word taxin was used for military formation and civic procedure — worship should reflect the ordered character of the God who is worshiped (v. 33). This verse has become a foundational text for all subsequent Christian reflection on liturgical order.

15

Summary: *1 Corinthians 15 is Paul's most extensive treatment of resurrection. He begins by reciting the earliest Christian creed (vv. 3-8), grounding the resurrection in eyewitness testimony. He then argues that denying the future resurrection of believers logically entails denying Christ's resurrection, which would unravel the entire gospel (vv. 12-19). The chapter traces the cosmic scope of resurrection: Christ as firstfruits, then believers at his coming, culminating in the defeat of death itself and the Son's handing over the kingdom to the Father (vv. 20-28). Paul addresses the nature of the resurrection body — not a resuscitated corpse but a transformed, imperishable body suited for the age to come (vv. 35-49). The chapter climaxes with the mystery of final transformation and a triumphant declaration that death has been swallowed up in victory (vv. 50-57).*

What Makes This Remarkable: *Verses 3-7 constitute the earliest surviving Christian creed, likely formulated within five years of the crucifixion. The appearance list includes over five hundred witnesses, most of whom Paul says are still alive and could be consulted. The Adam-Christ typology (vv. 21-22, 45-49) establishes a framework that Paul develops further in Romans 5. The phrase 'if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile' (v. 17) is the most direct statement in Scripture that Christianity stands or falls with the bodily resurrection. The 'mystery' of verse 51 — that not all will die but all will be changed — introduces an eschatological surprise not found in prior Jewish expectation.*

Translation Friction: *The phrase 'baptized on behalf of the dead' (v. 29) remains one of the most obscure statements in Paul's letters; over forty interpretations have been proposed. We render the Greek literally and note the difficulty. The meaning of 'he handed over the kingdom' (v. 24) and the Son's subjection to the Father (v. 28) raises complex Trinitarian questions we do not attempt to resolve. The 'spiritual body' (soma pneumatikon) of verse 44 is frequently misunderstood as 'immaterial body,' but Paul means a body animated and governed by the Spirit.*

Connections: *The creed of vv. 3-5 connects to the Gospel passion and resurrection narratives. The Adam-Christ typology links to Genesis 2-3 and Romans 5:12-21. The 'firstfruits' language echoes Leviticus 23:10-11. The defeat of death draws on Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14. The transformation imagery anticipates Philippians 3:20-21 and 2 Corinthians 5:1-5.*

¹Now I make known to you, brothers and sisters, the gospel that I proclaimed to you, which you also received, in which you also stand, ²Indeed, by which also you are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached to you, unless you have believed in vain. ³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴That he was buried, and that he rose again the third day in keeping with to the scriptures:. ⁵He appeared to Peter, and then to the twelve apostles. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as

to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹Because I persecuted the church of God, for I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than all of them — yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. ¹¹Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you believed. ¹²Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴And if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is empty and your faith is empty. ¹⁵We are even found to be false witnesses about God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ — whom he did not raise if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. ²⁰But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man. ²²For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. ²³But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. ²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says "all things are put in subjection," it is clear that the one who subjected all things to him is excepted. ²⁸When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who subjected all things to him, so that God may be all in all. ²⁹Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on behalf of them? ³⁰Why are we in danger every hour? ³¹I die every day! I swear it by my boasting in you, brothers and sisters, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord. ³²If merely from a human perspective 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." ³³Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good character." ³⁴Come to your senses as you should and stop sinning, for some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame. ³⁵But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" ³⁶Foolish one! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷And what you sow — you do not sow the body that will be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. ³⁸But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. ³⁹Not all flesh is the same flesh; rather, there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. ⁴⁰There 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 kind. ⁴¹There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. ⁴²So also is the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³It is sown in dishonour. It is raised in glory — it is sown in weakness. It is raised in authority. ⁴⁴It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. And there is a spiritual body, and there is a natural body. ⁴⁵So also it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶But the spiritual does not come first; rather, the natural comes first, then the spiritual. ⁴⁷The first man was from the earth, made of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸As 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. ⁴⁹And just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven. ⁵⁰Now I say this, brothers and sisters: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹Listen, I tell you a mystery: we will not all fall asleep, but we will all be changed, ⁵²Indeed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump — for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. ⁵³For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴When this perishable body puts on imperishability and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." ⁵⁵"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory by way of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. Paul reintroduces the gospel he originally preached to Corinth. The three verbs trace the gospel's trajectory: proclaimed (euengelisamen), received (parelabete), and now stand firm in (hestekate). The perfect tense of hestekate indicates a settled, ongoing stance.
2. The present tense sozesthe ('you are being saved') presents salvation as an ongoing process, not merely a past event. The conditional 'if you hold fast' (ei katechete) introduces a note of warning that prepares for the chapter's argument against resurrection deniers.
3. The transmission language (paredoka/parelabon) matches 11:23 — Paul is passing on authoritative tradition, not inventing doctrine. The phrase en protois ('among the first things, as of first importance') indicates priority of content, not merely chronology. The creed that follows (vv. 3b-5) is widely recognized as pre-Pauline, likely dating to the early 30s AD.
4. Four clauses form the creed: died, buried, raised, appeared. The burial confirms the reality of death; the appearances confirm the reality of resurrection. The perfect tense egegetai ('has been raised') indicates a past event with continuing effects — Christ was raised and remains risen. 'According to the Scriptures' likely refers to Hosea 6:2 and/or Jonah 1:17 (cf. Matthew 12:40), though no single Old Testament text explicitly predicts a third-day resurrection.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Hosea 6:2. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Jonah 1:17. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. The verb ophthe ('appeared, was seen') is a divine appearance term in the Septuagint (cf. Genesis 12:7, Exodus 3:2). Cephas is the Aramaic name for Peter — Paul uses the Aramaic form, suggesting this creed originated in the Aramaic-speaking Jerusalem church. 'The Twelve' functions as a title for the apostolic group even after Judas's departure.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Genesis 12:7 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Exodus 3:2 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
6. Paul's note that most of the five hundred are still alive functions as an implicit challenge: these witnesses can be consulted. This is the earliest form of historical evidence appeal in Christian literature. The appearance to five hundred simultaneously is not recorded in the Gospels.
7. This James is almost certainly James the brother of Jesus (cf. Galatians 1:19), who became the leader of the Jerusalem church. He was apparently not a follower during Jesus's ministry (cf. John 7:5), making the resurrection appearance a conversion experience. 'All the apostles' appears to be a broader group than 'the Twelve' of verse 5.
8. The word ektroma ('miscarriage, abortion, untimely birth') is shockingly self-deprecating. Paul sees his apostleship as abnormal — born violently and prematurely through the Damascus road encounter rather than through the normal process of following the earthly Jesus. The phrase 'last of all' (eschaton panton) may indicate Paul believes his was the final resurrection appearance.
9. Paul's self-assessment is not false humility — he genuinely regards his persecution of the church as disqualifying. The phrase ten ekklesian tou theou ('the church of God') uses the most elevated designation for the community, heightening the gravity of his offense.
10. The phrase chariti theou eimi ho eimi ('by the grace of God I am what I am') is one of Paul's most concentrated theological statements. The self-correction 'not I, but the grace of God' prevents boasting while still claiming the reality of his labor. Grace does not eliminate human effort but transforms and empowers it.
11. Paul closes the credal section by emphasizing apostolic unity: regardless of which apostle preached, the message was the same — Christ died, was buried, was raised. This common proclamation is the foundation for the argument that follows.
12. Paul reveals the problem: some Corinthians deny the resurrection of the dead. They likely accepted Christ's resurrection as a unique divine act but denied that ordinary believers would be bodily raised. This may reflect Greek philosophical contempt for the body (cf. Acts 17:32). Paul will show that the two resurrections stand or fall together.
13. The logic is tight: if resurrection is categorically impossible, then Christ's resurrection is also impossible. Paul refuses to make Christ's resurrection an exception to a general rule — it is instead the first instance of a general resurrection.
14. The word kenon ('empty, hollow, without content') is devastating: without resurrection, the entire Christian message collapses into an empty shell. Both the apostolic proclamation and the Corinthian response to it become meaningless.
15. The phrase pseudomartyres tou theou ('false witnesses of God') is a serious charge — the apostles would not merely be mistaken but guilty of bearing false testimony about God's actions. The preposition kata ('against') suggests testifying against God by attributing to him an act he did not perform.
16. Paul restates the premise of verse 13 for emphasis before drawing the most devastating consequence in verse 17.
17. The word mataia ('futile, useless, pointless') is stronger than kenon in verse 14 — not merely empty but worthless. The consequence 'still in your sins' means that without resurrection, Christ's death accomplished nothing. Atonement and resurrection are inseparable in Paul's theology.
18. The word apolonto ('have perished, are destroyed') stands in brutal contrast to 'fallen asleep in Christ.' If there is no resurrection, the euphemism of sleep is a cruel lie — the dead are simply gone.

- 19.** The superlative *eelenoterai* ('most pitiable, most to be pitied') is the climax of the *reductio ad absurdum*. Christians who have suffered persecution, social ostracism, and material loss for a false hope would be the most deluded people on earth. Paul's argument assumes that following Christ involves real worldly cost.
- 20.** The emphatic *nyni de* ('but now, but in fact') signals the dramatic reversal from the hypothetical despair of vv. 12-19 to the triumphant reality. The word *aparche* ('firstfruits') is a Levitical term (Leviticus 23:10) — the first sheaf of the harvest, offered to God as a guarantee that the full harvest will follow. Christ's resurrection guarantees the resurrection of all who belong to him.
- 20.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Leviticus 23:10 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 21.** The Adam-Christ typology is introduced: the same channel through which death entered (a human being) is the channel through which resurrection comes. The parallelism demands a real, bodily human — not an angel or divine being acting apart from humanity.
- 22.** The two 'all' (*pantes*) statements are symmetrical but not necessarily identical in scope. 'In Adam all die' is universal — physical death touches every human. Whether 'in Christ all will be made alive' is equally universal (all humanity) or limited to 'all who are in Christ' is debated. The context of verses 23-24 suggests the latter, as Paul specifies 'those who belong to Christ.'
- 23.** The word *tagma* ('order, rank, division') is a military term for a unit in formation. The resurrection occurs in stages, not all at once: Christ first, then believers at the *parousia* ('coming, arrival, presence'). The *parousia* is the expected return of Christ.
- 24.** The 'end' (*to telos*) is the consummation of all things. Christ's mediatorial reign ends when all hostile powers are defeated and the kingdom is handed over to the Father. The three terms — *arche*, *exousia*, *dynamis* ('ruler, authority, power') — encompass all forms of opposition to God, whether spiritual or political.
- 25.** Paul alludes to Psalm 110:1, the most frequently quoted Old Testament text in the New Testament. The divine necessity (*dei*, 'it is necessary, he must') indicates this is God's predetermined plan. The reign is not yet complete — enemies remain — but the outcome is certain.
- 25.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalm 110:1 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 26.** Death is personified as an enemy — the final enemy. The passive *katargeitai* ('is being destroyed, is abolished') may be a prophetic present, treating the future event as already underway because Christ's resurrection has already begun death's defeat. Death is not merely an unfortunate reality but a hostile power that will be defeated.
- 27.** Paul quotes Psalm 8:6 and adds a logical clarification: when the psalm says 'all things,' the Father who does the subjecting is obviously not included. This prevents the absurd conclusion that the Father is subject to the Son.
- 27.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Psalms 8:6. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
- 28.** The Son's voluntary subjection to the Father is the final cosmic act. The phrase 'God may be all in all' (*ho theos ta panta en pasin*) envisions a reality where God's presence and authority are fully realized in every dimension of existence. This is the *telos* of the entire biblical narrative — God's unmediated presence filling all things.
- 29.** This is one of the most obscure verses in the Pauline corpus. The phrase *baptizomenoi hyper ton nekron* ('being baptized on behalf of the dead') has generated over forty scholarly interpretations. The most straightforward reading is that some Corinthians practiced vicarious baptism for deceased persons — Paul neither endorses nor condemns the practice but uses it as an argument: their own behavior presupposes resurrection. We render the Greek literally without resolving the interpretive question.
- 30.** Paul shifts from the Corinthians' practice (v. 29) to his own experience. If there is no resurrection, the constant danger of apostolic ministry is pointless. The phrase *pasan horan* ('every hour') emphasizes the unrelenting nature of the risk.
- 31.** The oath formula *ne* ('I swear by') is rare in Paul and indicates the intensity of his claim. 'I die every day' (*kath' hemeran apothnesko*) describes the constant mortal danger of his apostolic work. Paul's daily dying is meaningless without the hope of resurrection.
- 32.** Whether Paul literally fought animals in the Ephesian arena or speaks metaphorically of fierce human opposition is debated. The quotation 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die' comes from Isaiah 22:13, where it describes fatalistic hedonism in the face of judgment. Without resurrection, this becomes the only rational philosophy.
- 32.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 22:13. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
- 33.** Paul quotes a line attributed to the Greek poet Menander (Thais, fragment 218). The Greek *ethē chresta* ('good character/morals') and *homiliai kakai* ('bad company/associations') form a proverbial warning. Paul's use of a pagan poet to make a moral point parallels his quotation of Aratus in Acts 17:28.
- 34.** The verb *eknepsate* ('sober up, come to your senses') suggests the Corinthians have been drunk on their own theological confusion. The phrase *agnosian theou* ('ignorance of God') is a stinging rebuke — despite their intellectual pride, some Corinthians lack basic knowledge of God's character and purposes.

35. Paul now addresses the 'how' question. The objection assumes that resurrection means resuscitation of the same physical body — an idea many found absurd. Paul will show that the resurrection body is real but transformed.
36. The sharp address *aphron* ('fool, senseless one') echoes Jesus's parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:20). The seed analogy answers the 'how' question: just as a seed must die to produce a plant, the mortal body must die to produce the resurrection body. Continuity and transformation coexist.
37. The point is crucial: the seed and the plant are continuous (it is the same organism) but radically different in form. No one mistakes a wheat kernel for a stalk of wheat. Likewise, the resurrection body will be continuous with but transformed from the present body.
38. The resurrection body is God's gift and God's design — not a natural process but a divine creative act. The phrase 'as he has chosen' (*kathos ethelesen*) emphasizes divine sovereignty over the form of the resurrection body.
39. Paul expands the analogy: God already creates diverse kinds of bodies in the natural world. The diversity of earthly bodies demonstrates God's creative capacity to produce bodies suited for different environments — including the environment of the age to come.
40. The word *doxa* ('glory, radiance, splendor') refers to the visible splendor appropriate to each type of body. Heavenly bodies (sun, moon, stars) have a different kind of glory than earthly bodies — both are real, but they differ in mode of existence and splendor.
41. Even within the category of heavenly bodies, diversity of glory exists. The point is cumulative: God's creation already displays an enormous range of bodily forms and degrees of glory. The resurrection body will be yet another form — different from anything now known but no less real.
42. Paul now applies the analogies. Four contrasts follow (vv. 42-44), each using the sown/raised pattern. The first: *phthora* ('decay, perishability') versus *aphtharsia* ('imperishability, incorruption'). The mortal body decays; the resurrection body cannot.
43. Two more contrasts: dishonor versus glory, weakness versus power. The burial of a corpse is an act involving shame and frailty; the resurrection body possesses divine radiance and supernatural vitality. Each pair moves from the negative experience of death to the positive reality of resurrection.
44. The crucial fourth contrast: *soma psychikon* ('natural/soul-ish body') versus *soma pneumatikon* ('spiritual body'). The 'spiritual body' is not immaterial — it is still a *soma* ('body'). The adjective *pneumatikon* means 'animated by/oriented to the Spirit,' just as *psychikon* means 'animated by/oriented to the soul.' The resurrection body is a real, physical body fully governed by the Holy Spirit.
45. Paul quotes Genesis 2:7 for the first Adam and adds his own christological counterpart. The first Adam received life (*psyche zosan*, 'a living soul/being'); the last Adam gives life (*pneuma zoopoion*, 'a life-giving spirit'). Christ is not merely alive but the source of resurrection life for all who belong to him.
45. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Genesis 2:7 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
46. Paul insists on the sequence: natural before spiritual, Adam before Christ. This may counter a Corinthian belief that they had already attained the spiritual state and had no need of future bodily resurrection.
47. The adjective *choikos* ('dusty, earthy, made of soil') echoes Genesis 2:7, where God forms Adam from the dust of the ground. The second man — Christ — is 'from heaven' (*ex ouranou*), indicating his heavenly origin. The SBLGNT omits 'the Lord' after 'second man,' which appears in some manuscripts.
47. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Genesis 2:7. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
48. The representative principle: we share the nature of our representative head. Those united to Adam share his dusty, mortal nature; those united to Christ will share his heavenly, imperishable nature.
49. The SBLGNT reads the subjunctive *phoresomen* ('let us bear'), but many manuscripts read the future *phoresomen* ('we will bear'). The meaning is similar: just as our present bodies reflect Adam's dust-nature, our resurrection bodies will reflect Christ's heavenly nature. The word *eikon* ('image') connects to Genesis 1:26-27 — the image of God, marred in Adam, will be fully restored in the resurrection.
49. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Genesis 1:26-27. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
50. The phrase 'flesh and blood' (*sarx kai haima*) refers to the present mortal human condition, not to physicality as such. The resurrection body will be physical but not 'flesh and blood' in this mortal sense. Transformation is necessary — the present body cannot enter the kingdom as-is.
51. The word *mysterion* ('mystery') in Paul means a truth previously hidden but now revealed by God. The 'mystery' is that not all believers will die before Christ returns — some will be alive at the *parousia*. But all, whether dead or living, must be transformed. This addresses a question left open by the preceding argument.
52. The Greek *atomō* ('indivisible instant') is the word from which 'atom' derives — the smallest possible unit of time. The 'last trumpet' (*eschatē salpingi*) echoes the shofar traditions of Jewish apocalyptic expectation (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Matthew 24:31). The transformation is instantaneous and universal.
53. The clothing metaphor (*endysasthai*, 'to put on, to clothe oneself with') suggests that the resurrection is not the discarding of the body but its being clothed with new qualities. The mortal puts on immortality as a garment — transformation, not replacement. The divine necessity (*dei*, 'must') indicates this is God's determined plan.

54. Paul quotes Isaiah 25:8 ('he will swallow up death forever'), adapting it to read 'Death has been swallowed up in victory' (eis nikos). The prophetic promise will be fulfilled at the moment of resurrection transformation. The passive 'has been swallowed' indicates that death is not merely defeated but consumed — it ceases to exist.
54. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 25:8. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
55. Paul taunts death with a loose quotation of Hosea 13:14. The SBLGNT reads 'death' (thanate) in both lines rather than the KJV's 'grave' (hades) in the second. The word kentron ('sting, goad') evokes a scorpion's or bee's sting — death's weapon. In the resurrection, death is disarmed and mocked.
55. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Hosea 13:14 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
56. Paul inserts a compressed theological explanation: death's weapon is sin (without sin, death would have no power), and sin's power comes through the law (which defines transgression and pronounces the curse). This compressed argument anticipates the fuller treatment in Romans 5-7.
57. The present tense didonti ('who gives, who is giving') presents the victory as an ongoing gift, not merely a future event. The victory over death is secured by Christ's resurrection and appropriated by believers through union with him. The chapter's argument culminates in doxology.
58. The chapter ends not with speculation but with exhortation to faithful action. The adjectives hedraioi ('steadfast, firmly seated') and ametakinetoio ('immovable, not to be shifted') contrast with the instability of those who deny the resurrection. The final word kenos ('empty, vain') echoes verses 10, 14, and 17 — unlike a faithless gospel, labor done 'in the Lord' is never empty.

16

Summary: *First Corinthians 16 transitions from theological instruction to practical matters: the collection for the saints in Jerusalem, Paul's travel plans, commendations of co-workers, and final exhortations. Paul instructs the Corinthians to set aside money on the first day of each week so that no collection will be needed when he arrives. He outlines his intended route through Macedonia and expresses hope for an extended stay in Corinth. The chapter closes with commendations of Timothy, Apollos, and the household of Stephanas, and includes the Aramaic prayer-cry 'Maranatha' — 'Our Lord, come!' — embedded in a Greek letter as a witness to the earliest Aramaic-speaking church's expectation of Christ's return.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The Aramaic word 'Maranatha' (v. 22) is one of the most significant linguistic fossils in the New Testament. Its preservation untranslated in a Greek letter to a Greek-speaking church demonstrates that this prayer-cry was so ancient and well-known that it needed no translation. It witnesses to the earliest post-resurrection community's worship of Jesus as Lord (maran) and their expectation of his imminent return. The conditional curse formula in verse 22 ('If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed') followed immediately by 'Maranatha' creates a jarring juxtaposition of judgment and hope that reflects the eschatological tension of early Christian worship.*

Translation Friction: *The phrase 'anathema' (v. 22) is a strong term meaning 'devoted to destruction' or 'cursed,' borrowed from the Septuagint's rendering of the Hebrew cherem. We render it as 'accursed' to preserve its severity. The 'holy kiss' (v. 20) was a standard early Christian liturgical greeting, not a cultural peculiarity. Paul's note about writing 'with my own hand' (v. 21) indicates that an amanuensis wrote the rest of the letter and Paul added the closing personally as authentication.*

Connections: *The collection for Jerusalem connects to Paul's broader theology of Gentile-Jewish unity (Romans 15:25-27; 2 Corinthians 8-9). The travel plans anticipate the situation described in 2 Corinthians. The mention of Pentecost (v. 8) provides one of the few chronological anchors in Paul's correspondence. Stephanas is mentioned as the 'firstfruits of Achaia' (v. 15), connecting to the earlier reference in 1:16 where Paul baptized his household.*

¹Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. ²On the first day of every week, each of you is to set something aside and save, in keeping with how he has prospered, so that no collections will need to be made when I come. ³And when I arrive, I will send those whom you approve with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴And if it seems worthwhile for me to go as well, they will travel with me. ⁵I will come to you after I pass through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia. ⁶And perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may send me on my way wherever I go. ⁷For I do not want to see you just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. ⁸But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹For a remarkable door and effectual is opened to me, and

there are numerous adversaries. ¹⁰When Timothy comes, see that he has nothing to fear among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, just as I am. ¹¹So let no one despise him. Send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me, for I am expecting him with the brothers. ¹²Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the brothers, but it was not at all his will to come now. He will come when he has the opportunity. ¹³Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act with courage, be strong. ¹⁴Let all that you do be done in love. ¹⁵Now I urge you, brothers — you know that the household of Stephanas were the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints — ¹⁶That you place yourselves under the guidance of to such, and to every one that helps with us, and labors. ¹⁷I rejoice at the arrival of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence. ¹⁸For they refreshed my spirit and yours. So give recognition to such people. ¹⁹The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord. ²⁰All the brothers and sisters greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. ²¹This greeting is in my own hand — Paul. ²²If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed. Maranatha! ²³The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. ²⁴My love be with all of you in Christ Jesus.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The Greek *logeia* ('collection') is a term from the papyri associated with religious contributions. This collection for the Jerusalem church was a major project spanning several years of Paul's ministry, reflecting his commitment to unity between Gentile and Jewish believers.
2. The phrase *kata mian sabbatou* ('on the first day of the week') is an early witness to Christian assembly on Sunday rather than the Jewish Sabbath. The verb *euodotai* ('has prospered') is in the passive, implying God as the source of prosperity — the KJV makes this explicit, though it is only implied in the Greek.
3. The word *charin* ('gift, grace') is used here for the monetary contribution — Paul consistently elevates the collection by using theological vocabulary for it. The letters of commendation were standard practice for ensuring the integrity of financial transfers in the ancient world.
4. Paul leaves open the possibility that the collection may be large enough to warrant his personal delivery to Jerusalem — a journey that would eventually lead to his arrest (Acts 21).
5. Paul's travel plans here differ from what he later describes in 2 Corinthians 1:15-16, where he had originally planned to visit Corinth first. This change of plans became a point of contention that Paul addresses in the opening chapters of 2 Corinthians.
6. The verb *propempsete* ('send on my way') implies providing material support and traveling companions for the next leg of a journey — a common early Christian practice of hospitality. Winter travel by sea was considered dangerous and was generally avoided.
7. The conditional 'if the Lord permits' (*ean ho kyrios epitrepsee*) reflects Paul's characteristic submission of his plans to divine sovereignty, similar to James 4:15.
8. This verse provides a rare chronological anchor: Paul writes from Ephesus before the Jewish feast of Pentecost (Shavuot), placing the letter in the spring. The continued use of the Jewish calendar by Paul, even when writing to Gentile believers, shows the Jewish framework of early Christian life.
9. The metaphor of an 'open door' for ministry opportunity appears also in 2 Corinthians 2:12 and Colossians 4:3. The juxtaposition of great opportunity and many adversaries captures a characteristic Pauline tension — the advance of the gospel generates opposition.
10. The concern that Timothy might face intimidation suggests the Corinthians' contentious spirit could extend to mistreating Paul's delegates. Timothy's mission was mentioned in 4:17. The phrase 'the work of the Lord' (*to ergon kyriou*) elevates Timothy's ministry to the same level as Paul's own.
11. The verb *exouthenēsē* ('despise, treat with contempt') is strong language, suggesting a real risk that the Corinthians might dismiss Timothy due to his youth or because he lacked Paul's authority. Compare 1 Timothy 4:12, 'Let no one despise your youth.'
12. This verse is remarkable for what it reveals about the relationship between Paul and Apollos. Despite the factionalism in Corinth ('I follow Paul... I follow Apollos,' 1:12), Paul actively encourages Apollos to visit. The phrase 'it was not at all his will' (*pantos ouk en thelema*) is ambiguous — it could refer to Apollos's will or God's will. Most interpreters read it as Apollos's personal decision.
13. Four imperatives in rapid succession create a martial rhythm. The verb *andrizesthe* (literally 'act like men, be courageous') echoes the Septuagint of Joshua 1:6-9 and Psalm 31:24 (LXX 30:25). We render it 'act with courage' to capture the semantic force without the gendered idiom. The KJV's 'quit you like men' is archaic.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Joshua 1:6-9 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Psalm 31:24 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.

14. This single sentence summarizes the entire practical section of the letter. After the extended discussion of love in chapter 13, Paul returns to *agapē* as the governing principle for all community life. The placement after the martial imperatives of verse 13 is deliberate — strength and courage must be exercised in love.
15. Stephanas was mentioned in 1:16 as one whom Paul personally baptized. The term *aparchē* ('firstfruits') means they were the first converts in the province of Achaia (southern Greece). Their self-appointed service (*etaxan heautous*) to the saints demonstrates voluntary leadership in the early church.
16. The verb *hypotassēsthe* ('submit') here describes voluntary deference to recognized leaders, not hierarchical subordination. The criteria for recognition are service and labor, not office or title — a significant window into early church leadership structures.
17. These three likely carried the Corinthians' letter to Paul (cf. 7:1, 'Now concerning the matters about which you wrote'). The phrase 'made up for your absence' (to *hymeteron husterēma aneplērōsan*) is diplomatic — their presence compensates for the fact that the whole church could not come.
18. The verb *anepausan* ('refreshed, gave rest to') suggests that the delegation brought not only the letter but also encouraging news or personal comfort to Paul. The imperative *epiginōskete* ('recognize, acknowledge') calls the community to honor faithful servants.
19. Paul uses the formal name 'Prisca' rather than the diminutive 'Priscilla' found in Acts. This couple had previously been in Corinth (Acts 18:2) and now hosted a house church in Ephesus. The phrase *kat' oikon ekklēsia* ('church in their house') is one of the earliest references to the house-church model that characterized Christianity for its first three centuries.
20. The 'holy kiss' (*philēmati hagiō*) was a liturgical practice in the early church (cf. Romans 16:16; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26). It expressed familial bond and unity within the believing community. The adjective 'holy' distinguishes it from an erotic or merely social greeting.
21. Paul takes the pen from his *amanuensis* (secretary) to write the closing personally. This practice authenticated the letter as genuinely from Paul (cf. Galatians 6:11; Colossians 4:18; 2 Thessalonians 3:17). The shift to Paul's own handwriting would have been visually obvious to the original recipients.
22. The Greek *anathema* translates the Hebrew *cherem* — something devoted to God for destruction (cf. Joshua 6:17-18). The Aramaic *marana tha* can be divided two ways: *maran atha* ('our Lord has come') or *marana tha* ('our Lord, come!'). The latter is more likely given the eschatological context and its parallel in Revelation 22:20. This Aramaic phrase preserved in a Greek letter is a remarkable linguistic fossil, demonstrating that the earliest Aramaic-speaking Christians worshipped Jesus as 'Lord' (*maran*) — a divine title.
22. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Joshua 6:17-18. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
23. The SBLGNT reads 'the Lord Jesus' without 'Christ,' a shorter reading preferred by the critical text. This grace benediction is Paul's standard letter-closing formula, though its exact wording varies across his letters.
24. This personal declaration of love is unique among Paul's letter closings and is especially striking given the severity of much of this letter. After confronting division, immorality, lawsuits, and doctrinal error, Paul closes not with a final rebuke but with an expression of genuine affection. The SBLGNT omits the 'Amen' found in some manuscripts and in the KJV.