

New Topic, Created Roles. (Verse one of chapter 11 seems more like a final exhortation connected to the subject of chapter 10 than an introduction to the next subject which is taken up in the first part of chapter 11.)

The subject of headship and appropriate head covering is a response to either a question or a report from someone among the Corinthians. Paul takes the opportunity to carefully lay out the majestic, basic principle of order.

Headship! The creation itself, even though fallen, reflects the very nature of the Godhead Itself. While the Three divine Persons are indeed One God there appears to be an intrinsic order there. The title “the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” suggests an order, not of superiority/inferiority but of equals with differing roles, the Father being the initiator, the Son the executive and the Spirit the implementer. Other scriptures including 1Corinthians 12 also suggest these differing roles for the different Persons of the Godhead.

Paul describes here God’s order of headship for us. Some have described it as the “chain of command”. He takes us back to the creation to demonstrate the order that God established as a model of order to be restored among believers today. Headship begins with God himself and flows downward into humanity through the relationships God established. What is amazing is that authority flows directly to mankind from God, not through angels as many presume. Although angels are superior in nature to mankind (Heb 2:7) they do not have authority over men. Instead God has deigned these wonderful spirit beings to be His servants that minister to us (Hebrews 1:13-14). How like Him! The superior in nature serves the inferior. God highly values the virtue of serving others. It is an aspect of love many among mankind disregard, if not despise. Yet we see God the Son, Himself taking the form of a servant and becoming a man (Philippians 2:7). Then He becomes obedient unto death. Even as King, He serves the God that made Him Christ (“anointed”) the King (1Cor 15:24-28).

The line of headship God has decreed is this:

God>>Christ>>Man (male)>>Woman>>Household

Other scriptures show us that the Man with the Woman were set up to be co-regents over the earth (Gen 1:26). This position they forfeited when they sinned and disobeyed the God who had created them and had brought them together into this relationship. The dominion will be restored to mankind in the person of the Man Christ Jesus and His Bride who will reign together over the earth.

Now Paul declares that we are to illustrate and demonstrate God’s order through the way we dress our heads when we pray or prophesy. First note there is here

no gender distinction as to the basic principle that both men and women are at liberty and spiritually qualified and empowered to pray or prophesy. But God limits our practice under this liberty several ways. Here Paul prescribes a gender distinction in head covering when praying or prophesying. Later in chapter 14 he further limits a woman from speaking in the gathered Assembly (church). He also limits the women from teaching or usurping authority over a man, 1Tim 2:11-12. So spiritual men and women are both qualified and at liberty to pray or prophesy in the Lord, but the woman is limited to some extent by God.

Paul now explains the reasons for the gender specific head covering/head uncovering. It is simply because of the order God had originally established. A **man is the image and glory of God**. Therefore he is to exhibit that position by simply uncovering his head when he speaks to God or speaks on behalf of God. Similarly since the **woman is the glory of the man**, when she speaks to God or speaks on behalf of God she is to exhibit the appropriate place the glory of man has when compared to the glory of God. John, while Jesus was here on earth, lay in His bosom communing with Him. But he falls at His feet as dead when he sees Him in glory, Rev. 1:17. The glory of man (the woman) is to be covered when before God.

Mankind is declared to be the glory of God, for in mankind God united the spiritual being (as are angels) and the soul being (as are animals) into one unique creature. Likewise, Woman is declared indeed to be the glory of Mankind. Obviously this is not an inferior place. Just in case these facts are not obvious to perceptive, intelligent people God affirms them to us in no uncertain terms. The Corinthians needed this reminder. We do too.

Clearly defined gender distinctions are a critical part of God’s intended, and later prescribed, order in the Creation. Male and female are not only made (wonderfully and attractively) different physically, but gender differences in interests and responses to everyday life become obvious shortly after birth. This, despite the attempts of women’s liberation groups and “politically correct” idealists to deny, and to squelch gender differences that naturally arise in youngsters. There is little wonder that young people grow up confused about their gender orientation and gender roles in this atmosphere. Believers, parents and children, need desperately to be alert and to avoid being taken in with this deception of Satan. God has given a simple custom to observe, gender specific head covering for specific occasions, that helps keep things straight in our minds and establishes His order early in the hearts of even the very

young.

But you may say “this is out of date. No one covers her head anymore.” Or “that head covering stuff was for the Corinthian culture because only women of ill repute went bare headed.” Well, certainly we should not dress as a whore, but that is not the issue in this passage of scripture at all. Also, many try to evade clear and simple statements of God’s will by deciding the scriptures are time bound or culture bound. That is, they say the scripture was for the time it was written but doesn’t apply now. Or, that it is culture bound, written for the culture of the land that received it, not for here. Paul’s presentation destroys that kind of reasoning for he takes us back to the creation to establish the basis for what he prescribes here. More on that next week.

God is earnest about this issue. For now as much as for then. So earnest, the apostle uses a sharp comparison of a woman having her head shorn if she doesn’t want to cover when praying or prophesying. The allusion is, she would forfeit **her** glory (her hair, v 15) to be like a man. That is as disgraceful for her as being shorn bald. Why is this issue so important? To knowingly continue to uncover her head when praying or prophesying is to symbolically usurp a man’s authority and place before God. She is also symbolically despising the headship of her husband, if she is married, or her father, if single.

But it seems such a simple thing. Why is it so important? Because God says so. It seems so trivial. Then why is it so hard for some to simply do? This simple request is in many ways similar to God’s first command made in the garden of Eden. Essentially it was a single command symbolically establishing God’s authority. Simply avoid eating fruit from a certain tree! Eve couldn’t handle that. This is mankind’s second chance to honor the Creator by obeying a simple command. The believer now has the new nature’s desire to please God and the power of the indwelling Spirit to carry through. And here is the

simplest of tests of that liberty and submissive spirit which we have been given by the blood of Christ shed on the cross. Let’s not flunk it this time around.

There could be more discussion on when and where to cover (women) and uncover (man) and perhaps, Lord willing, a special edition of “Dig” will attempt to discuss this. For now, **be aware** that there are occasions when covering, or uncovering your head, depending upon your gender, is appropriate. (No, not just when the flag is passing by.) **Be alert** to them and prayerfully seek to discover yourself what the will of the Lord is in various situations. For instance, a continuous covering is obviously not envisioned for a woman because praying and prophesying are specifically given as the occasion for a woman covering her head. I sense that women today in this country have the greater difficulty accepting this scripture and complying. But a man who has converted from Islam may experience considerable reproach, if not persecution, for simply removing his head covering when praying or prophesying in his native country.

When in doubt, go back to the previous chapter which, as it concludes, both sums up chapters 8 through 10 and sets up this discussion.

1Corinthians 10:31 *Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: 33 Even as I please all [men] in all [things], not seeking mine own profit, but the [profit] of many, that they may be saved. 11:1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also [am] of Christ.*

And consider:

Colossians 3:17 *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, [do] all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*

By Ron Canner, July 16, 2003.

Now Paul continues his lesson for the “deep thinkers” among the Corinthian believers who were questioning the distinguishing gender roles God has ordained from the beginning. Instead of human tradition or custom, all of his instruction is founded upon the **created order** revealed in Genesis (“so says the Law”) or from commonly known “facts of life.” Two provoking attention getting thoughts he introduces just add credence to his argument. One, the angels are watching! Two, even nature teaches a discerning heart what hair length suits each gender. The Corinthians in their natural reasoning and self exaltation had drifted away from these two basic realities. Even today we easily think our own thoughts and reason that hair length is not only not important but it is a person’s own business. Even as believers we tend to lose touch with our own God created human nature and lose touch with the Creator’s revealed mind for us. He uses Paul to gently remind us of what we ought to know instinctively regarding gender appropriate hair length and head covering.

Paul reminds us of the proximity of the invisible angelic host, onlookers. They not only are rejoicing in the salvation of one sinner but are delighting to see the **return** of that one to the God given gender role. These angels are those who remained faithful to God when Satan rebelled. Other angels, now known as demons, fell with him. When man sinned in the garden through disobedience Eve ignored her God given role and preempted Adam. Adam acquiesced in her having usurped his place as head and accepted her offer leading him to sin as well. BUT Christ’s death on the cross has conquered Satan and the dominion of sin and redeemed us to Him to obey and serve Him. He has regained for us the position Adam and Eve lost in their disobedience. Now we return to God to learn and carry forward the order He created originally. We gladly array ourselves in our gender specific order of headship, cover and uncover our heads in a gender specific way when praying or prophesying, and wear our hair an appropriate length suited to our gender. These are signs of the delivering victory of the His cross.

The **angels** see and rejoice while the **demons** see and fume. (Remember the demons, referred to in chapter 10, behind the idols to which the pagans sacrifice.) The **people** that see us behaving this way have a witness of how things should really be. They should see how well the assembly, our marriages and our households function in a loving atmosphere because we have adopted God’s created order. Best of all, **God sees and is glorified and refreshed.** Seeing this order, alive today, is a token for **Him**, a wonderful foretaste of the glorious order that will

be established in the thousand year reign of Christ. And after that, this same created order will be seen perfectly, voluntarily, eternally in the New Earth. But **we** have been given the privilege of carrying it out even **now**, in the midst of the selfish and rebellious age we live in. Let’s **LIVE** to glorify God! And **LIVE** to bless others. **LIVE** the best way possible, **in God’s given order!**

In verses 9-11, Paul reviews the created order of the man and the woman. Note:

- the reason God gives for the creation of the woman (for the man);
- the source of the first woman (man, Adam’s rib);
- the source of every man and woman since then (the woman);
- the inherent difference in the male and female roles in reproduction (of the man, by the woman);
- their mutual interdependence for existence and continuation of the race and specifically of themselves in their progeny.

So we are all equal but are blessed with differing roles and responsibilities. Learn them eagerly, accept them gladly, and live them joyously.

But why does he have to devote space in scripture tell us all this? Shouldn’t we just know this? He tells us because, sadly, we otherwise would ignore the obvious both from nature and God’s word. Man’s history has adequately demonstrated that we cannot be relied upon to see and know God’s will and order simply from the Creation, much less keep it. That is clear from the record in Genesis of the first 1600 years of history, from the fall to the flood. Consider that man then was far more intelligent than we because the degeneration due to sin had not yet reached it’s full extent. They were much more experienced and wiser than we because they were much longer lived. (Read Job and interactions recorded in Genesis for examples of early man’s sophistication in reasoning and dignity in expressing themselves, even after the flood.) They were responsible to see Creation’s order and to pass on God’s pronouncements to later generations, yet only eight were preserved in the ark through the flood. Man is proven incapable of retaining the knowledge of the Creator in the culture. Therefore God has given His written word to us to go by now. And He has given His indwelling Spirit to move and empower us to love Him and to do His will and carry out His mind and purposes. **We can now be after His own heart.** Do we dare to be contentious about these revelations given from God through Paul? He grants no latitude to ignore them.

Does God hate women? That is the charge that is implied when people today say Paul was demeaning to women and was a woman hater. How dare they! Was

God picking on the Corinthians? No. He gives the same truths to all of the churches (assemblies). Is it for today? Amen brother. Amen sister.

Who says a woman's hair is her glory? God does. And the care and concern most every woman has about her hair is witness enough that He is correct. Not to mention universal marketing and sales of woman's hair care and hair care products in the world today.

Isn't a woman's lovely, long hair enough covering when she is praying or prophesying? Why is a head covering sometimes needed over the hair? God gives the answer here. Because she is to cover her glory, her hair, because she herself is the glory of mankind. Mankind's glory is to be, at least symbolically, covered in the presence of God. The Greek word for her covering in verse 15 likens her long hair to a mantle, shawl or wrap. A different word is used in vv 4-6 for head coverings. There it denotes a something that "covers up." So her long hair is sufficient for an everyday **covering, or wrap**, and a "**covering up**" of her head is needed only when praying or prophesying.

Finally, note the strong statement to us guys. God says it is a **shame** for us to have **long hair**. It is a shame, even if it is the style in our country. Apparently, despite 1Corinthians 10:32, hair length is an exception to Paul's practice of conforming to those about us, in order that some might be saved. Long hair is clearly out of keeping with the position God has chosen to give men in His creation. There are several Biblical examples of men with long hair that are of interest.

- The **Nazarite vow** required a man who wished to dedicate himself to God to avoid cutting his hair, avoid partaking of any wine or grapes, and avoid touching a dead person, Numbers 6.
- **Samson**, a Nazarite dedicated from birth at God's direct command, (and in Hebrews 11 named a man of faith) lost his prodigious strength when he divulged the secret of it to Delilah who cut his hair, Judges ch 13 - 16.
- **Absalom**, David's rebellious son, was noted for his long and beautiful hair, but it was caught by a tree he when riding through a forest and he was mercilessly killed by Joab defending David's throne, 2Samuel 14:26; 18:9.
- Watch for others.

• On the other hand, consider the Lord Jesus, whom many artists have portrayed as having long hair, often long and flowing locks. This is a mistake. Jesus was NOT a Nazarite. He was simply a Nazarene, a native resident of the village of Nazareth. There is not a word in scripture of Him being a Nazarite, much less having long hair. Would He, being God the Son incarnate, have long hair? He states only a couple of decades after His resurrection, it is a shame to a man to have long hair! **He didn't!** And we shouldn't! Was He a shameful representation of God? Preposterous! Then we shouldn't be either.

Nevertheless, Jesus is often pictured as a long haired, somewhat effeminate man. But wasn't He a strong (carpenter), masculine, shorthaired, bearded man? Satan desires to corrupt our ideas of Jesus' masculinity and of what Jesus may have looked like. He tirelessly works to deceive us about Jesus, the Man he so hates. If we develop a distorted image of the Man Christ Jesus in our minds and before our eyes, are we not in danger of worshiping an "idol" rather than the real Jesus?

10:14 Wherefore my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

1John 5:21 Little children keep yourselves from idols.

And brothers, keep your hair short, like Jesus.

Meanwhile sisters note, value, encourage and rejoice in the masculinity of your husband, father, brothers, and sons. (We saw masculinity re-emerge as a favorable attribute on 9-11.) Guard against attempts of the world to promote unisex. Brothers, note, cherish, encourage and rejoice in the femininity of your wife, mother, sisters and daughters. But be sure our ideas of what masculinity and femininity are correspond with scripture.

6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost [which is] in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

10:31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

By Ron Canner July 23, 2003

Traditions (TRUTH) delivered and kept, "Headship" presented, Creation's gender roles restored and reinforced, contentiousness about these roles not tolerated, heresies exposed, sects denounced, selfishness rebuked. Then a profound lack of respect and self judgement regarding the Lord's Supper is exposed and God's intervention in judgement revealed. All these are found in chapter 11.

2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered [them] to you.

16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

17 Now in this that I declare [unto you] I praise [you] not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.

30 For this cause many [are] weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

Once the chain of command and created gender roles are reestablished Paul returns again to the divisive tendencies reported to be among them. We have seen earlier in the epistle, followings and leaders were developing among the saints at Corinth. While in verse 1 of 1Corinthians 11 Paul commends their adherence to the truth they had received from God through him, he then has to condemn the contentions, faction or schisms (not here "heresies" as the KJV mistakenly translates it) developing among them. There were those who simply preferred certain leaders and speakers to others. Contentions developed among believers who differed about teachings or practices. For instance some were apparently disposed to be contentious about the gender roles and head coverings.(v 16) This tended to divide them from one another. As they drifted apart (**schisms, factions, schools of opinion within the local assembly**) they eventually would find themselves uniting together into various **sects (or heresies) completely apart from each other**, even though in the same locality. Remember "I of Paul," "I of Apollos"? There was **one whole truth** given us, not many. Search it out and keep it. All of it! Don't let personalities, gifted believers, prominent figures or popular movements divert us from it. For it points us to Christ and unites us in Him.

Personal self centeredness is a huge threat to unity. Paul has rebuked this in many forms already in this epistle, and now uncovers another instance. This involved their mixing of their ordinary meals with the Lord's Supper. They showed a basic disregard and disrespect for the unique and holy occasion the Lord's Supper was

meant to be. "**This do remember Me!**"

That was not all. The common meal they were having together when the gathered to remember the Lord was anything but common. Some had too much. Others had not enough. But those who had much didn't share it **in common.** The Assembly (Church), at its founding on Pentecost, was characterized by believers having all things in common. This simple selflessness was the fruit of the Spirit newly uniting them into One body. This was manifested in their generous attitude even though the teaching of the One body or of the Assembly had not even been declared yet. But, years later, at Corinth the believers didn't even share their food with one another at an assembly get together. They casually had a picnic combined with the Lord's Supper and further dishonored Him by not even pooling their food. Hadn't they heard of potluck? Here we see the beauty of taking turns serving our Lord's Day evening suppers instead of everybody bringing their own meal each time.

Not only were they disrespectful to the Lord and disregarding one another, some were overindulging. Some were overeating while the hungry looked on. Some were actually drinking so much they were becoming drunken. What an insult to the Lord whom they were claiming to remember together. The Lord who died that they might be one. What an insult to the concept of Assembly. But they were simply numb to His interests. How easy it becomes to slip into such a state.

The remaining chapters of the epistle are largely devoted to teaching, instruction and exhortation to restore and embrace unity among the Corinthian saints (and us), particularly in the realm of the local Assembly. In fact the whole epistle is laced through with ministry toward unity. Paul faithfully exposes one by one, the forces and attitudes that were driving them apart. These schisms, these separations between them from one another was not God's primary plan or intent when He created the Assembly of God on the earth. Although He established many local assemblies, each and all were intended, externally and internally, to be part of the whole testimony on earth to the uniting power of the shed blood of Christ.

John 17:11 That they may be one as We.

On the other hand, dividing us is precisely Satan's goal. Let's not make work easy for him.

Paul now reviews **the Lord's Supper**, putting to rest any confusion regarding it. He does not refer back to it as something he learned from the other apostles. He had actually received what he tells us directly from the Lord Himself. This is not the only instance where Paul has, as an apostle, received a direct revelation. Remember, he reminds the Galatians how he had not conferred with the other apostles to receive the gospel but had received it from the Lord (Galatians 1:12). See also Ephesians 3:3.

Because the Lord's Supper focuses our thoughts upon the Lord Himself and His death for us it is the special target of Satan.

1. He disrupts it through disorderly practices that cause confusion, (such as vv. 20-22 and 27).
2. He distorts it by introducing false religious elements into its simplicity (John 4:23-24). There is every sort imaginable of weird superstitious beliefs and practices that religious men have added to the Lord's simple request. Some teach that partaking of the Lord's Supper is necessary to renew or maintain salvation. Some believe the bread and the wine supernaturally change into the actual body and blood of the Lord when blessed. (This in effect repeatedly crucifies Jesus all over again implying His work on the cross is not finished after all.)
3. He distracts participants by encouraging irrelevant hymns, scripture passages, ministry or prayers.
4. He discourages believers from self judgement, thereby quenching the Spirit when we come into meeting with un-judged sin (vv. 27 - 33 and 1 Thessalonians 5:19).
5. He simply discourages believers from observing it very often (Hebrews 10:19-22, v 26).
6. He discourages believers from assembling when it is scheduled (Hebrews 10:24-25).
7. He discourages participation by some who do not consider themselves capable or worthy to take a vocal part (1 Timothy 2:8).

The Corinthians, in mixing their disorderly social gathering for a common dinner with it, had corrupted the solemnity of the Lord's Supper. Paul reminds them that the Lord Himself took bread and having given thanks broke it and said "This is my body which was given for you." Some might say "but the Lord did this at the so called 'last supper' with his disciples. Wasn't that just a common meal?" No it wasn't. The last supper was

celebrating the Passover with His disciples, a highly sacred and solemn occasion to any Jew. In no way was it a common meal. In fact the Lord, by taking bread after the Passover lamb had been slain and eaten, was showing the disciples that from then on they were to replace the Passover remembrance feast with a supper dedicated solely to remembrance of Him. This is especially touching when we remember that the Passover spoke of Him and His death for His people. .

*1Corinthians 5:7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. **For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:** 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened [bread] of sincerity and truth.*

He instituted this "calling (affectionately) to remembrance" on the very night in which he was betrayed by one of His own disciples. He was then about to become the fulfillment of what the Passover looked forward to. Now it is finished! He, having died and been buried, is risen and ascended to the right hand of God in heaven. And while He is there awaiting His Bride, and then His Kingdom, He has asked us to "this do remember Me." It is a simple request, not a command. But it is a request any redeemed sinner would lovingly, happily and urgently respond to.

Paul tells us something new here beyond what the Lord said in the gospels.

26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

When we partake of the bread and the cup we announce publically the Lord's **death!** And we are to continue keeping this remembrance feast **until He comes!** Isn't it precious to remember Him in any aspect of His being including His life incarnate on earth, His pre-incarnate being in eternity, and His present life as the Man in glory! **But**, while all aspects of the eternal Son of God are beautiful we must always announce His death till He come when we are gathered together to eat the Lord's supper.

Some call this meeting the "worship meeting." But scripture doesn't seem to refer to it as that. We are simply gathered to remember the Lord, announcing His death till He come. But the worship cannot help but arise in our hearts as we remember Him. This worship results in the praise of our mouths in prayer and song and an occasional reading of scripture as led by the Spirit in the Assembly. True worship springs from the heart filled with the Lord by the Spirit.

John 4:23-24 They that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

If we have grieved His Spirit in our hearts, or quenched

Him in our midst, we may be tempted to turn to human arrangements, basically to keep up appearances. Beautiful choirs, soloists eloquently read prayers and sermons may stir the emotions and feelings and move us to “worship.” But we must beware of confusing these things, that appeal to the flesh and arouse the feelings, with true worship.

Some may be concerned when an apparent unbeliever is present in the room while we are absorbed in remembering Him. They may feel an urgency to rise and preach the gospel. But the heart rending story of God’s love in giving His Son is not told more poignantly than it is told at the Lord’s Supper by those worshipers who owe so much to Him and so adore Him, for WHO He is and WHAT He has done. Let the Spirit continue to lead.

Note that we are not told to remember the Lord in seclusion. We announce the Lord’s death! Not only to God, to the angels and to each other, but to any others who the Lord may move to attend. This fact also points to the need for keeping the Lord’s supper in a holy manner. For instance in chapter 5 they are instructed to put away a wicked man. He could no longer eat a common meal with them much less partake of the Lord’s Supper with them.

One person customarily gives thanks for both the loaf and then the cup. This is the way the Lord did it, although there does not appear to be a strict order required in this as long as everyone knows what is expected.

We are free to use real wine for this event. Use of wine is never forbidden in scripture. It is not intrinsically evil. Intoxication is condemned. The Corinthians are rebuked for overindulging at what they were celebrating as the Lord’s Supper. (Wise believers avoid using it as a beverage for reasons given in chapter 8 and Romans 14, and because so many other scripture references to its use as a beverage contain warnings. Note 1Timothy 3:23 where Paul had to coax Timothy to use a little wine medicinally, apparently because he customarily avoided using it at all.)

One loaf speaks of the one body of believers the Lord created by dying on the cross (1Corinthian 10:16-17).

The wine poured out in a cup speaks of the blood of the sacrifice poured out, separated from His body forever. He speaks of Himself having only flesh and bones after His resurrection (Luke 24:39).

The bread may be leavened or unleavened as the scriptures do not prescribe either. There is no problem with using leavened dough for the bread even though the leaven always speaks of sin in scripture. The grain

ground into flour speaks of suffering in His perfect sinless life as a man here on earth which proved Him sinless. He was the only sacrifice for us that was worthy in God’s sight. But, while the Lord is presented in scripture as absolutely sinless, He was made sin for us and bore our sins in His own body on the tree. The point is that the leaven in bread is destroyed by the fire of the oven. This could well speak of the judgement He bore for our sins. Similarly the crushing and fermentation of the grapes made into wine could well speak of the terrible judgement He suffered on the cross for our sins.

Partaking of one loaf is symbolic of the One and Only Man found worthy to die for us. Partaking of one cup is symbolic of the One Savior whose blood was shed not only to save us personally but by God to purchase the Assembly as a Bride for His Son (Acts 20:28).

The word “broken” in “this is my body which is broken for you” is more accurately left out. It is “This is my body which is for you.” We read in John 19:36 that not a bone was broken. In the Old Testament we have this given as a type in the Passover lamb in Exodus 12:46 and Numbers 9:12 and prophetically in Psalm 22:17.

Now what does verse 27 mean?

27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink [this] cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

What does unworthily mean? It means “in an unworthy manner.” The true believer is always worthy to eat because has been made worthy by the blood of the cross. But what an insult to the Lord and His people, for one to come to the Lord’s Table to partake of the Lord’s Supper having sinned and not bothered to confess it and make it right to the victim if possible. One who does so is declared to be guilty of the Lord’s body and blood, that is His death. How do we avoid such a thing? First, by avoiding sinful acts. But if we should fall and sin, then by confessing our sins.

1John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

God has made full provision for the sinner to be forgiven and cleansed. And He has made full provision for the believer who sins to be forgiven and cleansed. Any who avail themselves of His provision Both are found worthy to approach Him and worship at the Lord’s table and partake of the Lord’s Supper. What if we don’t avail ourselves of this gracious provision? Paul discusses that next.

By Ron Canner, August 5, 2003.

The Lord's Supper is celebrated together, by the whole assembly acting as **One Body**, not merely as a number of individuals in one room personally worshiping. It is "the cup which **we** bless," "the bread which **we** break." That is why our prayers of praise and hymns should normally use the pronoun "**we**" instead of "**I**" when gathered as the Assembly. When we take a verbal part we speak for the whole assembly that is gathered. Of course we each are intimately involved personally as well. More on that in chapter 12.

The Lord's Supper comprised the bread and the cup which are symbolic of the body of the Lord given for us and the blood of the Lord shed for us. The wine is separate from the bread symbolizing the death of the Lord. His blood was spilled out by the soldier's spear after Jesus had commended His spirit to the Father. He bowed His head and laid down His life, using the authority given Him by the Father described in John 10:17-18. No man has ever done that before or since. The third day He used that same authority to take His life again and rose from the dead. No man has ever done that before or since.

He did not bleed to death. The wounds in His hands and feet, the thorns in His brow, the brutal scourging were not life threatening though continually producing horribly excruciating agony. **NO MAN TOOK HIS LIFE FROM HIM.** Yet now the blood has been poured out, apparently never to be replaced even through resurrection. We give witness to that every time we remember Him together in this way. His body was that of the only holy, sinless Man that ever walked this earth. This blood was that of the only holy, sinless Man that ever walked this earth. If we eat of this bread in a careless manner or drink of this cup in a careless manner we are said to be **guilty of His body and blood**. It is not that the bread or wine mystically becomes the actual body or blood of the Lord, as some teach, but they symbolize them. For instance, pulling down a statue of Saddam did not destroy him. That act was symbolic of his fall from power. Spitting on someone's photo shows utter contempt for that person. Likewise to walk into the meeting to remember the Lord without first judging ourselves shows contempt for **Him**, the beauty of His peerless life and the value of His precious blood. Those who are in fellowship, sitting in meeting and nudging or playing with a companion, reading a newsletter or sleeping are being rude to the Lord and distracting to their brothers and sisters in Christ. Worse they are treating the emblems on the table and His promised presence in the midst as a common thing.

On the other hand, the little children **need to be in meeting** so they learn from infancy that this is a solemn occasion where grownups are quiet and respectfully doing something which is very important. Both their little coos

and loud crying are but reminders for us of our fallen but saved humanity as we remember the One who died to redeem us. Their presence is in no way disrespectful of the Lord who said let the little children to come unto me and forbid them not.. And as the babies grow they will soon learn to whisper then later to remain silent and respectful. Bring them! Take them out if punishment is needed but bring them back in as soon as practicable. They don't need to learn they can get out of the room by creating a ruckus. Let them hear the hymns and the tunes that help the words sink in to their hearts. Watch the youngsters playing :meeting at home during the week. There we may see ourselves though our children's eyes, our foibles, our earnest sincerity, and perhaps a little pomposness as well. And the Lord sees us as we truly are and rejoices that He died to save us. Even so doesn't He sometimes grieve our inattentiveness or slowness of heart, or spiritual uncleanness. How do we judge ourselves and then eat? One way is to genuinely pray, "Search me, O God," Psalm 139:23, 24. Try to do this daily. It shouldn't take long and it cleanses us for our daily walk. If we neglect this, things pile up, especially as the longer we walk without Him the further away we get and the more likely we are to neglect Him in our thoughts and lives. And the harder it is to return. But God has a second remedy for the wayward who no longer will come to Him. He, in His mercy, gives wake up calls. Sometimes they have to be rather abrupt. He has promised that we who have believed on Him who died for us will never, never perish, John 10:28, 29. But carrying out this promise entails action on His part to keep us and to recover and restore us if we wander. He doesn't merely let us go our own way.

30 For this cause many [are] weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

This doesn't mean that every time we have a "misfortune" or become ill that it is due to some sin or departure in our lives. On the other hand we shouldn't automatically assume we are not being disciplined for something the Lord has seen us doing or neglecting. Don't be too proud, or too fearful, to ask the question personally in prayer before Him if we are sick or suffer some difficulty.

The Lord chastens us for other reasons too. Some of them include:

- ! preventative measure to keep us from sinning,
- ! trials and testing of our faith to display it to His glory (to Satan's chagrin),
- ! preparatory for some mission He has for us,
- ! to prepare us for coming hardship,
- ! to elicit the outpouring of the loving hearts of our brothers and sisters in response to our plight,
- ! to increase our dependence upon Him,
- ! to drive us back to Him,
- ! to expose some malice lurking in the heart of

another towards us,
to prevent a prideful attitude,
to display some characteristic of Christ in us,
to enable us to implement some truth we have just learned and embraced,
to keep us unto the end and preserve us from perishing, for whom Christ has died,
combinations of some or all of the above.

If we have sinned and finally become aware of it we need to confess it and forsake it.

Sometimes what one may have done will have disqualified him from further service for the Lord. Sometimes the Lord brings illness or disability. Sometimes He even takes one home to Himself out of this scene. There is a sin not unto death and there is a sin unto death, 1John 5:16-17. Taking one of His own home "prematurely" is the ultimate tool at God's disposal to ensure the eternal security of the believer. And He will use it when necessary so we won't be condemned with the world. Therefore we ought to judge ourselves.

We are not given an either/or option here. He says "let every man judge himself and so let him eat." There is no permission given to eat without judging ourselves. There is no option given to cease eating and thereby forgo judging and forsaking some sin. Walking away from the Lord's Supper is not an option. It is the Lord's Table and He wants us there, pure and clean. Note in 2Samuel 20 both David and Saul's concerns about David's absence from the King's Table. This may seem strange to us as we do not have a sovereign ruler in the United States. Nevertheless we can learn respect and allegiance for sovereignty from scripture. We do not come or go at our pleasure, but at our Lord's pleasure, and in a condition presentable to Him. This has mostly to do with one's spiritual state, but a careless attitude and slovenly or immodest attire is disrespectful as well. He is Lord! Regard Him as Sovereign. Honor His requests and His good pleasure.

While we need to be sensitive to His displeasure with **our** conduct we should be less ready to attribute **another's** illness or misfortune to **their** conduct. "Judge not that ye be not judged", Matthew 7:1. If we see someone fall we are to seek their restoration, Matt 18:15; Gal 6:1, not point the accusing finger at them as Job's friends did. We should not even entertain a thought that they deserve what God is putting them through. They may indeed need the discipline they are experiencing, but it is not our business to determine that. The one suffering is the only one truly able to see that, and act upon it. Our job is to be there for the sufferers on behalf of the Lord, to comfort, encourage or sometimes even admonish, as led by the Spirit in us.

There are some indications in scripture that the sin of one person may bring God's discipline upon others, even a whole assembly. There is a possibility that my sin

may actually cause others in the assembly to become weak and sickly. The story of Achan's sin being counted as a sin of the whole nation of Israel is one example, Joshua 7 and 8. There are a number of other similar instances in the Old Testament. The **unity of the assembly** is of great importance to God. He values it in our worship, prayer, and prophesying, and service. But He also regards us as **one** when sin is present in our midst. Therefore we are to put away the wicked found amongst us, 1Corinthians 5. Does it seem possible that God may actually remove someone greatly valued from our midst because some of us (even one of us) are harboring sin in our lives, or because our assembly is lackadaisical regarding sin in us? I believe it is possible.

Note the wonderful expression Paul uses for those that have died. "Some even sleep." Believer's who have died, or been killed, are consistently termed to be asleep in Jesus, fallen asleep. These are not lost even if they may have died because of sin in their lives. **They are asleep!** Their souls are in Paradise even now with the Lord. How rich is His mercy and grace! How precious in His sight is the blood of His Own [Son] that redeemed us. If He takes the erring one home to Himself, He does it in such a way that even that one is said to only sleep, just as if he will awake again after a rest. (This remark should have been an eyeopener to those among the Corinthians who denied the idea of a bodily resurrection. Paul speaks to this error in Chapter 15.)

So he sums up:

33 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. 34 And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

This is simple stuff, but necessary. Common courtesy. Mutual respect. Looking out for others first. Tarrying for one another. **Waiting**, whether eating a simple meal together or when participating in a meeting of the assembly. Remembering to wait for one another is urged upon us so that we do not usurp the prerogative of the Holy Spirit to select whom He will to take an audible part at a particular time in a meeting. Respecting the Lord's Supper for what it is and who it speaks of. Being orderly, and focused on Him when come together to remember Him. First things first. There were other points of their order that were not so important. He leaves these until he visits them personally some time in the future.

Now that he has set us in order regarding our created gender roles and our respect for one another and for the Lord's Supper, he can go on in chapter 12 to teach us further about the unity that is ours and instruct us about the role of gifts in the assembly.

By Ron Canner, August 18, 2003

The Lord, through Paul, has provided instruction regarding a number of very practical issues that confront the believer in every age and locale. We can see that the Corinthian's underlying problem rested in the believer's selfishness, a self centered attitude and fleshly self indulgence. In chapter 11 he first set us in order regarding our created gender roles. With this basic created order established then he immediately engaged our respect for the Lord's Supper and, incidentally, our respect for one another when gathered together. The local assembly is not merely a collection of saved individuals but one body, governed by one Spirit. He goes on in chapter 12 through 14 to teach us further about the unity that is ours in the assembly, to instruct us about the role of gifts in the assembly and more about order in the assembly.

First he distinguishes between spiritual manifestations that are of the Holy Spirit and those that are not. As pagans the believers in Corinth, of Gentile origin, had previously engaged in demonic religious rituals centered in idols they worshiped. Some were apparently still toying with these idols. This tendency is indicated by the warnings in chapters 8-10 about entering idol temples for a meal and eating things sacrificed to idols there. Paul now strongly demands allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ and none other. They were to recognize who was speaking by the power of the Holy Spirit by what they said about Jesus. Merely speaking in a supernatural manner was not a reliable indicator that the person was being driven by the Holy Spirit. Nor was such behavior to be taken as evidence that the person was a believer. The Lord said "By their fruits ye shall know them."

3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and [that] no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

What believer saved by the shed blood of Jesus Christ would even think of Jesus as accursed [*anathema*] much less say so. Only an unsaved soul or a demon would initiate such a thing. (Other places the term "*anathema*" is used include: Acts 23:14, Romans 9:3, 1Corinthians 16:22, and Galatians 1:8&9. It is a very strong expression of condemnation.) Were the Corinthian believers being influenced by demons so that they even called their Lord accursed? Would they knowingly say this? Were they allowing their fascination with miraculous spiritual manifestations to lead them into a vulnerability to demonic influence? Or were they rather infiltrated by a few unbelievers who were actually channels for demons, as many of them had been before conversion to Christ? Perhaps both. Paul deals with their unhealthy attraction to the supernatural later. But first he gives us the real thing. The Holy Spirit is a real live, divine Person who is active in all believers individually.

He is also active collectively (in us together as a group) in the assembly gathered together unto the name of the Lord.

But for the Spirit to lead we must **confess** Jesus as Lord. We who are believers confess Jesus as Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, [Jesus as Lord] and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Philippians 2:9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth; 11 And [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord , to the glory of God the Father.

The demons know him as Son of God but never will voluntarily confess Him as Lord. Satan is their lord. Yet there are people who will have said "Lord, Lord" and even done wonderful miracles, but the Lord will say to them at the end "I never knew you." The Lord Jesus anticipated imposters and warned:

Matthew 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither [can] a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. 21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord , shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Luke 6:46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say.

There are many false prophets gone into the world and are come in among professing Christendom. They are forecast to even arise from among us, Acts 20. Most, if not all, of the epistles warn of them. Beware. Be cautious. But do not fear them. We should not be surprised at their existence. One test is: **do they call Jesus accursed? If so, do not receive them! Do they acknowledge Jesus as Lord? Then freely receive them if their life and works bear out their words.** I have talked to people who claim to be believers but somehow found "Jesus is Lord" extremely difficult to say with their mouth. I've wondered about them. I have met people

who acknowledge Jesus as Lord but pursue a life of sin and self interest. We are to take them at their word and seek to restore them to the Lord. If they are false brethren, they will be manifest soon enough, as was Judas. If we are godly they won't be able to stand us very long. The Spirit will see to that.

Now having established how we know who is speaking by the Spirit of God Paul tells us the intended role of the Holy Spirit in each of us and amongst us today. The hierarchy of God is revealed here. The Persons of the Godhead are each mentioned. The Trinity! He reveals that each has a different role, as God, on behalf of God, the Three in One.

4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. (KJV)

or

4 But there are distinctions of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are distinctions of services, and the same Lord; 6 and there are distinctions of operations, but the same God who operates all things in all. (JND)

The Spirit has to do with the transferring of the spiritual gifts from the Lord to the believer and guides and empowers their use in work and service for Him. The

Lord has to do with giving the various gifts and with the various works and services that He does through those He has gifted to do them. The Father sets out the whole divine plan and the various operations needed to carry it out. The Lord directs and coordinates the necessary operations. The Spirit moves and empowers the various spiritually gifted individuals to carry out necessary work effectively, at the proper time and in the proper way.

Through the Spirit we are actually enlisted in the blessed Team comprising the Eternal Omnipotent Omniscient, Omnipresent God in Three Persons! Blessed Trinity!. Blessed work! Blessed fellowship! Blessed results! Blessed privilege! Blessed responsibility!

We each have at least one gift. Our gifts are to be used for Him, not for our glory. We are to use them as directed by the Lord. God in Three Divine Persons is One. We, as distinct persons united in the assembly on this earth, are one also. Our gifts differ. They equip us for differing work and roles in the work. So our gift complements the gifts of others. No grandstanding! No copouts! And no envying! More on this next time.

By Ron Canner, August 27, 2003.

In chapter 11 the order and roles for lives and activities of a believer which do not require any Spiritual gift are presented. These include praying, prophesying, worshiping, keeping the Lord's Supper, sharing common meals (and other blessings), common courtesy, self restraint (waiting for one another whether at meeting or at dinner), observation of headship, etc. This sets the stage for Paul's instruction and admonishment regarding the use of **Spiritual Gifts** they possessed. There is a list given here and at the end of the chapter. Other lists are given in Romans 12 and Ephesians 4.

Note that none of the gifts mentioned are "natural," inborn gifts humanly speaking, such as eloquence in public speaking, musical talents, artistic abilities, writing ability, coordination and athletic ability, intelligence, reasoning abilities, mechanical aptitude, etc. Nor are they acquired knowledge and abilities or skills achieved through study, education, training and practice, developing natural inborn talents and intelligence. While human abilities are indeed valued and admirable many believers are surprised to learn that they are to be presented to the Lord as a sacrificial offering, Romans 12:1-2. We present our bodies a living sacrifice. We lay all of our natural abilities at His feet. We do not take them up again unless He directs us in their use for His glory. Often He does use them to support some service we are given for Him. However the possession of such natural abilities is not in and of itself a reliable indicator that we should necessarily engage in their use. (On the other hand a person is usually wise to use his in-borne aptitude and abilities to earn his living. This can leave one with more energy and time for serving the Lord in other ways.)

Over and above any natural gifts and abilities, we each have been given one or more **spiritual gifts** directly from the ascended Lord,

Ephesians 4:7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. 8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

We receive these gifts from the Lord, who is at the right hand of God in heaven. They come through the Holy Spirit, apparently when He takes up residence in our bodies when we are saved. These are free gifts. They are available to us to use, or abuse. They are really grace given, we didn't deserve them and don't earn them.

Romans 12:4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5 So we, [being] many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us,...

Along with them we are given the privilege, authorization and responsibility for their proper use.

11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame

Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

There is no scripture that says we have to receive permission, ordination, or authority from the assembly or any other earthly entity to use the gifts the Lord has given us. Rather the assembly and individuals are to encourage and support the development and use of evident gifts seen in godly brothers and sisters. We have the indwelling Holy Spirit Who guides and empowers their use, if we allow Him.

Our gifts are developed in us personally as the Lord has occasion to use them, and we allow Him to use us. For instance, some gifts may be used daily, such as that of an evangelist or pastor. Some other gifts may lay latent for a substantial period of time until the Lord "needs" it. Then the one with the needed gift springs into action, much to the surprise and gratitude of other believers who were at a loss as to what to do in a difficult or unusual situation. Some gifts are prominent, public, moving, and notable, others are mundane, behind the scenes, perhaps largely unnoticed, such as helps. All are essential. But to use our spiritual gift(s) in **self sacrificial love** is said to be "a more excellent way," verse 31. Some gifts are apparently "better" than others and we are encouraged to desire earnestly the best gifts, 14:1. **Yet to be led by the Spirit to worship, pray or prophesy is more important than any gift, 14:1.**

We are to endeavor to use our individual gift(s) for edification of others, in the context of the unity and interdependence of the all of the members of the One Body of Christ, world wide. This is the reason we have been gifted by the Lord. (See Romans 12:4-6 quoted above.) Obviously exercise of our gifts occurs mostly close to home and in the local assembly. We have each been saved personally in order to comprise and edify the Body of Christ. This in a nutshell is the lesson of chapters 12-14.

What are these gifts mentioned here and why these and not others? Looking ahead we find the Corinthians were abusing the free gifts they had received. They were using them for exciting show rather than for edification. Therefore the valued gifts that weren't as showy are mentioned first.

The word of wisdom. The word of knowledge. Quiet but substantial, clear words to guide, support, encourage and build up the saints of God. How we need these in every age. Yet before the New Testament was completed these were essential to provide doctrine then unwritten and guide believers in their manner of life.

Faith. We all were saved (by grace) through faith, and are to live daily by faith. The just shall live by faith, Romans 1:17; Galatians 2:20; Hebrews 10:38. But some have a special faith that prepares and strengthens them to

commit to some activity that others of us could never do. For example embarking upon a life of service to the Lord without normal means of support, as did Paul and the other apostles, and as do "laborers" among us today. George Mueller ran an orphanage supported entirely by faith (no fund raising). Can you think of others?

Healing is still much needed as witnessed by the many ailments mentioned in our prayer requests. And God does still provide healing in answer to earnest prayer of righteous men,

*James 5:14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: 15 And the **prayer of faith** shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. 16 Confess [your] faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

And, I suppose, healing was especially desired in Corinth where many were weak and sickly among them due to God's chastening hand. James connects healing with the confession of sins. The so-called "faith healers" that abound today, who cause much excitement (and rake in much money), are **not** what Paul or James envisioned. True physical healing was indeed rendered by gifted men in the early days of the Christian era. These incidents are documented particularly in the Acts, but referred to in Hebrews etc. These acts of healing were not used for the sick among the believers but as a sign to unbelievers of the power of God being introduced to them by the Apostles and others. In fact Paul, in other letters, refers to different believers whom he loved and valued as being sick, yet he has not made effort to use his spiritual gift to heal them. Why? Apparently, even in his day, this sign gift was not to be used for the bodily ease of the ones who were already believers. Likewise other gifts, exciting to the flesh in us, were also soon to cease as is noted in 13:8.

All these gifts obviously differ from one another but we are emphatically reminded are of the SAME Spirit. He is to be given control of their use. The last five in this list are the more spectacular of those listed here. (working of miracles, prophecy; discerning of spirits, different kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues.) These, except for "prophecy," are not listed in Romans or Ephesians. They are referred to in Hebrews 2, but in the past tense as having already passed away when that epistle was written.

3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard

[him]; 4 God also bearing [them] witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

These sign gifts are the gifts being abused at Corinth for fleshly show and excitement. They still are sought today in some Christian denominations. But why do we need more signs? We have enough recorded in scripture for faith to believe and rejoice in. Jesus says "A wicked and adulterous generation desires a sign."

Why is the gift of prophecy mixed in with this part of the list? Partly, I believe, to confirm that these were real and valid gifts given and empowered by the Holy Spirit. They weren't mere human fakery or demonic. Yet they, (prophecy included) were more exciting and spectacular and were likely to appeal to the flesh than the gifts that edified the new nature of the believer. For instance, even today anyone in the world who claims to predict the future is much acclaimed and sought after by the world. Sad, because the believer knows the future from reading and believing the scriptures and can warn any of the doom that awaits them.

The idea that every believer must demonstrate that he has received the Holy Spirit by speaking in an unknown tongue is not supported here. Not all had this gift. I suppose that the ability to understand a foreign language one has never learned is just as wonderful as the ability to speak in a foreign language one has never learned. What a wonderful gift for a missionary to a foreign country. Yet we do not see it in common use today in the mission field, if at all. Instead great efforts and countless hours of labor are expended by hundreds of well trained believers seeking to translate the scriptures into the native tongue of various peoples they are seeking to reach with the gospel of Jesus Christ. No, the confusion of tongues at Babel has not been reversed yet. The tongues given on the day of Pentecost were a true sign that Babel has been conquered at the cross and that the Messiah truly had come. But the day of reckoning is still ahead. Babylon the Great must rise in its horrid mimicry of the Bride of Christ and be destroyed before Christ Himself returns to reign and restore world order and unity among the nations.

Until then the true body of Christ is edified through the gifts given to the members as they are used by the Lord. Each is uniquely gifted and set in the body. Each must do its part. After all, we **are** one body. More on this next.

By Ron Canner, September 3, 2003

Paul now presents a fuller revelation of the truth of the One Body. He alluded to it earlier in the epistle (chapter 10:16-17) in connection with the breaking of bread at the Lord's Table. The bread not only speaks of the Lord's sinless, human, physical, body given for us, it speaks of the One Body of believers on earth. First, in 12:12 he describes the composition and **unity** of the Body. Then in 12:13 he describes the creation of the Body. Then he describes the **diversity** of the body. All is determined by the initiative, control, and power of God **by the Holy Spirit.**

The human body, yours and mine, is used to illustrate the make up and functioning of what? "So also is the church?" "So also is the Body of Christ?" No! He says "**so also is Christ!**" We, all together, are so personally identified with Him we are known by His Name and Title, Christ. Just as when you see me walking toward you, you may say "Here comes Ron." You wouldn't normally say "Here comes Ron's body." You and I are each whole persons, with body and head. We are usually recognized by our faces and names. So also is Christ. A somewhat related example might be seen in Adam and Eve.

Genesis 5:3 And [He] called their name Adam.

The relationship between Christ in glory and His people on earth is so intimate He views us and Him as **one**. And with one name.

One's human body is, simply put, one body. So also is Christ. As our human bodies have many members, external and internal, so also is Christ. As our ordinary human bodies have many different members, so also is Christ. In this we each are fully, personally individuals, members, but known together (collectively) as "Christ."

How and when did this come to be? We are told this in 12:13.

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether [we be] Jews or Gentiles, whether [we be] bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

The best translations have this in the past tense, "**we all were** baptized into one body." It is an accomplished thing. This baptism does not refer to baptism in water. It refers to baptism into one body by one Spirit. And it is "we all" not "we each." This event occurred on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts chapter 2. In God's marvelous plan He created something entirely new that day. And He did it once and for all, including all believers composing the Body of Christ. He did it then for the apostles and disciples that were incorporated by the Spirit into the **ONE BODY** formed at

that time. And it includes all those that would be saved down through the ages, including us today, and until the rapture.

When we each were saved we were sealed by the Holy Spirit, and He indwelt us immediately. Scripture does not tell us to seek for the baptism of the Holy Spirit because that was done at Pentecost. Upon being saved we are automatically made part of Christ, His body the Assembly (church).

This is true whether we realize it at first or not. The disciples in the early days hadn't been told much about this new thing. They reached out to the Jews and witnessed to the nation through various signs and wonders. Israel defiantly refused God's gracious offer of national salvation if they would but repent and receive Jesus Christ. But once the Jews stoned Stephen, the Lord moved to reveal His gracious plan to include all believers in one new thing, the Body of Christ. He included both Jews or Gentiles, bond or free. The Lord used Philip the evangelist to reach out first to Samaria, and next to the Ethiopian eunuch, a proselyte. Then He used Peter to include the first Gentiles, Acts 10 and 11. After that the unparalleled grace of God gave to Paul the charge to reveal the truth of the Assembly fully. Now neither nationality or social status stand in the way of becoming a member of the Body of Christ. See also Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:14-16; and Colossians 3:11.

John the Baptist makes the contrast between water baptism and the baptism of the Spirit. Water baptism is not baptism of the Spirit. One is an act of men, upon persons newly saved. The other was completed of God on Pentecost and included all that are saved since then.

Matthew 3:11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and [with] fire:

The term "baptism" means to bathe by immersion. We are said to be baptized (immersed) by the Spirit into one body. Not merely linked up or connected somehow but totally immersed together into one body. We can't get any closer than that, and this closeness and unity is bought about and maintained by the Spirit, not any human arrangement or organization.. We also have been given to drink of one Spirit, the same Holy Spirit. He is inside! Inside and outside! All through us and all around us. And He remains with us in this relationship forever.

John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

Revelation 22:17. 17 And the Spirit and the bride

say, Come.

I am me! Personally a member. Personally answerable to the Lord. And “we” are we together! Many members of one body. Collectively (together) answerable to the Head.

Now the obvious. **Diversity.** The one body has many members each with specific functions and abilities. All are interdependent. All are needed. All are important. All are to be dependent upon the Head. All must do their job to accomplish the purposes of the Head. None exists solely for his or her own benefit or glory. All are dependent upon others for help, support, encouragement. Each is to avoid interference with the work if they aren’t needed to be part of it. One could say “If you can’t help at least stay out of the way”. However we each can help, if in nothing else, by faithful prayer, and by standing guard, watching and warning of danger. Even the tiny hairs on my arm warn me of an approaching mosquito.

We have an intriguing example set before us in the biology of the human body. It is composed of obvious members such as the limbs, the internal organs, the nervous system, the circulatory system, etc. Less obvious are the cells that comprise the body. There are all kinds of cells, each with a specific function in the body. These cells are marvelously developed, and specialized, all from just one cell after conception. Now recent scientific studies (last 50 years) have discovered the mechanism that facilitates the wonderful diversity yet unity of each human body. DNA is a rather common item in the news because it enables tracing even a few cells of a being back to the person or animal they came from. Hair, spit, blood, skin of a given person all have that person’s DNA code in their

cells. This is true despite the specialized nature of the particular sample of cells tested. Men use now this fact to solve crimes (or prove innocence), investigate ancestry, etc. The fact that each diverse cell of one’s body contains the code for the whole body is a marvelous illustration and confirmation of the One Body of Christ composed of many diverse members (cells). Each contains the code of the whole Body Christ. We each have a new nature from Him and the Holy Spirit from Him. As our human spirit controls and directs our bodies through our minds so Christ the Head uses the various members of His Body as He pleases. (There is more here to investigate for those so inclined. But this is enough to whet our appetites to be aware of the discoveries of true facts (as opposed to mere theories) about God’s fascinating creation. While simply glorifying the Creator is enough reason to rejoice in them, their applicability to spiritual principles is often instructive as well.)

Another likeness our human bodies have to the Body of Christ is in the death and replacement of individuals over time. This is mirrored in the continued aging and eventual removal and replacement of cells in our bodies. More on that in chapter 15.

Now Paul gives us another reminder.

18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

We had no choice. We have no complaints. We have no boasting, and no belittling. Only to bloom where planted.

By Ron Canner, September 10, 2003

We have learned that **the body of Christ** was formed of believers on Pentecost by the Holy Spirit. There is One Body, Christ its Head. He has given each member his place and gifted him for that place. It is indwelt by the Holy Spirit as a whole and each individual is indwelt by the Holy Spirit as well. Though all the members are different it is One Body. No member is to despise his or her own position or function in the Body. No member is to despise the position or function of any other in the Body. No member is to be proud of his or her own position or function in the Body. No member is to envy or covet the position or function of any other in the Body. None is unnecessary. Each is placed there by God.

Even the ones that may seem more feeble are indeed necessary. With our human bodies we clothe the parts we deem less comely or that need special protection. With us our clothes sometimes are given more emphasis than appropriate for a simple, becoming covering. Style and attractiveness become objectives. So, within a congregation of believers, there may be a misuse of the spiritual gift God has given one, showing off one's blessing as if he had deserved it, or acquired and developed it himself. This kind of thing was happening in Corinth and still is apt to happen today amongst God's people.

Just as God has wonderfully formed and tempered each of our human bodies together so He has the Assembly. For instance, our insides are fearfully and wonderfully fashioned and perform marvelous functions for the health, support and building up of our bodies. But aren't we happy they are covered up by our skin! :-) So God has covered many essential members of the Assembly so they operate in relative obscurity. We often aren't even aware of their work until something happens and they malfunction. And as our human bodies are covered with skin and underlying fat layers which smooth out the knobs of our bones and joints so God has given more abundant spiritual honor to parts that otherwise would lack in outward spiritual comeliness. We perhaps aren't even aware He has done this because we are taken by the "more abundant honor" He has given one we admire spiritually. But those so granted more abundant honor need to guard against pride and abuse of their gift. For instance, one granted a gift to teach clearly and knowledgeably must beware that he not use this gift to form and maintain a following. A dynamic evangelistic preacher must avoid falling into the trap of seeking to attract numbers to hear him. But don't we bless God for gifting us so many ways.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do [it] with thy might;*

In this is the key to discovering one's gift(s). With the

gift God seems to give the special ability to discern when it is needed. We have all thought sometimes "what an opportunity" or "what a awful situation," "Why doesn't someone do something... ?" Well, when you see that situation or opportunity no one else seems to see, pray for grace and wisdom to deal with it, for you probably are the one equipped and selected by the Lord to handle it. Who me, we ask incredulously? Then, why me-e-ee? we whine in despair. But take heart, God will help us succeed beyond all expectation, as we depend upon Him.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Then Paul reminds us again there is to be **NO SCHISM in the body.** As we have seen in previous chapters, the Corinthians were thriving upon schism. They not only were forming parties within the local assembly they were very adept at personally acting completely independently of one another, not only in spiritual things but in personal affairs. They were going to court against one another, stumbling weaker consciences, not sharing their food, and in every way imaginable engaging in self indulgent behavior, even to the point of flagrant immorality. **NO SCHISM!!!** "But [that] the members should have the same care one for another." Love was to permeate and prevail.

Then **WHY!... HOW!... What are all these denominations** we see in the Christian world today!? And, not to be out done, divisions among those who seek to walk in the original truth of the One Body given so clearly here, and in Paul's other epistles. **WE HAVE FAILED!** God established one Body, and gave the truth of it for believers to hold and carry out. It's in the **BOOK!!!** We believers, all believers, must own our failure to faithfully do so. Satan has been busy down through the ages. Any resemblance to what the Lord originally envisioned could almost be said to be purely coincidental. But it's not coincidental because God is faithful to His promises. And the enemy finds his work more effective if he supports false copies of the true rather than to attempt to completely destroy that which God established. Besides God won't let him. I've noticed that instead of taking away truth the enemy often simply adds to it, corrupting the testimony to it. This is because it is much easier to point out disobedience to a written truth than it is to expose something that has been added to it.

Beware. Be alert. Where ever he finds it, Satan still is actively seeking to destroy or compromise any testimony to the accomplished work of Christ. He died to form His Body, the Assembly, out of His blood bought saints. God has revealed His purpose that there be **ONE BODY, CHRIST!** Hold to it tenaciously, jealously, and practice it lovingly, in holiness, grace and truth. Self has

no place here. Christ is all! And His Body, beloved! And counterfeits hated. Babylon the Great (Revelation 17) epitomizes the false “church” that Satan is busy forming to deceive the unwary.

What can a believer do today to obey this wonderful truth? Live it out! Walk in it! Be in it **separated** from all that has compromised it and corrupted it. Separated from all that dishonors **Christ the Head** and replaces His holy Name with a name of a division or denomination.

Revelation 3:8b ...for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name

First, **honor** Him personally. Then **walk** with others that

*2Timothy 2:22 “call upon the Lord out of a **pure** [undivided] heart.”*

That is, return to the true ground of the Assembly He originally established in the New Testament, and walk there. This is not impossible, despite what others say. It

is not a popular path. But He gives more grace! Nor one that is easy. But it is Right! It is Good! It is Love. It is faithfulness to Him. And He has promised to be with us personally. And He has promised to be in our midst if we are gathered **unto His Name!**

So today the local assembly, and the assemblies around the world with which it fellowships, comprises what might be called a microcosm of the body of Christ. They are not just [another] sect or denomination. It is pulled back outside all that which man has added over the years. They simply attempt to follow the truth as contained in the scriptures. What else is there to do until He come? What better thing to do until He come? Where else has He called us to be?

By Ron Canner, September 17, 2003

25 That there should be no schism in the body; but [that] the members should have the same care one for another.

A schism is a cleft, a rent, a division. This word is used for the old wine skins destroyed by putting new wine in them. As seen in earlier chapters, a condition that would lead to destructive division was developing among the believers at Corinth. Destructive because they were to be ONE. And the members were to have the same care for one another. This care was to be seen in loving concern being shown for both spiritual and physical needs. Whether sharing supper (ch. 11) or avoiding doing something that might stumble another (chs. 8-10). When using one's gift to edify or maintaining friendly relations with all in the local gathering, whether likable or not.

This unity among believers is like a person. *26a And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.* If my thumb is injured my whole body is affected. I have to adjust my activities to avoid hurting the sore place. I have to adjust how I get things done so I can do them without using that thumb. I even avoid close contact with others to avoid accidentally exposing my thumb to more pain. More severe injuries place even greater restraint on a person's activities. So Christ suffers when one suffers.

26b ...or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.

When I receive a compliment I feel good all over. If I get a raise at work I walk with a lighter step. When a fellow believer is used of the Lord some way for blessing to another don't we rejoice with him in it! Sometimes we have somehow developed a self focused, envious attitude toward our brothers and sisters in the Lord and refuse to glory in their glorifying the Lord. Paul's glory and boast was in those he had ministered to for their blessing and God's glory. Watch for these expressions in his epistles.

27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

We learn that the local assembly as a whole is considered the body of Christ in that place. It is not a group of individuals agreeing to get together for some worthy purpose, even if that purpose is to work for the Lord or to worship Him. If two or three believers get together for an evangelical work of some kind they are not the body of Christ. If two or three believers get together privately for prayer or to study the Bible they are not the body of Christ. They are indeed members of the body of Christ but unless they happen to be the only believers in that locale they do not comprise the body of Christ in that locale. The "Ye" in this statement is a plural pronoun, just as Paul tells the Corinthians "Ye are the temple of the Holy Spirit" in ch 3:16. They were that together. We each are personally the temple of the Holy Spirit as well, ch. 6:19. By one Spirit we have all been baptized into one body and each given to drink of Him., ch 12:13. Now the body of Christ includes all believers world wide, even those who are astronauts in outer space. But locally the

believers in that place are said to be "body of Christ" and are each members individually. Locally the believers are sufficiently gifted and otherwise equipped to function as one body there in that place. They are also authorized to make collective decisions in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, ch 5:3-5. There is no formal central or regional governing body organization envisioned in scripture. Decisions and actions do not have to be reviewed or ratified by anyone outside the local assembly. The principle of the unity of the body and respect for the Head calls for world wide acceptance and respect for decisions locally made in the name of Christ.

The principle of the unity of the Body also makes room for appeals by other assemblies if local actions seem to be unscriptural or do not seem to fit known facts. Utmost cooperation is called for in view of there being One Head. and One Body. An example of one such appeal and a united outcome is described in Acts 15. For any person or any other assembly to simply ignore or override a decision made locally is a denial of the basic principle: **There is one Body, Christ!** (Ch.12:12) We must recognize that Christ only directs **one** decision in a given matter. **He is not divided** no matter how much we may be. We must take care to seek His will together and do it.

The gifts are now enumerated again. This list seems to be in order of benefit to the body of Christ and glory to the Lord. The important fundamental is that **God has set** some in the Assembly. We don't set anyone in the Assembly, He does. There are three particularly important gifts first. Then he says "after that" etc. Those listed first are those that give us basics for life and walk. Apostles, prophets, teachers. Supporting gifts and sign gifts are then listed: miracles, then healings, helps, governments and diversities in languages. Then he stresses the fact that we aren't all each expected to have all of the gifts. He asks are all apostles? Etc. The obvious answer implied is NO! This is consistent with the diversity of the body described before. Don't let any one try to tell you that because you do not have a certain gift you are not Christ's, or don't have the Holy Spirit. Both are received by faith upon trusting upon the Lord as our Savior.

On the other hand they (the Assembly) are encouraged to covet the best gifts. These would come in new converts or migration from other assemblies. They would be a means of greater edification for the Lord's people. Yet gift is not the end in view. He has a **more excellent way** for us than simply receiving and displaying supernatural spiritual gifts. It is the very nature of God Himself. **Love!** Love that edifies.

By Ron Canner, September 24, 2003

Correction: The reference to John 1:11, in the middle of column 2, page 1 of the September 10, 2003 Dig Deeper, should be Matthew 3:11.

1Corinthians 13:1-7
Dig Deeper, October 8, 2003

Chapter 13 is well known as **the love chapter**. Hopefully familiarity doesn't breed contempt. Verses 4 through 8a often are used and quoted out of the context of the whole chapter and the epistle itself. That isn't bad, for these verses are a marvelous description of the attributes of what is known as "agape love." They go far to nourish relationships, such as marriages, families, assemblies and businesses. These fourteen qualities easily stand alone. Yet we may rightly ask why here in this setting? In Paul's introduction in the first chapter when he commanded the great and many blessings, he notably doesn't mention love. In fact it isn't until chapter eight that he mentions love at all, and there it is in the sense of being lacking among them. ch. 8:1 Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth

They put knowledge and achievement above self sacrificing, tender care for one another. Note the use of the antiquated term "charity" in the KJV while still poetic, is somewhat misleading. It is not merely giving to those in need that is meant. Although one also can gain much insight from the concept of giving, for agape love is simply that, sacrificial giving of self, goods, energy, attention, and the like, to benefit another. To another who, incidently, often doesn't "deserve it." Showing such love glorifies God because He is Love, 1John 4:8,16. And we see His infinite Love in the gift of His only begotten Son to redeem us from our sins. Receive it, if you haven't already!

Note that the love described here is not merely a "warm fuzzy feeling" toward another or even a warm demonstration of affection, but a motivating force calling into action beneficial behaviors and conduct. In the context of the epistle, love is brought before the Corinthian believers here as the only suitable motivation and power for their use of the wonderful spiritual gifts they possessed. The first three verses refer to use of spiritual gifts and give several examples of great powers and achievements humanly speaking which are said to be something else apart from love. Instead, according to the examples given, I cause confusion, I am nothing, I profit nothing. This despite using a spiritual gift received from the Lord to do something I and others may think is good.

In Paul's examples, **tongues, knowledge**, and even **faith and charity** are called to account. These were truly gifts from the ascended Lord Jesus Christ received through the Holy Spirit. They are included in the list in chapter 12. They don't need any human authorization for their use. Nor are they put under the control of any human agency, including the Assembly. They are truly **free gifts**. And they are from the Lord. Yet they were apparently being misused. Note: **They were so free that they could be misused.** Paul has to bring things back into proper perspective. The gifts, freely given to be

freely used, were to be used **responsibly** for the Lord who gave them. He gave them for the glory of God and the edification of His assembly and the benefit of men. This can only occur if they are used with love. And in subjection to the One who gave them. They are free gifts by the grace of the giver. Otherwise their use for edification would be lowered to a level of paid obedience (employee), forced obedience (slavery), or involuntary obedience (robotic). The Lord in His infinite grace lifts us up above these positions, out of the condition we were in when He found us (and saved us). He gives each of His own a loving heart to voluntarily give as He gives, and to be enthusiastic channels of His Love grace and mercy to others. Let Him!

We all have a natural tendency to act carnally, in the flesh (ch.3) as they were, and to use our gifts **as we see fit**. While we do not need human ordination or other authorization to be used of the Lord we do need to submit to His use of us. Prayerful study and application of the Scriptures will move us into a useful, fruitful life **for HIM**. This is the better way referred to in 12:31.

The Corinthians were not only each **personally directing** the use of their gifts they were apparently misusing them (abusing) them. They were using them to put on displays that appealed to the flesh and drew the applause and accolades of their audiences and peers. Naturally followings (groupies) developed around those with certain gifts. These gifted men were exciting and they generated excitement. The concept of excitement is fleshly, not of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 1 Eloquence or foreign tongues, even the supposed tongues of angelic beings, intriguing and wonderful as they might be, are merely confusing noise if not spoken in love and with love.

Verse 2 I am nothing if I have prophetic revelations, vast supernatural knowledge of profound truth, profound philosophic reasoning, and knowledge of things not generally known to men if I have not learned, held and communicated them in love. Lord said that faith able to move mountains was but as a mustard seed. ut love, is said to be a nothing, a nobody. One with faith to move a mountain literally, or figuratively some immense humanly impossible obstacle, if not done in love is said to be nothing, a nobody. See Matthew 4:5-7 for a related example. The Lord will Himself demonstrate TRUE faith when He returns to the Mount of Olives and it parts, like the Red Sea did, to provide an escape for trapped Jewish believers at the end of the Great Tribulation. Read about it in Zechariah 14:3-5. The Jewish believers of that day will have to have great faith in this prophetic scripture to enter and pass through a freshly formed chasm in the mountain. Yet won't they pray in faith for His appearing as prophesied by Zechariah?

Verse 3 Giving to the needy our personal belongings, even our tools and goods that we need to earn our living, is nothing if our alms are done without love and merely to impress men,

Matthew 6:1 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.2 Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth 4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

On the other hand such sacrificial giving characterized the New Testament believers from the beginning (see Acts chapters 2, 5, and 6). Paul later works with these very same Corinthians to accumulate and transport a gift for the needy saints in Judea, ch 16 and 2Corinthians 8 and 9.

I suppose the greatest sacrificial gift of all would be delivering my body to be burned. Yet without love it would profit me nothing. It would be like wood, hay and stubble, ch 3:12-14. We see suicide bombers dying for a cause, and it is worthless waste of life. Is taking the death penalty for killing an abortionist doctor an act motivated by love? God knows. Just don't assume intense faith or costly sacrifice is automatically good or glorifying to God. But don't hesitate to trust Him and stand for Him even unto death, in love for Him. Paul's tumultuous life of faith is a wonderful example for us. Yet he was given a thorn in the flesh to prevent him from becoming self important.

Now in verses 4-7 he talks about **LOVE**. Fourteen statements about love are set before us. Two things love does are mentioned first then eight that it doesn't do, followed by four more that it does. Much has been written on this passage and most of the verses are self explanatory, therefore comments will be mostly general except for a few specifics.

Verse 4a&b The first two have to do with the attitude toward others which encourages unity among us. Our being slow to lose patience, enduring irritating or difficult people and returning kindness are essential ingredients to maintain the unity for which Christ died.

Verses 4c-6a Next are some attitudes which love **does not** entertain in the heart. These bad attitudes emerge from self consciousness, self centeredness, immersion in self interest, all of these are but works generated from innate, instinctive raw pride.

4c. envy; jealousy;
4d. vaunting self, self exaltation, a braggart, boastful; vainglorious; arrogant, insolent and rash, parades self;
4e. puffed up, proud, cherishing inflated ideas of one's own importance, anxious to impress others, haughty;
5a. unseemly behavior, rude, without good manners,

ambitious, unbecoming behavior;

5b. seeking one's own [things], self seeking, pursuing selfish advantage;

5c. easily provoked, short fuse, touchy; fretful resentful;
5d. thinketh evil, imputing evil motives to acts of another, keeping accounts of offenses suffered, or committed.

6a Furthermore true love never rejoices in iniquity (unrighteousness, injustice), whether found in self, family, fellow-believer, assembly or lost sinner, Romans 1:32. Love does not overlook sin, it deals with it in a gentle but firm manner. And certainly love doesn't rejoice or gloat over another having been caught misbehaving.

None of these proceeds from love! But it seems easier to recognize these traits in others than in ourselves.

Now some more of what love is and does.

Verses 6b-7

6b. Love moves the believer's delight in truth of scripture, and when the truth is taught held and practiced.

7a. Beareth all things, bears up under every thing that comes, is protective.

7b. Love believes all things, believes the best in everyone and every situation. Always trusts first, until given evidence not to. Believers are to have a certain sweet, artless gullibility about them, even if a suspicious nature might seem more warranted. This does not condone simple carelessness as to whom we believe or fellowship with. We are given tests to expose liars, and any who seek to harm the sheep will soon be exposed by the Shepherd. Take care. Evil communications corrupt. Chapters 5, 8, 10, 11 and 15 treat real situations where we are to be on our guard.

7c. Love hopes all things. For instance we can believe the best and hope for the best when someone caught in sin claims to have repented and gives some evidence of it. We do not normally need to wait long periods of time to see if they might fall again before we receive them.

7d. Finally, love endures all things. What ever hardship or problems the Lord allows are given in His love and are to be met and accepted by that same love which He has instilled in us. What examples we have in the scriptures, from Abel through John in exile!

Note that 1John 4 is the other "love chapter" of the New Testament. **We love because He first loved us.**
1John 4:19.

By Ron Canner, October 8, 2003

Afterthought.

What happens if we attempt to move mountains with our faith that God doesn't want moved? Does He move them? What if we do it by the faith He has given us without love? People get hurt when literal mountains are moved.

1Corinthians 13:8-13
Dig Deeper, October 15, 2003

The latter part of Chapter 13, **the love chapter**, is devoted to assurances of the preeminence and permanence of love in contrast to the temporary nature of spiritual gifts. Even the best gifts are but for our time on earth. Temporal. And don't we **enjoy the peace and assurance of faith, hope and love now as we walk here below**. But the greatest of these is love! Why? Because when in heaven we won't need faith in the unseen or hope for the promised future any more. **We will be there already!**

12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

What a wonderful prospect. We now see as through a glass. Darkly. Today we have excellent clear window glass and mirrors which don't have ripples, dark imperfections, unclear spots, blurring distortions that mar the images we look for. We also have color photographs and big video screens which are becoming clearer with more realistic images all the time. But none of these are the reality. Seeing someone's image does not compare to face to face. Visiting someone with a glass in between doesn't quite make it. Seeing beautiful landscape through a window doesn't compare to being out in it. Likewise what we see and know by faith and anticipate in hope is no comparison to the brilliant, intense REALITY that awaits us.

1John 3:1-3 We shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.

Yet what we are able to see and comprehend by faith in this life is far beyond the imagination of man.

9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Christ in glory is revealed by the Holy Spirit to believers in a way that changes us to become more like Him even while still here. But it is as a child, so to speak. Once an adult we look back at thing we saw, things we thought, things we did and smile (sometimes cringe and shudder). Paul likens us now to children. Normal children put away childish things as they mature, and go on to more advanced

toys. They look at something they once delighted in and say "that's babyish." Likewise believers mature, putting away things once thought important in favor of better things. So there is a not too subtle exhortation embedded in this statement. For instance, the Corinthian's fascination with spiritual gifts and spiritual manifestations such as speaking in tongues was childish. It was time to put away childish things and grow up.

Even though all of our gifts are but temporal, not eternal, the fruit from godly use of them will be eternal. The wood, hay and stubble would not endure the test of God's judgement, but the gold, silver and precious stones will be an eternal prize. The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) endures. But the gifts they felt were so important were actually going to, sooner or later, pass away or cease.

8 whether [there be] prophecies, they shall fail; whether [there be] tongues, they shall cease; whether [there be] knowledge, it shall vanish away.

In contrast **"Love never fails!"** The word fail here is that it will not fall or disappear ever. Why? Because God is Love.

That which is perfect was coming and when it did it would replace that which is said to be "in part." There are differing opinions what this means. I believe most will agree that when the Lord returns for us and takes His Assembly out of this earth the spiritual gifts mentioned will no longer be needed. But some believe the "that which is perfect" said to be coming is the completion of the inspired word of God. This occurred historically upon the completion of the apostle John's last writings near the end of that century. Some spiritual gifts given by the Lord on the day of Pentecost and thereafter were necessary to compile and complete the word which the Lord promised the night before He was crucified.

John 15:26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: 27 And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

John16:12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. 13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

Supernatural prophecies and knowledge direct from God were received when needed during the days when the New Testament was being written. In fact much of it is a result of prophecies and knowledge that were then duly written. These gifts were also needed in the interim to instruct and

guide the believers until the scriptures were completed.

Prophecies were telling God's mind for a given situation at hand. Knowledge was supernatural revelation of applicable truth for the situation at hand. Now the word of God includes all the truth and mind of God necessary for us today. We just have to study and know it and hide it in our hearts. Still we know but in part even after a lifetime of immersion in the word. Tongues were signs mainly to Israel to witness God's initiation of a new era replacing the old. They overcame temporarily the effects of Babel but did not restore one language. We will hear more about tongues in chapter 14.

Some view the gifts mentioned here, prophecies, tongues and knowledge, as now no longer needed and no longer with us today, since we now have the New Testament scriptures. Others believe what is presented here is simply the temporary nature of all the spiritual manifestations that will not be needed after we are in heaven. Either way Paul wants them to let go of them as objects and regard them simply as tools to serve and glorify God. (I suppose some who place great importance on speaking in tongues will probably not agree with either view.)

Whichever view one holds, what a glad surprise

awaits us when we shall know as we are known. Despite the wonderful blessings of our position in Christ, our new life and new nature in Christ Jesus, the presence and power of the indwelling Holy Spirit and the presence of the Lord in the midst of the Assembly, (and in the midst of the Assemblies) **we are not yet where we will be.** Meanwhile we live and bask in His unfailing Love.

But there is more. Something even better than spiritual gifts, (even those used with love). Prophesying!

By Ron Canner, October 15, 2003

Keep us Lord, O keep us cleaving
To Thyself and still believing,
Till the hour of our receiving
Promised joys with Thee.

Then we shall be where we would be,
Then we shall be what we should be;
Things that are not now not could be
Soon shall be our own.

T. Kelly, 256 LF

1Corinthians 13 Review Dig Deeper, October 22, 2003

Spiritual gifts are great blessings if not neglected or abused. They are not only to be desired but are essential for the edification of the body of Christ. And they do edify if used in love, and as led by the Holy Spirit (ch. 12). Love is the supreme, preeminent, unassailable, virtue given by God to every believer to motivate and empower us as channels of God's love to saint and sinner. It will never let one down.

Yet these wonderful, freely given gifts were so free that they were also liable to be diverted toward promoting one's personal glory and power rather than edification (building up) of the body of Christ. While they are given by the Spirit for the use as directed and empowered by Him, anyone can usurp the Spirit's place and go about directing and using **his own gift** as he sees fit. This very human (fleshly) tendency is exposed here in the first part of chapter 13. It is further countered in chapter 14 with God's blessed, more excellent provision for **responsible involvement of all**, not only the gifted, in the process of edification. (Sometimes men will seek to direct the use of **someone else's gift**, whether in pre-arranged assembly services, ordination, missionary boards and the like.) Let the Lord direct, through the Spirit.

While the apostle delights in the diversity and competence of the multi-gifted assembly he discourages fascination with the gifts themselves and their selfish use of them. So in the latter part of chapter 13 he demonstrates that the gifts themselves are only temporal in nature. They will all pass away upon the rapture of the assembly into Christ's very presence. Some have already. Apostles no longer walk this scene. Gifts of supernatural prophecy and revelations of knowledge have been replaced by the completed scripture they helped form. Even the remaining gifts are nothing in themselves but wonderful tools to be used as the Lord directs for the glory of God and the blessing of man. Other uses are futile. They do not benefit or reward the user or the hearers. They cause disorder, distraction, dissension, discouragement, disillusionment and division rather than edification and blessing.

Even the God given universal virtues of faith and hope are but for this time on earth alone. For faith will be turned to sight, and hope rewarded with fulfillment. There are many, many scriptures confirming this for the believer.

2Corinthians 5:6 *Therefore [we are] always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: 7 (For we*

walk by faith, not by sight:) 8 We are confident, [I say], and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

1John 3: 2 *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is*

Romans 8:16 *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. 18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. 20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, 21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. 24 For we are saved by hope: but **hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?** 25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.*

Love outlasts Faith and Hope which are relevant only while we are here upon earth. But Love will be with us and in us for eternity. Or can we better say, we will be with Love eternally.

Love is intrinsically supreme, not merely one of God's attributes we are to display as His children. John TWICE declares that **GOD IS LOVE**. This seems to mean that Love is God's intrinsic nature. All other characteristics and attributes of God flow from this ultra infinite source, LOVE. Love generates, embodies and saturates Life. Love displays its glory as unapproachable, yet all pervasive Light. All three, Light, Life and Love, are perfectly revealed to created beings in Christ. But the greatest of these is Love.

Romans 5:5 *And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

1Corinthians 14:1-6

Dig Deeper, October 29, 2003

We now enter another phase of the apostle's admonition regarding the disorder and selfishness of the saints. (Admonition is instruction and exhortation applying the instruction to the heart.) He has exposed their immaturity, tendency toward sects and heresies, premature judging of one another, tolerance of evil, selfish adjudication of disputes before the heathen courts, misuse of celibacy (and of the world), stumbling the weak through misuse of knowledge, self indulgence on the path of faith, lack of self sacrifice in serving the Lord, carelessness regarding demonic forces, disorder surrounding both the Lord's Table and the Lord's Supper, misuse and abuse of spiritual gifts, lack of love governing use of gifts and other actions, and overvaluing gifts at the expense of edification and blessing. He has reminded them of the truth of their created gender roles and the truth of the Assembly, the Body of Christ. He has clarified the source of, and proper attitude toward, spiritual gifts given for edification of the assembly in love. In chapter 11 their disorder when assembled is rebuked. Now he goes on to admonish regarding proper order, use of gifts, and procedures suiting meetings of the gathered assembly.

Love is essential for becoming conduct of meetings of the saints. Spiritual gifts are important when used in love for the spiritual blessing of the assembly. They serve an important role in the assembly's growth and edification and public testimony. The messages of gifted, godly preachers are truly wonderful manifestations of the grace of God to us, poor and undeserving as we are. Would we had more. But even such inspiring messages are truly edifying only if the speaker is prophesying.

The scriptures do not limit "prophesying" to one who is gifted as a "Prophet" as in chapter 12:28, Romans 12:6, 16:25-26, and Ephesians 4:11. Those with the gift of prophecy were used to compose the canon of the New Testament, Romans 16:26, and to temporarily "fill in" with needed revelations for the saints until the scriptures were completed and available. Note that chapter 14:30 gives priority to revelations over prophecy. More on that later. Since then all prophesying is to be based upon the now completed, inspired word of God.

In chapter 11 there is no gift needed for either praying or prophesying. In chapter 12 a gift of prophecy is named. In chapter 13 love is to be operative in prophesying. In chapter 14 the one prophesying may have a spiritual gift of some kind or he may not, but the important focus is spiritual edification, exhortation, and encouragement. (Mind whether your head is covered when praying or prophesying, and in assembly sisters are restricted to silence, ch 14:34.)

Paul marks that prophesying had powerful competition in Corinth. Speaking in tongues. This

wonderful gift was particularly exciting to observe and apparently was a stimulating experience for the one speaking as well. People are always excited by the miraculous. God in His wisdom and grace had bestowed this gift upon some of the saints in Corinth, and they all were enjoying this to the full. Both the hearers and the speakers were "blessed" and stirred emotionally by speaking in tongues. So they naturally sought more of such enjoyable experiences totally overlooking the absence of one another's lasting spiritual edification, exhortation, and encouragement desired by God. They weren't being motivated, or blessed, through love.

Paul emphasizes spiritual edification of others as the intended result of the use of any gift. He describes the way the Corinthians were using their God given spiritual gifts of tongues in public in the gatherings of the assembly. This gift of tongues was the ability to speak an unlearned foreign language. Obviously whatever was being said was meaningless to the locals without an interpreter. In contrast, in Acts 2 when the disciples, who had just received the Holy Spirit, spoke in tongues, foreigners visiting Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost were amazed by spiritual sayings spoken in their own homeland languages. This was a graphic sign of God's power in the disciples, and they paid attention to Peter when he presented the gospel to them. (Ch 14:21-22 confirm that tongues were given for a sign to Israel.)

There was understanding of what was spoken on Pentecost but the Corinthians speaking in tongues in assembly were not being understood. The speaker could be revealing the most elegant or thrilling mystery (secret) yet none but God knew what was said. No one understood the language so couldn't interpret. Apparently the speaker didn't even have an idea what he had said, for he didn't interpret. (Or was it beneath him to interpret?) Despite this, seemingly rational believers were enthralled by these essentially useless performances in their midst and encouraged it the more. Paul discourages such practices (antics). Paul encourages them as one who would "speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine." These would edify them in love. Those that prophesied are said to be greater than those who spoke in tongues, unless there was an interpreter. Tongues only built up the speaker in the eyes of others instead of presenting Christ for the building up of others. Amazing grace that God freely gave such wonderful free gifts to be freely used for His glory. Amazing folly to squander them on self.

By Ron Canner, October 29, 2003

Paul continues to make his case for edification rather than excitement. Prophesying was superior in results to speaking in tongues. The assembled saints would be edified instead of merely the speaker. One who rises to prophesy may not present God's mind to us faultlessly but at least we understand the language being spoken and can take in and weigh what is said. The Spirit can move our hearts by whatever is said in subjection to His leading. He cannot if we don't even understand the language being spoken. And listeners cannot sift the precious from the worthless spoken in an unknown, foreign language. Who knows what might be said in the name of the Lord. This is why the first thing Paul mentions in chapter 12 is a screening of speakers, as to whether they confess Jesus as Lord. The need for judging what is spoken by the prophets is restated in 14:29, "let the others judge." This would be impossible without interpretation of any foreign language being spoken.

He uses simple commonplace examples to illustrate his point. Even inanimate things such as musical instruments are useless if they cannot play a tune. This reminds us of his earlier statement beginning chapter 13,

13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become [as] sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

In the military, camp order was maintained and battles were directed by use of distinctive trumpet calls. The beautiful, familiar TAPS still played ceremonially at military funerals, is a relic of that practice. It was merely the call at the end of the day to quiet down and go to sleep. In the wilderness the Children of Israel were given silver trumpets to call them to break camp, etc. We now use radios for most of that, but if there is static communications may be disrupted. When a tornado hits a town the question always arises, Were the sirens sounded? We take shelter until the all-clear sounds. If the siren doesn't give a recognizable signal many might perish. So likewise if the speaker cannot be understood the listeners miss a warning or other blessing.

9 So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.

The key is, "**easy to be understood.**" We now use a speaker system to assure all in the room may hear speakers, even those with weak voices. Others with normally strong voices, if unsure of themselves, may

mumble. The result isn't much different than if he were speaking in a foreign language. We stopped kneeling in prayer meeting because of problems hearing prayers spoken into the back of one's chair. For this reason if we do kneel we should face toward others or rise to our feet when praying aloud. Otherwise how will the others be edified and be able to intelligently participate with an "Amen!" Verse 16 speaks to that.

16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? 17 For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.

Frustration results when would-be hearers are unable to hear, or worse, unable to understand what they can clearly hear. The confusion of tongues at Babel is reenacted all over again. The tendency is toward separation rather than uniting.

11 Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.

But we can have grace in our hearts toward one another's weaknesses.

Being zealous of spiritual gifts they were to seek to excel to the edification of the assembly. We should endeavor to speak to be understood rather than to impress others. Self becomes the focus and the speaker an object of admiration and even adulation by others. Self is in action, whether speaking an unknown foreign tongue or simply **using natural abilities** to preach eloquently or to elegantly expound doctrinal truth. This is counter to the desire of the Spirit who seeks to direct and empower the gifts He has conveyed to us from the Lord. Those with natural abilities need to guard against impersonating spiritual gift or interposing self where the Spirit should be in charge. Those who think they have no speaking ability can take heart that the Spirit can and will use them if they are given a burden to speak. Be open and receptive to that burden. **Depend upon Him, not self, whether gifted or not, to prophesy!** And those present, look to the Lord the Head to move those **He will** to pray, speak, give out a hymn as He orchestrates the meeting of His assembly in that locale. After all, He is in the midst and all there are praying and prophesying, whether audibly or not. For they are the body of Christ gathered locally unto His name.

By Ron Canner, November 5, 2003.

Those who did speak in a foreign tongue were to pray that they might interpret. Does this mean they were speaking words they themselves didn't even understand? Scarey! How did they know what spirit was moving them? Much more, how did anyone else know? Was it the Holy Spirit, their own fleshly human spirit, or a demonic spirit influencing them? Not that we should limit the Holy Spirit. We might if we speak only from a prepared text, although He can and does use these too. (Otherwise there is no point in me writing what you are reading now.) But in assembly there can be such a self abandonment that we can speak (prophesy) beyond anything we could prepare in advance and rehearse to give as a lecture. Not that extemporaneous speaking is necessarily superior. But usually one prophesies from a reservoir of previous exercises in the word. The Spirit, if allowed the liberty to do so, collects and calls to mind and presents the message He desires be brought for that audience and occasion. But that we should **understand** what we are saying is paramount. The speaker is edified by what he is led to say, along with the hearers. Not by the fact that he was used to prophesy but by **what** he actually said as led by the Spirit. What a blessing this is! Any ordinary man, a simple brother in Christ, can be put on his feet and led by the Spirit to speak as the oracles of God to the edification of the Assembly, 1Peter 4:11. We can and should. And we should take precautions to assure we do not discourage the liberty of the Spirit by the way we announce meetings of the Assembly, arrange seating in our hall, etc. We need to beware of the temptation to preempt the Spirit by prearranging things where He is to have control. Be jealous for His rights, and His directing..

On the other hand we should also provide that individual gifts can minister to us as well. Brothers are free to request a meeting on their **own responsibility** to minister as the Lord has exercised them in advance. Here attention to preparation is appropriate. Taking simple precautions of being sure he can be heard, that he speaks in an known language (or with a translator), perhaps has an outline or notes, uses understandable terms in complete sentences, in some organized manner so that his message from the Lord is not garbled or unintelligible.

We must beware of the temptation to substitute an eloquent or gifted brother for the liberty of the Spirit in the meetings of the assembly. That would relieve others of having to be spiritually exercised and would grant prestige and power that is difficult if not impossible to most to resist. And it would preempt and effectively quench the Spirit whom God has given to preside over the assembly.

We all are to pray with the Spirit and with understanding also. The brother audibly prays on behalf of all those present, brother and sister. They all remain silent while he prays. They pray silently so the Spirit will

move him to say aloud the godly yearnings in their hearts. They add their **amen** to what he prays. This is united prayer or worship.

We also all join audibly in the psalms, hymns and spiritual songs given out. Singing together with the spirit (and the Spirit) and with our understanding. And we are all edified, not merely excited. Here again the flesh may find opportunity to insert itself into the proceedings. One may be tempted to give out a hymn because he "likes it," likes the tune, likes to sing, likes the poetry, etc. He sings in his spirit and enjoys it, but is he spiritually edified or merely entertained?. Yet we are not to judge his motives. We can sing with the Spirit whatever hymn is given out even if it seems inappropriate to us at the time. Grace prevails in our weakness.

Singing is not given us to excite worship in the heart. Our singing is to be enthusiastically **from the heart**. Of course there is no virtue in poor or listless singing. I suppose it could be a signal of the spiritual condition of the heart. If we sense we have dull hearts we should not simply try to drum up enthusiasm though vigorous singing. If that should fail will we need to organize a choir? And if we don't have enough local talent for a good choir will we hire professionals to conduct song services? (There are such professional groups of believers available now.) Somehow we will drift from edification to entertainment. Enthusiasm to enthrallment. True spiritual unity is characterized by the liberty of the Spirit toward responsible **involvement of all** in the assembly. Paul is trying to prevent a departure from this.

What does Paul mean "the other is not edified" if there is no understanding when we give thanks? We don't pray or preach for the approval and praise of others, do we? No. **We pray on behalf of all so we all are edified by our understanding and inclusion in the united prayer of the group.** We belong! We are one. Together our exercises are being presented to God by the spokesman for the group who is led to pray. The edification of others by prophesying (preaching) is obvious. But **one in the congregation is also considered to be prophesying when he or she is just sitting there silently listening to another speak.** How so? The speaker is speaking to all, but also on behalf of all, present. Their exercises (man or woman) are taken by the Spirit and given to the brother(s) He selects and moves to speak. So we are **all prophesying** in this manner when gathered together unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are the body of Christ after all. We all take part in this way, or should at least. (And that is why we all mind our head cover in assembly.)

little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Paul next cites the Old Testament to show they were not properly using their gifts of tongues for their intended purpose.

Isaiah 28:9 Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. 10 For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: 11 For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. 12 To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. 13 But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

Interestingly, this passage also refers to babes and knowledge. And it warns that if Israelites did not grow up and seek knowledge, line upon line, precept upon precept, they would fall into the hands of men speaking in foreign tongues, invaders and captors. Spiritual knowledge, true knowledge of God, is acquired through regular, systematic, applied study of His word. If we neglect the word we will begin to hear things spoken that might as well be foreign languages, for we will not understand what is said. And we are carried captive by human reasoning and ideas.

*2Timothy 2:23 But foolish and senseless questionings avoid, knowing that they beget contentions. 24 And a bondman of the Lord ought not to contend, but be gentle towards all; apt to teach; forbearing; 25 in meekness setting right those who oppose, if God perhaps may sometime give them repentance to acknowledgment of the truth, 26 and that they may awake up out of the snare of the devil, who are taken by him, for *his* will.(JND)*

[Note that quotes of scripture given in scripture often are meant to turn us to the context of the quote, which often contains much more on the topic at hand than stated in the quote. The quote is a “bookmark” to more light. Make a practice of looking up the quotes.]

Our in-depth study of short portions of this full and important chapter provides many practical insights on assembly conduct. But we must watch that are seeing the forest not just the trees. Much of what Paul is saying here is irony or sarcasm. Those who are blinded by their own preconceived notions and desires tend to apply his statements in a way to justify the use of tongues in assembly. And indeed, Paul forbids us from forbidding the speaking in tongues, verse 39. But he presents every reason to discourage the use of tongues short of forbidding them. Why didn't he just forbid their use? That would quickly do away with the problem if misuse. Or would it? But that would be returning them to bondage and destroying the liberty Christ had died to bestow upon them, and us. The same is true of the three chapters (8-10) he takes to instruct about things sacrificed to idols. The attitudes are more important than the acts. So in chapters 11 through 14 he takes a considerable space instructing us about the **assembly order**, rather than merely issuing decrees.

When he states he spoke in tongues more than they all he is not bragging. Nor is he endorsing the use of tongues in assembly. He is simply removing any basis for a possible accusation that he was just envious of their gifts and therefore was putting them down. No. He states the preferred activity in assembly. *I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.* Look how many times he tells us in these chapters that spiritual edification is the objective, not fleshly excitement. They were acting like children with fun toys, showing off, entertaining and being entertained. They were behaving with immature, childish understanding, rather than mature wisdom and knowledge imparted by spiritual ministry that touched the heart. How ironic! Here they were priding themselves in their deep knowledge based upon the wisdom of men and yet they were neglecting the very source of real wisdom and knowledge among them, prophesying in the Spirit.

He makes a neat aside here reminding them that they should be childlike in their feelings and actions toward one another. Little children are characterized by a sweet simplicity of heart that quickly forgives and forgets and rarely picks up a grudge. They needed that gentle reminder to reinforce what he had said earlier in the epistle about their incipient divisions. The Lord calls us to become as little children.

Matthew 18:1 At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? 2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, 3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this

Paul's point here by quoting Isaiah is that the foreign languages heard by Israel were a sign to them of God's displeasure and resulting judgement upon their untrue hearts and persistent wandering from Him. Tongues were a sign for God's wandering people. Did the Corinthians wish to count themselves among those who had wandered from God? Weren't they misusing valid sign gifts in assembly for personal excitement rather than for outreach? They were to show Jews in the community that they were astray from God. He was indeed now

speaking a different way than their Old Testament laid down. This is how tongues were used on the Day of Pentecost. They were given to speak to **unbelievers, not to believers!** Perhaps the Corinthians were given the gift of tongues to be properly used in this bustling seaport to reach foreign speaking Jews and Gentiles with the gospel of Christ. They would also show the power of God working in these despised Christians. But outreach was neglected. The means for it were redirected toward entertainment inside. We must beware of similar disuse, misuse or abuse of spiritual gifts and inborn natural gifts found in individuals in our midst. **Performances instead of edification and outreach?!** That's what the Corinthians were into. They forgot why they were here. Heartfelt joyful (or sorrowful, if appropriate) singing, and preaching and comforting.. That's what we are here for.

Prophesying is again presented as the means of blessing in assembly. The use of unknown foreign languages there is but gross confusion. Such confusion is not of God. Paul later states the God is not the author of confusion but of peace (verse 33). This made the believers appear to be **mad** <3105> to a visitor.

3105 mainomai, mah'-ee-nom-ahee

(AV-be mad 4, be beside (one's) self 1; 5,
1) to be mad, to rave

1a) of one who so speaks that he seems not to
be in his right mind

Not only that, I understand pagan religious services feature speaking in tongues driven by demonic beings. Remember the warning about idolatry in chapters

8-10, and about trying the spirits chapter12:1-3?

Underlying all of this was the false premise they held that the assembly was a place for gifted individuals to use their gift **as they pleased**. Paul is refuting that idea in principle. Tongues were just one example of this practice. It effectively shuts down the liberty of the Holy Spirit to use anyone He pleased, gifted or not, to minister to the assembly as a whole or to speak for the assembly as a whole. Indeed spiritual gifts play an important, essential part in edification to the believers and reaching unbelievers. But Paul tells us here they were not to dominate when in assembly. There the Spirit works in the midst of those gathered unto the name of the Lord Jesus. It is one body, and any of the members may prophesy, whether gifted or not.

I recall someone once mentioning there seemed to be no gift for teaching in their assembly, so it was extremely difficult to conduct a bible study. The response of a wise older brother was that the “open meeting for ministry” didn’t depend upon gift for edification. All can prophesy there. Loving faith predominates rather than gift, although gift is to be used in faith and love too. What a gracious provision for even small assemblies in this day of ruin and divisions that separate gifted believers from one another locally. But God is sufficient, if we recognize the failed state of things and the path He has called all believer’s to in these last days.

By Ron Canner, November 19, 2003.

Paul has thoroughly laid out the principle of edification as opposed to excitement. Believers are to receive real lasting spiritual blessing through understanding what is spoken. The superiority of prophesying to the use of foreign tongues (languages) without an interpreter is clear. The gift of tongues was to reach unbelievers and was a special sign to Israel. So he continues then to apply this principle to the whole assembly being come together. This implies the gift of tongues was more properly used outside of the assembly. In fact he makes the case that one visiting the meeting place where tongues were in use would come to the logical conclusion they were mad. On the other hand, if all that speak prophesy, the visitor will be convicted in his or her heart. He will be touched in ways unexpected and brought to his knees. The secrets of his heart will be made manifest (be plainly recognized or known). This occurs even if the visitor is a total stranger to those present. He will come to realize and acknowledge the very presence of God among them, Matthew 18:20. And he will realize his sinful condition and bow to the God in their midst. If unsaved he is brought to repentance and salvation, even if the purpose of the meeting is worship, prayer or edification of the believers, not a gospel meeting. Here we learn incidentally, that visitors that are unbelievers, or believers who are "untaught," are not to be barred from attending meetings of the assembly (although not to participate until received by action of the assembly). A number of sincere believers worshiping the Lord who died for them is a touching gospel testimony to the grace of God.

Paul then proceeds to discuss their common practice when assembled. Whatever they had on their heart, it was to contribute to edification. "Let all things be done unto edifying." They might have a psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation. All were appropriate in assembly meetings. There are at least two ways we can view this verse. Is it criticizing them or is it commanding them? Were they pressing themselves forward with what they had to give, some seeking prominence and attention at the expense of order and the leading of the Spirit? Or were they each coming prepared with one or more exercise but ready to allow the Spirit to lead the various ones in the assembly as He wished? At least they did not seem to have a problem with too few willing and ready to participate.

1Thessalonians 5:18 ... in everything give thanks, for this is [the] will of God in Christ Jesus towards you; 19 quench not the Spirit; 20 do not lightly esteem prophecies; 21 but prove all things, hold fast the right; 22 hold aloof from every form of wickedness.

Quenching the Spirit differs from grieving the Spirit mentioned in Ephesians 5:30. Grieving the Spirit is

something we do personally that grieves Him who is dwelling in our physical bodies. We grieve Him when we neglect the word, forget to pray, ignore His prompting, or do something that is sinful. Personal communion with God is hindered or interrupted. God immediately initiates work through our Advocate with the Father (1John 1:9) to bring us back and to restore us. But if we come to meeting having grieved Him without repenting, we then become an agent that dampens or quenches the Spirit's activity in the midst of the gathered assembly. This condition allows self to insert itself into the proceedings. Not only is the one away from the Lord liable to offend but all are weakened and are less able to keep self out of the action. The assembled believers locally are one body, 12:27. Our meetings are affected by each member's spiritual state, for better or worse. That is why we are each exhorted to examine (judge) ourselves before we come to partake of the emblems at the Lord's Supper, ch 11:28-32.

Chapter 14:26 especially applies to gathered believers where the Holy Spirit is accorded liberty to preside and direct the various participants of the meeting. As we have seen, we can quench the Spirit by coming in an un-judged state.. If we do, we may become too pushy as the Corinthians seemed to have been. Some who were to be used by the Spirit are bumped aside, robbing others of the edification they might have received. On the other hand some may be too **self conscious** to pray, speak or even give out a hymn. (Isn't "self consciousness" simply that, **SELF?**) We can even come with no intention of letting the Spirit move us to participate. This robs others of the blessing the Spirit might have given through our participation. Sometimes this is fear of making a mistake. Having been treated harshly, or having seen others "jumped on" for something they said in meeting can also discourage participation. While we are to weigh what is said, we can quench the Spirit by jumping another for something he said. Rather we are to faithfully deal with these incidents gently but firmly. It costs nothing to patiently ask what was meant and seeking to determine the truth of scripture together. The exhortations in chapter 13 regarding love come into play in these situations. The exhortations of 2Timothy also encourage resorting to the inspired scriptures when apparently erroneous thoughts have been expressed. Rarely is something said that is so totally blasphemous that it must be sharply rebuked right then and there. The very fact that Paul is writing these patient, instructive epistles indicates most things needing correction can be handled apart from open rebuke. On the other hand the epistle to the Galatians is an example of a sharp response that was needed.

He now begins to prescribes what is needed for

orderly meetings basing his remarks upon the preceding comments beginning with chapter 11. The use of tongues is treated first. If they were used at all in assembly it was to be one speaker at a time, limited to two, or at the most three speakers per meeting. No one was to speak in assembly in a foreign language without an interpreter. He was to keep silent. If he was indeed gifted to speak in tongues he was to do so privately between himself and God. This requirement would thwart any tendency to show off the gift. He would be brought face to face with God and made to feel his responsibility to the One who had freely given the gift.

Now the very fact that such disorder described here was possible tells us much about the liberty for participation by all believers present. There is no human agent authorized anywhere in scripture to preside over a meeting of the assembly of God. And the remedy for disorder was not human arrangements or human direction of meetings of the assembly. Paul does not direct them to place a leader up front to prevent disorderly conduct in meetings. No! Doing that would displace the Holy Spirit

from His appointed place. He does not spell out a ritual to preserve order. We need to avoid slipping into a defacto ritual in our meetings. Groups of humans can do that you know. We don't always have to open with a hymn, or close with a prayer, or bless the emblems near the end of the meeting. He does not suggest a liturgy (prescribed religious service requiring certain written required statements, written prayers and sermons). While these arrangements fill in silences in meeting, relieve others from exercise to participate, and prevent some overzealous brethren from imposing themselves upon the meeting, Paul does not suggest them. No! To do so would be **systematically quenching the Spirit**. He instead lays down basics of order for all to observe. He uses the term "let" instead of "thou shalt." Each was responsible to do his part to maintain order and to yield to the leading of the Spirit. There is one body, one Head, and many members.

Listen! Trust! Obey! Enjoy!

By Ron Canner, November 26, 2003.

Now we come to what is to be a common practice when the assembly is assembled, **prophesying**. Paul has used much of the first part of this chapter to contrast the universal benefit of prophesying with the very limited value of tongues in assembly. He has restricted the use of tongues to two or at the most three and only when there is an interpreter. He seems to discourage the tongue speakers themselves from interpreting their own statements although he says in verse 13 “Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.” He seems to favor team work, the speaker relying upon another to interpret. Why? To speak in a foreign language where no one else understands it and then translate what he just said is ostentatious (showing off), and really tacky, even if others are so fleshly as to find such things entertaining. He also had to restrict speaking in tongues to one at a time! Since no one could understand what was being said it apparently didn’t matter to them if several were speaking at once. What confusion! What a dishonor to the Lord Jesus Christ and His name. No wonder visitors would think them to have gone mad (v. 23).

Paul now lays out orderly prophesying. He limits it also to two or three. Even though he doesn’t say outright “at the most three” it seems obvious he means that, having just said it about tongues. Since it isn’t specifically prohibited, some have argued to allow prophesying by more than three speakers in one meeting. But the New Testament isn’t a legal document where everything has to be spelled out or exceptions and loopholes can be sought (and usually found) at the expense of the intent. The Law of Moses was constructed more like a legal document. It seemed to invite the lawyers to find loop holes and develop whole sets of additional rules to plug them. This was the state of the Jews in the Lord’s day. The Sadducees kept finding “loop holes” and the Pharisees kept trying to plug them. The Lord had to rebuke them for adding to the Law, and for self righteous attitudes. We need to be cautious about making rules that add to the order set forth in the New Testament, especially by Paul. We also need to beware of discounting the order set out here as “out of date,” “unworkable nowadays,” and “culturally unsuitable,” or replaced by traditions developed since the Bible was written. While the language here is not legal, and is couched in voluntary terms such as “let”, they are binding and to be respected and obeyed.

John 14:15 *If ye love me, keep my commandments*

1John 5:3 *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.*

They are indeed the way of liberty, peace, unity and blessing.

Paul also enjoins respect for others who may have a Spirit led message. Those who are speaking are not to

monopolize the time available. Those who feel they have a pressing message from the Lord are to patiently wait for the other to finish, even if he feels what is being given is not Spirit led or edifying. The spirits of the prophets are to be subject to the prophets. Each is to be in complete control of himself and yet yielded to the leading of the Spirit whether to speak, when to speak, how long to speak and what to say. Each is to listen attentively. If he has a message it shouldn’t normally repeat what has already been said, but often will build on it. Sometimes one may speak to reemphasize what has been said, or to temper what has been said. Other times the Spirit may lead to seeming unrelated messages from the two or three that speak. On the other hand one may be led to correct or even rebuke something already said but that should be extremely rare, reserved for flagrant, blasphemous statements, certainly not mere differences of opinion.

Am I setting down rules here? Please don’t take the remarks as that. We may make observations that help interpret scripture but they are subject to the basic order laid out in scripture. The reader is privileged and responsible to weigh anything I write and to seek clarification and challenge me to back up what I say with scripture. The same is true for those sitting in meeting. We are to be listening, not to note mistakes, but to weigh what is being said, seeking out personal edification, heart searching, encouragement, comfort, and blessing. “Let the rest judge.” Not simply the rest of the prophets, as being a special class, but all present. Perhaps not every thing said seems to apply to me, or even to the current state of the assembly as I view it. Others present may be the Spirit’s direct target in these cases. However let’s not sit there and think “I hope _____ is listening, he/she sure needs that!”. Maybe he does and we can genuinely pray in the Spirit for his or her blessing, but let’s beware of pride because “I don’t have that problem,” or “I know better than that.” Been there. Done that. We indeed should take heed if just to avoid something we haven’t fallen into yet.

All the listeners, “the rest,” are to judge what is being said. We are to weigh what is said!. Separate the wheat from the chaff, so to speak.

1Thessalonians 5:19 *quench not the Spirit; 20 do not lightly esteem prophecies; 21 but prove all things, hold fast the right; 22 hold aloof from every form of wickedness. (JND)*

We learn from these statements that the prophets are not to be considered inspired and infallible. (All who claim to be Apostles or infallible today are unscriptural, are deceivers, even if self deceived, and not to be accepted.) Believers have the duty to weigh whatever is said against scripture. Not that every thing said that appears at first to be unscriptural, or that differs with what I believe, is to be rejected. We must always be humble enough to at least entertain the possibility that “I might be wrong.” On the

other hand we are not to be gullible and receive whatever is said because it was **said in meeting**, or it was **said by so and so**. Nor are we to automatically not listen to so and so “because he doesn’t present what he has to say clearly,” or “because he never has anything good,” etc. We respect him and support him in prayer while he is speaking because he is a brother in Christ. He is speaking on behalf of God in the presence of the Lord in the midst at the direction of the Holy Spirit. We may and must prayerfully, faithfully, lovingly test what is said against scripture, but we must never simply disregard someone who is a brother in Christ speaking in the assembly gathered unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. If he is out of order, wasting our time, or worse, then shame upon him and us that the assembly is in such a low spiritual state that such a one is not hindered or prevented by the very presence and power of the unquenched Spirit of God. If there is silence, none moved to prophesy, this may also indicate a low spiritual state or the existence of un-judged sin in the local assembly.

The “prophets” are **not a special class**. They are not necessarily naturally gifted or spiritually gifted, or ordained, appointed, selected nor “called” by men. Doing this systematically quenches the Holy Spirit of God. It usurps the authority of the Lord to gift and direct those so gifted, and to move whom He will to present what He wants presented to the local assembly. Not only is He in the midst of each local assembly, Matthew 18:20. He is seen in Revelation chapter 1 as the High priest in the midst of all of the local assemblies world wide. They are seen as encircling Him at any given instant, and down through the centuries as well, until He comes for us. He is overseeing all together (there is one Body), and yet overseeing each local assembly as well. There is no other Central Oversight revealed in scripture. He is Head. He knows well each local gathering as His, and lovingly encourages, exhorts, warns, admonishes, rebukes each as specifically needed. We see examples of His supreme authority and faithful tender loving in the letters he dictated to John to be sent to the seven assemblies in seven different cities in Asia (Minor), Revelation chapters 2 and 3. Each is local and has local authority and responsibilities to the Head as the body of Christ in that locale. He ministers to their current local needs through the “angel of the assembly.” Who is this? **The prophets of 1Corinthians 14!** Why do we think that? In Malachi 2 we learn that the priests are the messengers of God.

Malachi 2:7 For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger <mal'ak> of the LORD of hosts.

The title “angel” is simply “messenger.”

04397 mal'ak, mal-awk' from an unused root meaning to despatch as a deputy; a messenger; specifically, of God, i.e. an angel (also a prophet, priest or teacher);--ambassador, angel, king, messenger.

But all believers are priests, messengers of God.

*Peter 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an **holy priesthood**, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. {are: or, be ye} (KJV)*

*1Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a **royal priesthood**, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: {peculiar: or, purchased} {praises: or, virtues} (KJV) Revelation 1:6 and made us a kingdom, **priests to his God and Father**: to him [be] the glory and the might to the ages of ages. Amen. (DBY)*

The prophets that prophesy in the assembly are priestly messengers from the Lord through the Spirit to the Assembly. They are to be respected as that. Yet what they say is to be carefully weighed by “the rest.” That is, the rest of the priests, the rest of the prophets, all of the local assembly.

We are cautioned that whichever prophets speak they must speak one by one. All brothers in the assembly were eligible to speak (prophesy), two or three at any one sitting. There should be recess afterward, for physical relief if nothing else. This also presents opportunity for personal reflection and discussion about what was said and for contact with a speaker with questions, encouragement or concerns. If the assembly wants more it can schedule more meetings on a regular basis or on the spot after a suitable recess. Sometimes distance or difficulty in getting a commonly suitable time for everyone means sequential or combined meetings are appropriate. For instance, a Prayer/Open meeting could follow or precede Remembrance Meeting as long as announced and done in an orderly manner.

Notice there is **no limit given** on the number of **hymns** given out in a meeting or by a given brother. There is no limit to the number of **prayers** in a meeting or by a given brother, whether expressions of praise, supplication, thanksgiving, etc. There is complete liberty for a local assembly as small as two believers to fully function, even if only one is a brother. Some believe the limit of two or three applies only to the meeting specifically announced for ministry of the word, that is, for prophesying. We announce this as the “open meeting” or “open meeting for ministry as the spirit may lead” or the like. However Paul doesn’t seem to limit his guidance about prophesying solely to meetings announced for that purpose. Prophesying may, and properly should, occur in any meeting of the assembly, remembrance, prayer (although not the primary focus) or discipline. (See Acts 15 where only two prophesied, Peter and James, amidst much other discussion, statements of facts and positions.) There appears to be no reason the limit of two or three should not apply.

When assembled, enjoy the loving, holy, orderly liberty of the Spirit in the Lord's presence!

By Ron Canner, December 3, 2003.

While there are few direct commands given in the New Testament we have one here in verse 34. Even here it is couched in terms that maintain the believers liberty to voluntarily do what our Lord desires, and avoid doing what would displease Him..

34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: It doesn't say "**make** your women keep silence." It says "**Let** your women..." The sisters are treated as mature enough and godly enough to handle this inspired admonition without assembly intervention. They are priests just as much as the brothers.

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

They are free to pray, free to prophesy, but not in public, not in assembly. And when they pray or prophesy, the head is to be covered, ch 11:3-13. And when gathered together in an assembly meeting for prayer, worship or prophesying each sister is a full, if silent, participant and properly covers her head. On the other hand women are apparently at liberty to pray aloud and to prophesy aloud when gathered with women in private surroundings. Even there heads should be covered, if I read chapter 11 correctly. Chapter 11 gives the overall decorum for men and women praying and prophesying anywhere. Chapter 14 simply adds a limit upon sisters doing so audibly in public.

Was Paul a "male chauvinist"? Is God? Did Paul hate women? Does God? Paul clearly realizes that this was, and would continue to be, a controversial issue. While many questions arise over these directives that seem to focus on restraining women, open rebellion against the Lord's prerogative to set down order for the meetings of His assembly is strongly rebuked right here. While the immediate context is the silence of women in meeting these strong statements apply to all who dare to choose to ignore ANY of the directions given for order in the assembly. Verse 33 sums it up, "**For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.**" He is glorified by the spectacle of a group of widely diverse individuals from many backgrounds gathering together in a peaceful, orderly, quiet, respectful manner, in perfect liberty, without any visible leader presiding. Roberts Rules of Order is not needed here, just individual subjection to the Lord and submission to the Holy Spirit. WOW!!! What a miraculous thing when one thinks about it. But we are indeed to heed what He says here.

When we look into the background of the treatment of women one soon realizes that these passages establishing the befitting role of women amongst believers were drastically liberating compared with customary

social and religious practices up to then (and still rampant throughout much of the world). For instance, one commentator states,

"The Jews were very strenuous, and their laws were very strict. The Rabbins taught that a woman should know nothing but the use of the distaff; and they were specially prohibited from asking questions in the synagogue, or even from reading. The same rule is still observed by the Jews in the synagogues. Barnes.

Believers need to be wary of being caught up in the rebellious and ambitious spirit operating in the world today that seeks to overthrow God's prescribed roles for men and women, given here and elsewhere in scripture. Our object is not to see how much we can get by with. While some may be tempted to get just as close to the edge of the lines the Lord has drawn around us for our protection, blessing, and for His glory, we will be richly blessed if we wholeheartedly seek to walk in the center of the course He has set out for us.

What does Paul mean when he states women are "commanded to be under obedience"? Aren't we all are to be under obedience? This may be related to the symbolic head covering established in chapter 11. It speaks of headship and of upholding God's glory. As the last creature made by God, she is His masterpiece and the glory of man who is made in the image of God. However having been made from Adam's rib she was not directly created out of earth (dirt). Adam is directly responsible to his creator, having been directly created by God out of dirt. The woman God gave him for a suitable companion was made from his rib. This indicates, therefore, she is to be under the man's loving headship, leadership and care. Eve was responsible to Adam. (Of course she was also responsible to God who created them.) When she listened to the Serpent instead of her husband (her head and source of her very being) she led the couple into sin, disobeying the one and only commandment given them by their Creator. She not only led in initiating sin she usurped the place of headship Adam had been given by God.. It was Adam who first named the animals and later named his wife. Only one with superior authority has the right to name another creature, human or otherwise. Adam was given that authority and exercised it at first. But he relinquished it to Satan by heeding Eve when he accepted the forbidden fruit from her and ate it with her. At that point God Himself placed her in a position of deeper subjection to her husband than appears to have been her original created place.

So the sister in Christ is privileged to openly accept the protected position bestowed upon her by God, first by virtue of her creation out of man and then the discipline later meted out by God because of Eve's sin.

While this may not seem to be a privilege, it is. It is a continuing, living demonstration of the believers' recognition of Adam's original sin and the inherent sinfulness of the whole human race. It witnesses the redemptive work of Christ on the cross was indeed necessary to liberate both men and women from the shackles of an inborn sinful nature and its sinful works. And only the cross could accomplish that and the transformation of heart that would lead a man to uncover his head when praying or prophesying and woman to cover hers. Only that shed blood could enable a woman to voluntarily subject herself to a man in marriage. And she yields to men the more public place in assembly, in use of gift and in life as a whole. Only that shed blood could lead a man to win her heart's loving submission by loving her as himself (Ephesians 5) rather than using his superior physical strength to subdue her and force her subjection. Only that blood could move a man to faithfully take his God given responsibility humbly and respectfully, not lording over the flock of God, over his wife, or over the sisters in the assembly. Only that blood could restore the dignity and status of women that was long lost to the arrogance, lust and pride of man.

Paul enforces again the universal applicability of what is given us in his letter to the Corinthians. They were not unique. This is not the only place in the letter he asserts its applicability to all assemblies (then in existence, as well as to all to come, including us). They were not an isolated bunch of renegades needing to be reined in by special restrictions. The Lord uses their numerous problems and departures from His will as an opportunity to bless us with instruction for our personal lives, and assembly life, as well. We do well to read and heed.

This is also not the first time he reminds us that we didn't invent the assembly and set it up and establish its order. God did. The word of God didn't come out from us, it came in unto us through the Lord's apostles and prophets. If any considers himself to be a prophet, a source of the knowledge of God's mind, or thinks himself to be a spiritual man, he should recognize first that these words written in this epistle are God given and the inspired word of God.. The Corinthian's self exaltation and their seeking followers to lead, and picking leaders to follow, is exposed as missing the clear intent of God in forming them into one body.

The things he writes to them in this epistle are not less than the very commandments of the Lord, and are to be respected as such. How far we, with all of Christendom, have departed from this epistle. Later Paul writes to Timothy "all in Asia have forsaken me," that is, his ministry of the gospel of grace and of Christ and the assembly. May the Lord preserve all who seek to keep his word and to not deny His Name, Revelation 3:8. The epistle to the Corinthians is key to doing this.

Those who have willingly remained ignorant are to be left in their ignorance, but not allowed to destroy or corrupt that which God has created. Compromise for the sake of unity is not love.

So he sums up chapters 11-14 all in two sentences.

**Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid
not to speak with tongues.**

Let all things be done decently and in order.

By Ron Canner December 10, 2003.

Gifts so free that they could be misused. Isn't it hard to believe that free spiritual gifts were indeed so free that they could be abused? Believers are endued with free spiritual gifts. That is, they not only were given freely from the ascended Lord in heaven but they can be used freely. Each of these spiritual gifts is empowered by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven who permanently indwells each believer. The believer is apparently granted complete and free control over the use of this gift. The intent of the Lord is that the believer voluntarily, prayerfully let the Holy Spirit guide him if and when to use it and to lead him as it is used. The gift has no strings attached, so to speak.. The believer can act in the flesh and actually use his spiritual gift from the Lord to serve his own selfish impulses, for his own personal ends, not for the Lord who gave it.

The Corinthians were behaving like fleshly men in various self serving ways. If this were not so the admonitions of 1Corinthians would not be relevant. **Here we seem to see the holy God allowing, and the Holy Spirit empowering the misuse or abusive use of a valid, spiritual gift from the Lord. How can God do this?** Does this make God a partner of sin? Why doesn't He limit the power He provides to good uses only? Install some sort of circuit breaker to cut off power to prevent selfish and damaging misuse of His power? He certainly could have done that. But He didn't. It would not be a truly freely bestowed gift, given in love to be lovingly, freely used for loving ends. It's the "robot" versus "human liberty" issue again. Isn't this just like God?

(A similar example of this facet of God's ways is seen in a greater sphere. God grants His sustaining power and order in the whole universe. He created all and upholds all with the word of His power. If He lets go all will implode and disappear [and it will after the end of time as we know it, 2Peter 3, Rev 21]. Meanwhile He faithfully provides orderly power and direction that sustains and operates it in predictable ways. Men call these ways "laws of nature." Sinful men freely use the items held together and functioning by God's power for "good" and to sin against God. God sends His only begotten Son to die on a cross for us. **The very nails used to nail Jesus to the cross were held together by His own power.** Wonderment! Awesome! Praise Him! Weep!)

The mind of God for our assembling. We learn much in these chapters (11-14) about the types of activities that were appropriate in assembly meeting. Yet no systematic outline or list is provided. Rather, by simply paying heed we learn the mind of God, almost incidently, from remarks in these scriptures. Often what is not said is as important as what is stated.

What are some of the things that are mentioned here that we take for granted and practice when gathered

together? Orderly meetings with prophesying, praying and congregational singing. All are qualified and eligible to rise to pray, read, speak, or give out a hymn, one at a time, no human leader presiding, participants yielding to one another. Speaking in an unknown foreign language (tongue) is discouraged, not forbidden, but not to be commenced unless accompanied by an interpreter. All that is done is to be done with a loving, selfless motive, in a loving way, for the benefit and edifying (building up) of all. **Note the complete liberty!** It is taken as a matter of fact since the introduction and use of man's order is not even contemplated as something to be described and forbidden. What? No leader? No prearranged order of service? No choir? No solos? No written liturgy? No musical instruments or other artificial stimulants? No written sermons? No predetermined theme? No preselected speakers? No prearranged prayers? No prearranged hymns? Nope! Not here in 1Corinthians 14! Not in the New Testament! Only love and a few simple regulations to promote order, liberty, and edification.

Personal spirituality of every believer is vital to a congregation's successful collective, unified meeting service. There the Lord is recognized, by faith, as in the midst leading each meeting. He leads through the Holy Spirit who is there, and in each one there.

Each is personally privileged and responsible:

- # to be there.
- # to be in a self judged state, ch 11:28-32 so
 - # the Spirit in him or her is not grieved, so
 - # the Spirit in the midst is not quenched, or hindered, in His leading the meeting.
- # to be open to the prompt of the Spirit to speak,
- # to be subject to the restraint of the Spirit
 - # to not speak, or
 - # to quit speaking.
- # to listen, and weigh what is said against the scriptures, for what is edifying.
- # to appropriately uncover or cover the head.
- # to remain silent if a sister.
- # to be personally exercised as to worship, prayer, or prophesying needed so that
- # those whom the Spirit chooses to audibly contribute truly reflect in
 - # prayer,
 - # a hymn given out,
 - # reading, or
 - # speaking

what the Spirit has laid upon the hearts of each believer present there.

What were "revelations"? Revelations spoken of in verse 30 were direct from God. As discussed in chapter 13:8, revelations of prophecies and of knowledge

were interim gifts. They were apparently given locally as needed before the New Testament was completed. A revelation, verse 30, was more important than "prophesying," but was not infallible. A revelation was to be given priority, but courtesy, mutual respect and order were to prevail. Revelations, as contrasted with prophesying, should not be a problem nowadays as the need for supernatural revelations of wisdom or knowledge has been eliminated by completion and wide publication the entire New Testament. Prophesying selects, uses and applies the written word of God to speak to current needs and edification..

One by one. That a restriction against more than one prophesying at the same time was needed seems strange at first. How could anyone expect to or be expected to listen to competing speakers with any measure of comprehension? Perhaps the different **parties or sects** developing within the assembly would tend to gather around their preferred prophets, maybe even in the same room. God forbid!

(A few years ago we decided to break our Wednesday evening Bible Study into smaller groups. Our adult Sunday School has been divided for many years. These small groups are not the result of sects or divisions developing among us. They permit more personal interaction over the scriptures promoting greater mutual understanding of the passages being studied. Nevertheless we should take care that sects or followings do not come about by accident. Having the whole group meet together to review every chapter seems to be useful in maintaining unity).

Whatever is done it is to be done in humble love

with the objective of edifying others by being a channel for God's grace to them and a channel of their response and desires toward Him. The Spirit is to have liberty to awaken each of our hearts and to move audible expression of what is there in hearts of the assembly. He intercedes by taking the inexpressible in our hearts with "groanings that cannot be uttered" to the Father through the Son, the Lord in glory.

Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Romans 8:27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. {because: or, that}

God then returns the needed ministry of grace and peace through the channel He chooses to express it in that meeting. We receive it gladly, thoughtfully and thankfully. **His Pattern** What a blessed privilege and responsibility is ours. We can neglect it, squander it, misuse it, abuse it. Or we can simply faithfully observe it and use it.. We have the liberty to do what we will with the truth we have just been studying. God is faithful to bless if we do, or to intervene in discipline if we do not. Value and adhere to **His pattern** for meeting. Be alert to the temptation to add our own order and traditions, or to substitute our arrangements for His leading. It's much better to let Him lead.

By Ron Canner, December 17, 2003.