

Community Bible School (CBS) + Internet-Bible-School (IBS)

1st Epistle to the Corinthians (Lesson 18)

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Concerning the study

I **recommend** you to read through the respective book in the bible at first. Our manual is the bible. Then I suggest you to go through one or two pages of the material every day, which implies to also look up and read the given bible scriptures to become thoroughly acquainted with the subject. Another suggestion would be to use this material for regular devotion.

If you would like to **obtain a degree (certificate) at the end of the seminar**, you need to answer the **test questions** at the end of each lesson and send or email it to us with your full name and address. And now I wish you lots of joy and spiritual profit during your bible study.

Pastor Joh. W. Matutis

FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

GENERAL REMARKS

The 1st Epistle to the Corinthians is part of a longer correspondence between Paul and the church in Corinth. **1 Cor 5,9**, shows that another , which was unfortunately lost, preceded this one. The second letter to the Corinthians is the result of a continuing communication of the **Apostle** with the **church**.

The first Epistle deals with the matters of larger local church (service) meetings (*Acts 18:10*), describing what **the God-commissioned order is**, how this order is introduced and how it should be adhered to. In places where a lot of godly / **spiritual** things are happening, it is not unusual that **fleshly things sneak in**, as for instance attitudes, habits or even teachings, that may have been common in Corinthian society, but were not compatible with the essence and spirit of **church meetings**. This was partly caused by the ignorance of local believers, who had asked a number of questions in a letter to Apostle Paul, for he was the one who evangelized them at first, as we can see in *Chapter 7: 1*. **Paul did not only answer their questions**, but also pointed out the serious errors of their actions and teachings. He did this not with malice, anger or ridicule, but with deep heartfelt sorrowand many tears (*2 Cor. 2*).

1st Corinthians is a theme-oriented letter and **one of the greatest treatises concerning church order** we have. It is also a valuable document about the state of the Christian church in apostolic times. It is **a unique piece of Church history**, a call for harmony and unity to Christianity.

Corinth was destroyed by the Romans around 146 B.C., but a century later, Julius Cesar had it rebuilt in 44 B.C. and populated it with **released immigrants**, (meaning former Roman slaves). Starting from 27 B.C. , **Corinth** became the Capital of the Roman **Province Achaia**.

At the time of Apostle Paul, the city already had a high percentage of Greek and Oriental population. There was a rich upper class, but also many slaves and people of lower social status; there were also many Jews.

The **cultural life in Corinth** was impressive: there were art and schools for public speaking, also institutes of higher learning and philosophy. Sports played an important role. The **Corinthian games** were nearly as important as the **Olympic games**, that were regularly held every two years in Spring and Summer (Isthmiade) These games consisted of competitions in running, ring and fist fights, gymnastics and athletics; furthermore chivalrous wagon and horse racing, also muses, rhetoric, poetic and many musical lectures.

Corinth stood in strong competition with **Athens** and **Theben**. It was located about 50 miles West of Athens. It was the largest City in Greece and the second largest of the Roman Empire; a five mile long wall surrounded its center. At the time of Paul, about 200 000 people lived there.

There was also the famous temple of **Aphrodite** the pagan god of love, beauty and sensual desire and one of the twelve Olympic gods. That's why Corinth also as a center of **antique prostitution**, it is comparable to today's Amsterdam or St. Pauli in Hamburg. Beside these was Corinth already in antiquity known for a high standard of living and to rob and clean-out foreigners.

Numerous temples of various religions color the life of the City, next to cultic prostitution flourish strong mystic cults, which tried with their pagan-cultic rituals to overcome death and the material world, to reach a godly lifestyle. These cults constituted a secret religion with **initiation rituals** to join their ranks. Beside this, Corinth was a real prosperous harbor and commerce city. But unfortunately this place carried a very bad reputation. Drunkenness, prostitution and many other vices connected with the name of Corinth, because to live "**Corinthian**" lifestyle meant to live an especially debauched lifestyle.

We must understand the Epistles to the Corinthians in the light of this background.

The city is located on the so-called **Isthmus of Corinth**, a narrow strip of land near Corinth. It is the only land connection between the peninsula of Peloponnese and the rest of the Greek landmass. That is why the two harbors became such a **turning-wheel** between Rome and Asia. Commerce, financial dealings and trade-craft production was the daily lifeblood for its Citizens.

The Western **harbor of Lachine** was the connection to **Rome**, while the **Chancre** in the East constituted the connection to Aphasis. Correspondently large was their economic and cultural significance.

This special geographic position of Corinth magnetically pulled all sorts of population classes, cults and profit-hungry individuals, to quickly seek happiness through worldly gain. It became clear, that such a Kaleidoscope of social differences between rich and poor developed in this City. The poorer classes became nearly commonly accepted as side manifestation within the status of Corinth.

Geographically alone Corinth played an important role, she was one of the most important commerce centers in antiquity, because the total of inner-Greek traffic was forced by location right through this place. Corinth meant the bridge for the traffic to the Northern parts of the country, like Athens, Sparta and the rest of the Peloponnese. A canal near Corinth saved the seafarers from a dangerous sea-journey of over 200 miles. This is how the location developed into an important commerce and transshipment port. In the markets of Corinth, whose visitors came from the whole world, luxury articles of many kinds from the whole world were available there. From Arabian Balsam over phonetic dates to Lybian ivory, Babylonian carpets, Zilizic goat-hair, Laconic wool all the way to Phrygian slaves. Someone once said: Corinth was the "fair for vanity".

Corinth was infamous for its **prominent materialism** and for its **immoral lifestyle**.

As mentioned before, the Isthmian games were held here that were only topped by the Olympic games. This way Corinth became not only an economically rich, but also a vice-filled city. A Greek writer explained, that whenever Corinthians played in a stage-play, they always represented drunkards. **Corinth was a synonym for proverbial slovenly**. Some of the sources of this malevolence were known throughout the world, because on top of the Acrocorinth was located the temple of Aphrodisia, the goddess of love. This temple was home to a thousand priestesses, which were called **holy prostitutes**, who swarmed on holidays down into the city.

Corinth was building the first "tri-rudders", which this Greek warship was called.

The city itself was a new Roman colony **without "Aristocracy"**, a city-like structure without tradition or long established citizenry.

You must remember this when you read for instance 1 Cor. 6: 9-10. In this **breeding-place of vice**, at this godless place, where it should have been the least possible, there Paul brought forth one of his greatest deeds. Precisely there, Christianity experienced one of its largest successes. With the exception to Aphasis, Paul never stayed as long in any other City **then in Corinth**. He left Macedonia, when his life there became too dangerous, from there he moved to Athens, after that he went to Corinth. Here he stayed for **18 month**. The report of this time, we find pulled together in 17 Verses, to be precise in the book of **Acts 18: 1-17**.

In Corinth Paul met **Aquila and Priscilla**, the couple that in 49 A.D. through a decree of Emperor Claudius, where he cast out all the Jews from the city of Rome, had escaped from there. These two were, the same as Apostle Paul by trade, tent-makers. Even though we do not find evidence in the New Testament of them **having being saved**, they were probably already Christians when Paul met them.

Because of spiritual, ethnic and common trade background, it became natural that the Apostle felt drawn to them. As always, Paul looked first for **contact with the Synagogue**. He took part in Jewish services, and tried there to convince his listeners that in Jesus, the Messiah had already appeared. As he was later **prohibited from entering the Synagogue**, he preached in a house next to the synagogue that belonged to one of his listeners, a pagan named **Titius Justus**. See *Acts 18:7*. Titius Justus was one of the many Corinthians that had turned to the Lord.

The most respected man that had turned to Christ, **was Chrispus, who was also the overseer of the Synagogue**. Next to him many other Corinthians became believers. This was a considerable success of his mission activity. In 52 A.D. a new Roman Governor came to Chaja by the name of Galli, who was known for his good deeds. Because of its enormous upswing of culture and riches, Corinth was a stronghold of the civilized world of that time.

There were many schools for art and public-speaking halls and schools for philosophy, as mentioned before.

The **immorality and excessive lifestyle** at Corinth were already proverbial in nature, as “Corinthian partying”, or “Corinthian drunkards.”

The **Corinthian Epistles** deal with apologetic-dogmatic base questions of faith. Here the connections of Christianity to human behavior are being explored as the domestic, social, civil and religious relationships within the community. Specific district situations are being discussed, moral behavior, the position of individuals within the community toward their teachers, of the received **grace and the gifts they use**.

Also regarding the spiritual cleanliness of the community, or its restoration. **The actions of brotherly love** play a big part, as is the furtherance of the spiritual well-being, as also in the correct use of the gifts. Beside these, the Apostle fought on the sideline also **for his apostolic standing**, for there were people who were trying to undermine him, not recognizing his spiritual authority. He also dealt with **dogmatic question**, regarding resurrection from the dead. *1 Cor. 15*.

The development of the Christian church at Corinth.

After his failure in Athens and the difficulties in Beroe and Thessalonika, the Apostle Paul was still in a somewhat “depressed mood” when he came to Corinth, probably in 49 A.D. see *Acts 18: 1-17*.

On his mission-trips, Paul profited from the well-built Roman network of streets, and he always visited the Jewish communities first. Reaching a new location, he always preached in the local Synagogue, declaring his belief in the Messiah Jesus Christ. When interested, he was invited into private homes for further study of his beliefs; otherwise thrown out of that city.

Everywhere Paul met people of goodwill, as here in Corinth, working together with him on the evangelization and on whom he could also fully depend. This way, we know **of about forty men and women** by name. These were people that either traveled with him on his trips, or they were heads of the newly formed Church-communities. These provided a forum for his preaching and decent accommodations. From the beginning, women were equally important and of value in the mission-movements around Paul.

In Corinth Paul found work and quarters with the before mentioned Jewish-Christian couple Aquila and Priscilla, both of them apparently worked the same trade as he did. They were operating a tent and saddle-making business. *Acts 18:2-3*. For a hint to the accuracy of the depiction of this Apostolic story and its historic correctness, we can point to *1 Cor. 4:12*, Here Paul specifically mentions his economic independence. “and we labor, working with our own hands”

At that time **Paul came without company**, discouraged and tired from Athens to Corinth. *1 Cor. 2: 1-3*. No one expected or noticed him, though he came as a simple, insignificant worker, looking for employment. Soon he discovered this certain Aquila, stemming from Pontus in Asia Minor, who immigrated to Corinth. Paul attained work with him. This connection became very important for the whole future of the newly built Christian community. *Acts 18:1-3*. Already at the beginning of his stay in Corinth Paul seems to have been teaching at Sabbath in the synagogue. *Acts 18:4*. This is, how it came to the salvation of **Stephens** and his household. Later Stephens had been called a “First-believer.” *1 Cor. 16:15*

1 Cor. 16: 16-17, names two other believers, namely Fortunatus and Acacia. It is assumed they belonged to the household of Stephens, for they were mentioned in connection with him.

The assumption that Fortunatus and Acacia were of the household of Stephens is being made because of the mentioning in *1Cor.1:14-16*, where Paul said that he had baptized only Crispest and Gaius next to this household.

The Book of Acts further mentions a **Titus Justus**. *Acts 18: 7*. He could be identical to Gaius, for GaiusTitus Justus would make a complete Roman name. Acts reported that the household of Titus Justus joined with the synagogue, which also served as the meeting place for the Christian community. According to *Acts 18: 6*, **Head of the synagogue**, according to *Acts 18: 8*, was a certain Crispest. He is also being named in *1Cor. 1: 14-16*. Beyond this, "the book of Acts" declares that many Corinthians who had heard Paul became believers and were baptized. At a quick look, this statement seems to contradict Paul's own words. In *1Cor. 1:14-16*, Paul distinctly said that he only baptized Crispest Gaius next to the household of **Stephens**. But Paul wanted to declare, that he did not personally baptize any others. As a rule, he may have left the baptizing to someone else. In any case, the naming of the household of Stephens and of Gaius or (Titus Justus) allows us to assume that the Christian community was growing rapidly. Soon they were divided among other households of families. (home groups)

The members of these home groups were most likely former atheists, Polytheist's or idol worshipers. This is what we should understand, what Paul spoke of, when he said: these Corinthians accepted **the true God**. He could not have spoken this way about the salvation of Jews. Former idol worshipers who now honored the only ever-living God and having come **into believing Jesus Christ**, truly started believing in the **real God**. *1Thess.1: 9-10*.

The cultural, religious and social **variety** of the City reflected itself also in this Christian community. The majority of its members **were former pagans**. *1Cor.12: 2*. Next to them were also Jewish believers *Rom. 16:21, Acts 18:8*. The majority of the community belonged to the **underprivileged classes**. *1Cor.1:26-7, 21,11,22b*. But they were not the desperately poor. *Cor. 16:2*. Within this community there were also some members of the upper income class. *Acts 18: 8*, remembers Crispest, possibly Erasmus. *Rom. 16:23*, which could provide the facilities for the general meetings and the Lords supper. *1Cor.11:2*.

It is very likely that the community recruited for this from the lower social classes of Corinthian society. Only few of the first Christians in Corinth were educated, equally few that had economic or political power. Neither were there hardly any of "**Noble Men**" or upper-class houses found among them, as *1Cor. 1-26-28*, pointed out.

On the other hand were people like **Stephens, Titus and Justus**, or the head of the synagogue **Crispest**, influential enough to give **backing to this new Christian community**. In *Rom.16:23*, the Corinthian City **treasurer Erastos** is also named. Between these **few well-off community members** and the majority of the socially lower standing **soon after, tensions arose**.

This first Letter to the Corinthians, which is part of our N.T. was not the first epistle written by Paul to the Corinthians. *1 Cor.5: 9*. He refers to an **earlier** letter. The theme of the lost letter is probably partly worked in to our current letter, *1 Cor.6: 12-20, 5: 1-13*, since Paul mentions these problems again. The length of this letter itself speaks for this theory.

After Paul had broken-off **the mission in Corinth** and had departed, he came to Ephesus as *Acts18: 18-19* confirms. Going there, he was accompanied by Thimotheus, Silvanus, along with Aquila and Priscilla. Paul **left Aquila and Priscilla** in Ephesus and traveled further on to Caesarea and past Jerusalem to Antioch.

In Antioch he probably began again to rectify the broken-off relationship after the **Antioch conflict**, with the local community. In this connection he was probably reminded anew of the **collection-commitment**, which he had committed to in connection with his Jerusalem visit in 45-46 A.D. **After this time, the question of collections** is repeatedly coming up in his letters. The fact that he keeps quiet about this collection business in his First Letter to the Thessalonians could mean, that he did not become serious about this again, until after this renewed trip to Antioch.

Stephens, Fortunatus and Achaikus, members of the community in Corinth, came to get advise from him. They apparently had a letter from the Corinthian community with them, in which they had a number of questions. *1Cor. 7: 1*. Through these, Paul won a **clear picture** of that community **and its condition**. He learned that after Apollo, also other missionaries had visited Corinth. These may have come **from a group around Peter**. They had questioned the authenticity of **Paul's apostleship**.

Therefore, the community of Corinth found itself early in the tension-field and influence of Apollo, Paul, and other Jewish-Christian missionaries and not to forget, the pagan world around them. Now **the different house-groups** probably began to work against each other. They even seemed to have fought each other. The instruction to expel a sexually immoral person could have been the cause for the issue of contention. Therefore the renewal of the mandate was trying to clarify the situation. 1 Cor. 9: 5-11.

The importance of Apollo.

A lot of space is devoted in the 1. Letter to the Corinthians to the issue of arguments regarding the role of a certain Apollo. He may have been an Alexandrian Jewish Christian. He is described as an eloquent man, masterful in the Scriptures, advocating the allegoric interpretation of the scriptures that was prevalent in the **Alexandrian area. Acts 18: 24.**

Apollo came to **Ephesus** as part of his missionary tour and started a Christian community there (*Acts 18: 24-28*)

Paul came through Ephesus shortly before that time, but did not preach or teach there. He simply dropped off **Aquila** and **Priscilla**. Paul himself traveled through Caesarea and Jerusalem on to Antioch.

When Apollo came to **Ephesus**, Aquila and Priscilla invited him to stay in their home. As reported in the book of Acts, these two now instructed Apollo about the mission of Apostle Paul. Following this, **Apollo seems to have been working successfully among the Jews in Ephesus**. After his stay in Ephesus, he traveled with a letter of introduction from the newly formed church in **Ephesus**, to Corinth. There he met the church, established by Apostle Paul.

When Paul later, following the land-route through Galatia and Phrygia, returned to Ephesus, he found the **Jewish-Christian community** established by Apollo.

As we can tell by the reports in the Book of Acts this resulted in a larger conflict. This is not easy to prove, because Luke tried to play down the differences. He did this mainly by trying to minimize Apollo's importance. Where Acts asserts in *Acts 18: 25*, that Apollo had merely received the baptism of John. This seems to have been an entry by Luke to minimize the troubles, who was apparently trying to combine it with the description in chapter 19, where he called Apollo's mission, **one of a disciple of John**. Above this, it becomes clear that he is trying to reduce the **tensions** between Apollo and Paul unto a non-suspicious level.

There were definitely tensions between the community established by Apollo and the one Paul had started in Corinth. Also **Apollo himself** became cause for some unrest in the community of Corinth. These two missionaries apparently disagreed on some major points.

The people of Chloe. Now news arrived for Paul in Corinth about the conditions of the people in Chloe, from an influential woman of the Corinthian community. He heard of community-splits, which happened in connection with Apollo's stay and his mission in Corinth. This apparently caused Paul to write the "First Epistle to the Corinthians."

Furthermore he informed the community in Corinth, that he wanted **to remain in Ephesus until Pentecost, 1Cor. 16: 8**. From this we conclude, that it must have been already Spring of 52 A.D., about the time of Easter.

Also to mention, at the time of his stay in Corinth, Paul **received a financial donation** (support) from the community in Philippi, *Phil.4: 15-16, 2 Cor.11: 9*.

At the end of his stay in Corinth, Paul was being sued by Crispus successor, the former head of the synagogue, to appear before the new **proconsul Gallio, Acts 18: 12**. **Gallio** refused to be part of this intrinsic Jewish quarrel, since these were not legal questions. For this reason, Paul stayed a while longer in Corinth, before he with **Aquila** and **Priscilla** finally continued on into Syria, in direction of Ephesus, *Acts 18: 18*.

When Paul wrote his letters, (they covered a time-span of about **seven** years) he most likely did not suspect, that he was to author, what was later to be known as the greater part of the **New Testament**. These letters were addressed to individual communities or persons. They were then being exchanged between communities, collected and given on to others. With these letters, Paul made sure, that the contact between

individual communities would stay alive. These letters are literature for building, strengthening and reminding; above this, they have strong biographic signs.

After **1,5 years in Corinth**, *Acts 18:11*, Paul moved permanently (for two years) to **Ephesus**. His stay was pronounced by the following happenings.

- A deterioration of the relationship to the Corinthian community; including a side-trip with negative results.
- **Expanding correspondence** The greatest part of the New Testament letters had been written in Corinth. *1 Cor.*, *2 Cor.*, *Philemon*, *Philippians*, eventually also the letter to the Galatians.
- **Danger of death**: Paul in prison. *2Cor. 1: 8-10*.
- Still he undertook further missionary activity, possibly a trip to Galatia. *Gal: 4: 13*.
- After discontinuing his stay **in Ephesus**, he traveled through Macedonia where he authored *2 Cor. 1: 9*, and traveled for a short time back to Corinth, from there he wrote **Romans**, the last of his letters.

Apostle Paul visited Corinth on his second and third missionary journey. His first trip was around the time of 51 A.D., he had lived in the City for about eighteen month. He had started the first Christian community in Corinth and worked during that time in his learned trade as tent-maker.

On his **third mission-trip** in Ephesus, he wrote **the First Epistle to the Corinthians**. He probable wrote the second Epistle to the Corinthians somewhere in Northern Greece.

Apostle Paul visited Corinth in 58 A.D. once more for a short period, where he wrote the Epistle of Romans.

AUTHOR

The author of the first Epistle to the Corinthians is without doubt Apostle Paul himself. Already in the first few sentences, he introduces himself.

“Paul, called as Apostle to Christ” *1Cor.1: 1*, he also mentions the “ Brother Sosthenes” *1.Cor.1: 1*, who was most likely his secretary and co-worker in Corinth, who was also the overseer of the Synagogue, who defended Paul before Gallios, *Acts 18: 17*. The author also calls himself founder and father of the community (Christian church) in Corinth. *1Cor.3: 10, 4:15*, Style, structure and theology of the Epistle, as well as the end-salutation, are typical of him.

RECIPIENTS

Paul mentions them specifically in his preface, **“The community of God in Corinth”**, the holy ones in Christ Jesus, the **called and holy ones**, and all those, who call on the name of Jesus Christ in all of their and our locations, *1Cor.1: 2*. This community consisted of mainly converted Jews, the core of the church, and a large number of converted pagans.

COMPOSITION

The place of composition, the composer himself reveals. **It is Ephesus**. *1Cor.16: 8-9*. The words: **I will stay in Ephesus until Whitsun**, (Pentecost) *1Cor.16: 8*, prove, that the residency of Paul in Asia, was coming to a close. This residency had lasted for about **three years**. *Acts 20: 31*.

To prepare for his arrival, Paul sent Timotheus and Erastus ahead to Corinth, with the firm conviction *Acts 19: 21-22, 1Cor.4:17*, to follow them soon. *1Cor.16: 5*. For this reason he also wrote the **First Epistle**, *1Cor. 5:9*, to the community, but which were **lost today**. The answer, which a delegation brought to him *1 Cor. 16: 17*, and the report **from the people of house of Chloe**, motivated him to change his plans. Instead of traveling to Corinth himself, He wrote a **second Epistle**. (Our first), in which he also answered the questions that had been brought to him. *1Cor.16: 5-9*.

In *Chapter 16:1*, Paul reminded the Corinthians of **the big collection** in favor of the saints in Jerusalem and mentioned in this connection his upcoming trip to Corinth. *1Cor.4:19, 21; 11:34*.

We know, that with **this collection**, Paul would finish his mission to the Oriental regions. *Acts 24: 17*. According to *1Cor. 16: 5*, he first wanted to travel to Macedonia and from there, directly to Corinth, where he remained the whole winter, until Spring. *1Cor. 16: 8*. That is exactly the same **plan for travel** as described in *Acts 19: 21*, and as Paul had later carried it out, according to *Acts 20 and 21*.

We conclude from this information, that Apostle Paul wrote this first Epistle after his stay of two years and three month, in **Ephesus**, which means in Spring of 57 A.D.

AUTHENTICITY

One of the most convincing proofs for the genuineness of the first Epistle to the Corinthians is the way the reports of the Epistle of Acts and the details of the letter fit and tend to complete each other. Examples: the converted Krispus is baptized by Paul, before the arrival of Timotheus and Silas. *Acts 18: 8, 1Cor. 1: 14*; Sosthenes *Acts 18: 17, 1Cor. 1: 1*, the presence of baptized Jews in the Community. *Acts 14: 4-8/ 1Cor. 1:24, 7, 18: 9, 20-21, 12:13*, the description of the timidity, under which Paul suffered at the beginning of his activity in Corinth, *1Cor. 2: 1-5*, the necessity of a vision to encourage him, *Acts 18: 9-10*.

Clemens of Rome (end of the first Century) who personally wrote a letter to the Corinthians, mentions the two Epistles to the Corinthians a few times, especially the first one. The most noticeable one is in chapter 47, which says: "Pick up the letter of the blissful Apostle Paul. What did he write to you, especially at the beginning of the Gospels? He truly gave you pure spiritual directions, about himself, about Kephas and Apollo's, because even then you had quarrels among yourselves."

Ignatius quoted: *1Cor. 1: 18-20, 2Cor. 1: 23, 4: 1. etc.*

Polycarp specifically mentions a number of vices in his letter to the Philippians, *1Cor. 6: 9-10*.

Justin, the martyr, 1:19, refers in his apologetics numerous times to the resurrection of the body. *1Cor. 15*.

Almost all church fathers quoted from the Corinthian letters. The general acception, which both letters enjoyed in the 2.Century is established in the 'Muratoric fragment', also in their Syrian and Latin version. No one has ever seriously objected to the genuineness of these letters in neither old, nor modern research.

PURPOSE and GOAL.

Since Paul himself established and spent two years in the middle of this community, he did not need to put his Gospel in writing here, as he for instance did for the Romans.

The **theme of the First Epistle to the Corinthians** lead us to visualize a living community, that was plagued with a number of problems. *1 Cor. 7: 1*, shows that the community had turned to the Apostle with a letter and a personal inquiry, which he answered within the letter.

About **five years after the establishment of the community** in Corinth, a few negative things happened. For instance a few **ethical and moral questions** came up, *1Cor.5: 1-5*, that needed a **clarifying word**. *1Cor. 7: 1*, and also questions concerning: **marriage or being unmarried**, consuming **meat offered to idols**. *1Cor. 8: 1*, the **resurrection of the dead**, and especially concerning the **gifts of the Spirit**. Because of a **dangerous derailment** the Corinthians gave the gifts of the Spirit an overrated value, at the expense of the fruit of the Spirit. The believers desired to be important and to shine in their community.

Now a few comments regarding the **structure and purpose** of the **Epistle to the Corinthians**.

In **contrast to the Epistle to the Ephesians**, which dealt with the universal church, 1. Corinthians answers questions to specific affairs within the community of Corinth.

1st Corinthians offers a glimpse into the life of the Church during the 1st century.

And this life **was anything but rosy**. But for this reason the Apostle Paul wrote this letter. He wanted to encourage the Corinthians, to convert the level of healing that was already promised all believers during this life on earth; to bring it stronger into practice in their everyday life. Even despite numerous and sometimes spectacular proof of the Holy Spirit's intervention in their midst, the spirit of the world seemed

closer to the community than the that of the Spirit of God. And exactly that, is what the Apostle Paul was trying to change. Considering this, his message could be divided into the three following categories

1. In the **first six Chapters** he is trying to smooth the differences, of which he had heard from the servants of **Chloe**. He endeavored to bring back the unity between their conviction and actions. He heard how the communities, instead of becoming one in Christ, fell apart into groups and sects.

But these divisions were caused mainly by the fact that the Corinthians leaned too much on **human wisdom** and **human knowledge** and too little on the grace of God. In reality they found themselves **despite all of their wisdom** in a **state of immaturity**, explained Paul. They saw themselves as smart and sensible people, but in reality they were still small children in spiritual things.

2. **After chapter 7**, he turns to very specific questions.

- 7: 1, 25. Problems concerning marriage.
- 8: 1. The conflict between Freedom and responsibility.
- 12: 1. Between the gifts and Church order.
- 16: 1. The collection for the poor in Jerusalem and
- 16: 12. The visit of Apollo

3. In **Chapter 15** Paul confirms and defends the teaching of the **resurrection**, which some Corinthians denied. In this **contradiction** Paul recognized the central problem that had made all of his earlier expositions necessary. He placed the treatment of this subject to the very end of his letter and by doing this, made it its highlight.

But above and behind all of these points at issue with which the writer had to deal with, stands the wonderful fact, that there even was a Christian community, an evidence for the power of God and the Gospel.

CONTENTS AND DIVISION

The plan develops itself by grouping the individual themes.

Introduction	Chapter 1:1-9
Address and benediction	Vers 1-3
The Apostle's prayer of thanksgiving	Vers 4-9
<u>1. The Quarrels of the community.</u>	Chapter 10: 4 - 21
Presented facts: four tendencies	Chapter 10: 10-16
The Word from the cross as wisdom from God.	Chapter 1:17/ 2: 5
The character of the Apostle's prayer	Chapter 2: 6/ 3: 4
The type of Christian service	Chapter 3: 5 - 23
The office of the Apostle and personal comments	Chapter 4: 1 – 21
<u>2. The moral condition of the community</u>	Chapter 5: 10
Disorder: condemnation of immorality.	Chapter 5: 1-13
Trials before worldly courts.	Chapter 6: 1-11
Immorality has nothing to do with Christian freedom	Chapter 6: 12-20
Marriage, remaining unmarried, divorce	Chapter 7: 1-40
Idol-sacrifice and true use of Christian freedom	Chapter 8: 1-13
Paul, as model of selflessness	Chapter 9: 1-27
Dangers of participation in sacrificial meals.	Chapter 10: 1-33
<u>3. Ecclesiastical and dogmatic questions of the community.</u>	Chapter 11-15
Behavior of women in the church	Chapter 11: 1-16
<u>Instructions</u>	
● On celebrating the Holy Communion	Chapter 11: 17-34
● Use of spiritual gifts within the community	Chapter 12: 1-31
● The biggest spiritual gift: LOVE	Chapter 13: 1-13
● For the correct use of tongues	Chapter 14: 1-40
● Resurrection of the dead.	Chapter 15: 1-8

Conclusion: **business and personal matters**
Collection for the community in Jerusalem
Travel-plans of Paul and Timothy
Salutations, greetings and blessings

Chapter 16
Vers 1-4
Vers 5-12
Vers 13-24

Key word: **Community order**

Key Vers: **For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.**
1 Cor. 3:11

MISCELLANEOUS

The Wisdom in Christ

- ! has his origin in God
- ! is revealed in Christ Jesus
- ! is hidden in the cross
- ! is God's power for us
- ! is received through the Spirit
- ! is for human wisdom foolishness
- ! is depraved of the world

Chapter 1: 24, 30
Chapter 2, 7
Chapter 1: 24,30
Chapter 1: `18, 23-24
Chapter 1: 18, 24
Chapter 2: 9-10
Chapter 1: 18-21
Chapter 1: 26-27, 2: 8

The body of Christ - the community

- ! unity of the community
- ! life-source of the community
- ! indivisibility of the community
- ! the diversity of the community
- ! the dependancy of the community
- ! suffering and rejoicing in the community
- ! cooperation within the community

Chapter 12: 12-30
Vers 12
Vers 13
Vers 12, 25
Vers 12-14, 19-20
Vers 21-25
Vers 26
Vers 27

The praise-song of Love Chapter 13

Her praise: **Love is more important than:** Vers 1-3

Characteristics of love Vers 4-7

- ! Longsuffering - she bears all things
- ! friendly - she believes everything
- ! joyful - she hopes for everything
- ! truth-loving - she suffers long
- ! not jealous - does not seek its own
- ! is not provoked - thinks no evil
- ! does not parade itself - does not hold grudges
- ! does not rejoice in iniquity - but rejoices in truth

The purpose of Love

- ! Love is forever - all else is temporal. Vers 8
- ! love is perfect - all else is only partial Vers 9

The resurrection of Jesus Christ

Chapter 15

Proofs of His resurrection

The life-saving Gospel
prophecies of the Word.

Vers 1-11
Vers 1-4
Vers 4 b

Multiple witnesses

- ! Kephas
- ! Jacob
- ! The twelve disciples
- ! All apostles
- ! 500 brothers
- ! Paul

Vers 5-8
Luke 24, 34
1Cor. 15
John 20: 19
Acts 1:4, 13-14
1Cor. 15: 6
Acts 9: 5

The pointlessness of a resurrection denial

- ! our preaching would be in vain Vers 12-19
- ! our resurrection would be an illusion Vers 12: 14
- ! our faith would be futile Vers 12
- ! our witness would be false Vers 14
- ! our dying would be a complete loss Vers 15
- ! our forgiveness of sin would be deception Vers 18
- ! our hope would be fraud Vers 17
- ! our hope would be fraud Vers 16, 19

Steps of the resurrection

- ! Christ as first-fruit - Eastern Vers 20- 22
- ! than those who belong to Christ - return Vers 23
- ! after-words the end - judgement Vers 24
- ! after-words the last enemy - victory over death Vers 25-26
- ! full rulership of Christ - kingdom of peace Vers 27
- ! diminishing of the resurrected - God all in all Vers 2

Fight for the belief in resurrection

- ! for this reason baptism for the dead. Vers 19-34
- ! for this reason daily dying to self. Vers 31-32a
- ! for this reason not only eating and drinking Vers 32b
- ! for this reason to abstain from evil talking Vers 33
- ! for this reason to abhor sin Vers 34

The nature of the resurrection

- ! the picture of seeds Vers 35-38
- ! terrestrial and celestial bodies Vers 35-41
- ! The ones exempt from dying Vers 42-50
- ! the triumph of the resurrected Vers 51-53
- ! believe and work toward this expectation Vers 54-57
- ! believe and work toward this expectation Vers 58

Detailed interpretation

CHAPTER 1

1 Cor. 1:1-3. Here we deal with Jesus, the head of the community. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul writes first of all about Jesus. It is not by chance that His name is comes up **10 times** within the first **10 verses**. As we know, **Jesus** is His human name and **Christ** His title of honor. This one means: the anointed One, the Savior, the long-promised redeemer. Only after **we have heard something about Jesus**, we hear about **the Christian community**.

For Paul, **the community of God** in Corinth was a part of **the universal community** (the Eclassia), which reflected with its local link one part of a chain-community. Here Paul probably thought also of the many small groups of Christians that had developed around Corinth who had found in this **City-Center Church** a collection point for their small assemblies. *1Cor.1: 2. This "Community Church of God", is a favorite expression of Apostle Paul 1 Cor. 10: 32, 11: 16-22, 2 Cor. 1: 1, Gal. 1: 13, 1 Thess. 2: 14.*

The universal church of JESUS, includes **all true believers** everywhere and at all times. Eventhough the believers in the community of Corinth were torn-apart, split and chaotic, Paul reminded us, speaking about her without comment about her godly destination and already seeing her perfected future. Even-though he admonishes them strongly, he twice calls them "**dear brothers**" in his letter. This formulation hides a big argument and a big part of his message to the Corinthians.

- ! **Firstly**, it softens his reproach not coming toward them as a careless **schoolmaster**, but that here someone talks to them, who honestly loves them.
- ! **Secondly**, this word had to show them how terrible it is to live with **quarreling** and in **disunity**. Because as **brothers**, they were obligated to solve their differences in brotherly love

His simple use of words, was an attempt to reunite the different groups within the community . He challenged them to come to agreement and to work out their differences, as two **opposing parties** would and in this way to become **single-minded** again.

Furthermore Paul makes in his address **three different statements** about the individual believers.

- All have become holy in Christ Jesus, because of their belief in Jesus and His sacrifice for them. They are anointed and made holy and God has reserved a special place for them, which they have not yet occupied.
- He calls true Christians The **called holy ones**, anointed for God's service and made ready.
- For him, believers are a **God-anointed temple**, or a holy sacrifice, which means, they are separated from the masses of the general public and what they used to be part of. They have become a holy people that are different from all others. By this, as the people of God, they are **chosen exclusively for the service of God**. This all is coming and is not completed yet.

Paul is not greatly concerned **how they look at the moment from the outside**, but how God through Jesus views them **from eternity** and who they, in His viewpoint, already are. **By the grace of God**, they have been put into their position and that not in their own power or with their own assistance. *Gal. 1: 1.*

This **being different** on the inside, does not mean that they should withdraw from all of their normal daily activities, but that they prove themselves in these new circumstances that they may be recognized **as people of God and belonging to Him**. That is why Paul directs his letter toward everyone who calls on our Lord Jesus Christ. They make this calling and confession to the people of God in any place and at any time. Christians are called to this universal community that cover heaven and earth. As members of this worldwide community they should learn to look beyond their own church-steeple.

At that time, **Sosthenes Acts 18: 17**, was the head of the Synagogue in Corinth. In Greek it actually means "the strong one". He most likely dictated this Epistle to him, as **Tertius** the book of Romans. *Rom. 16: 22*. They were his younger helpers and co-workers.

The first letter to the Corinthians is a **common project** of the Apostle Paul and the former head of the Synagogue **Sothenes**, who appears here as sender as well. Therefore the many clear and detailed directions about the course of the service and the rules of conduct. For these reasons we understand the many rabbinic answers and solutions that were probably added by Sothenes.

1Cor. 1: 4-17. Even especially picked out and called "holy ones of God" **have sometimes great difficulties** to master **hard situations**, trying to come to terms with them in a rabbinic or biblical way. This type of individual problem-solving we recognize throughout the letter to the Corinthians. Often there are solutions with a compromise, were each one had to sacrifice, by giving-up something, or showing a loss.

1Cor. 1: 4-7. Here Paul is becoming personal when talking about the community of Corinth. He speaks very specifically in the personal "I" form. He did not **distance himself** from the community despite their numerous mistakes and sins. He also did not want to show them up or to stand in judgement over them, for he had no right to do that. To simply place them before God was what he wanted to do. He knew exactly that it was not in his power to change anything or to turn it around; This was only possible through the **grace and power of God**, for any sisters and brothers to be brought back unto the strait path. Paul was fully convinced that God was always working among His own. That was the reason for his great confidence and to be able **to thank God** for the community. *Eph. 1: 3*.

The community in Corinth was established through the Word of the cross. She was living from godly words and should perform her service in all of her different life-situations and orient itself exclusively by it. Through the Holy Spirit, the all-mighty will of God, the Word (from the cross) is solidly established. The Word (JESUS), His Gospel, brings people under His benevolent and godly rule and also releases the gifts.

1Cor. 1: 5-7. In his thanks-giving prayers, Paul expresses the idea that the Corinthians were actually made rich through Jesus. It now only remains for the promises to be fulfilled and to become true to them.

Paul's **favorite expression** in the letter to the Corinthians is "**CHARISMA**", God's gift of grace. This expression says that **someone receives what he has not earned, nor could ever earn**.

The Corinthians only became so rich in their gifts, because the were now **part of the body of Christ**, but they had also received much **teaching**. These godly gifts were not given to be selfishly misused, or to be profitable for the user. They were given for a great benefit and for the building-up of the community.

God gave humans gifts and abilities. NO ONE is without talent. There is **the gift of redemption**. This way anyone can, without exception, if he just wanted to, be justified before God. Assuming he is voluntarily and obediently following the goddirected path of real love. *Rom.6: 23*. This counts also for all other **unearned godly gifts of grace**. **All the gifts**, as talents and blessings are strictly from God that would like to help us during our development; to achieve the optimum in our life, in the natural as also in the spiritual. Besides this, do all the different gifts originate from one and the same spirit (H. S,) and reveal themselves exclusively to **general advantage**. *1Cor. 12: 4-8*. **We cannot** use them at will or personally, for our own satisfaction and expect to receive through it respect or a better reputation. **Each gift** has actually **only one task**. It should solely exist **for the honor of God**. If the gifts are being utilized the way God is expecting from us, we will eventually receive **our fair wage**.

The actual reward does not happens until the return of Jesus. *1Cor.15: 23-24, 1 Tim. 6:14, Luke 17: 17, 30, Rom. 2: 5, 8, 19, 2 Thess. 1: 7, Heb. 9: 28, 1Pet. 5: 7, 13, 4: 13, Rev. 1: 1, 2 Thess 2: 3-8*.

The fullness of gifts in Corinth is proof that the service of the Apostle Paul, which happened in weakness, *1 Cor. 2: 1-5*, brought very good results.

1 Cor.1: 8. Paul was certain that the grace of God would **keep the Corinthians faultless until the day of the Lord**, bringing them to their goal. The DAY OF THE LORD is the final and finishing act in the whole salvation story, *Acts 1: 7*. It started **with the earthly arrival of Jesus** and will be completed with HIS glorious return. *1Cor. 1: 7-8, 15, 23, 1 Tim. 6: 14*. It is THE DAY when God judges the world, to reorganize and reshape it. Because Paul knew that the Corinthians had only by God's grace received their freedom from sin and guilt, he trusted that God would also keep them in this faultless condition. *1Col. 1: 22*. Paul was sure that the Corinthians **despite their inner tensions** would still remain in God's grace and could continue to live in their god-given community. He was not quite as convinced it would be the same with the Galatians. *Gal.1: 6-8*.

As long **as we live** and exist **here in this world** it will daily happen again, that we will sin, make mistakes, become weak, be tempted a.s.o. *James 1: 2, Prov. 24: 16, 1 John 1: 9-10*, or when others find fault with us, showing us mistakes we made. But when Jesus returns, He Himself will present us **free from sin and guilt** to His Father and then no one can **come against us** anymore.

The content of *1Cor. 1: 9*, is **the key verse of the whole letter**. Paul praises here the loyalty of God and points out that in the end only **Jesus and the Holy Spirit were the answer for all of the problems** that came up in the community.

In the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul is pointing to the importance of **unity** within the community as a **partnership**, a unifying connection for the Christians, to a lesser degree the material things, but the spiritual ones, who have an eternal effect. *Rom. 15: 26-27, 2Cor. 8: 4,9,13, Gal. 6:6, Phil. 4: 15-17*. It is the **common actions**, the **common disposition** and the **common confession**. *2Cor.1: 7, 6: 14, 1Tim. 5: 22, 2 John 11, Rev. 1: 9*, that binds the Christians to each other. And this will also give them part of the coming glory of God. *1Pet. 5: 1*. The fact that we human beings have in our spirit and thinking (our human nature) a partnership-like connecting unity with Jesus, *Heb. 2: 14*, we receive through Him also a friendship-like unity with His godly nature. *2 Peter 1: 4*. The word **community** is generally thought of as an unchristian group. *Acts 2: 42*. **The meaning of community** is often connected to social help, having the same ideology or awareness of solidarity. The commonality includes the unity which came out of the agreement to **partake** of the **gospel of Christ** and all the eternal and heavenly benefits of salvation that were given this weak humanity by the Father through Jesus and His Holy Spirit, by the Apostles to the community.

The united **partaking of the Holy Communion** best symbolizes this unusual connection. *1 Cor. 10:16*, Christians are without question called as part of His body to this "union" and "partnership" with the Son of God. (Jesus). This is **one of the greatest rights** that could ever be offered to us. That is one of the reasons why the word **partnership** is so intensively being dealt with in this first letter to the Corinthians. As a loving Father, **God is always ready to be, or to become, our partner**, as long as we are ready to wholeheartedly become real partners toward each other within our community. *1Corinthians* makes it abundantly clear that it would be impossible to become a real partner with our Lord, as long as we live in **disharmony** with another part of the same body. This would clearly contradict the **"love-teaching"** of Jesus. *Matt. 5: 23-24*.

1Cor.1 :10, 4: 20. **Paul fights the division of the church**. Speaking about this, he does not mention the causes of their division, nor who carries the greatest guilt. His goal is simply to stop the quarreling. That is why he does not write a detailed report about the causes for the split. He only reported what the people from

Chloe told him about the situation. *1 Cor. 1: 10-17*. These were probably trade-or commercially active people, who had access to all kinds of laborers, like slaves, released former slaves and free persons and were therefore neutral in their views. They reported that different groups had been formed who leaned toward guidance from individual personalities and missionaries.

But Paul did not point out **secret complaints or suspicions**. He declared openly where his information had come from. They were all impartial men, whose trustworthiness neither Paul nor the Corinthians doubted.

He reminds the community of friendly unity, a sign of a mature Christendom. They should only obey Christ and to be of one mind. Because Christendom is called to unity with God in Christ and not to some party, group or denomination.

Paul is naming himself first, for he is the one who built this community, then Apollo and Kefas (Kefas, Petrus). The fourth group he mentions is a so-called **Christ-party**. This was probably only a rhetoric tightening of the situation.

1 Cor. 1: 10. The division of the Corinthian community became the first problem Paul concentrated on clearing up. He names the **misgivings head-on**. He speaks directly **to the brethren**, to the community, to the believers and **not to some trouble-makers**. In the first ten verses, he refers **ten times to Jesus**. In this way He would not be portioned. Paul expected the different parties to find their way back together. If not, he would personally come for a visit.

Paul even scolded those who called themselves: Followers of Paul. These were mainly former pagans, who spoke of the end of the law, allowing themselves a greater lack of restraint.

Groups that flocked to certain Christian persons and personalities had evolved.

Some stuck **with Peter**, who had probably visited the community. He was a formidable personality in Christendom and probably also because he presented the Jewish-Christians and of them the ones who still hung to the old traditions and customs and continued to teach the law.

Some held with Apollo, who also came from a Jewish-Christian community. *Acts 18: 24-28*. He stressed, that Paul and also Apollo are simply gardeners in the garden of God and architects who build on the foundation that was laid down by Jesus Christ Himself. The community is the **temple of God** that should never be desiccated, as by divisions within the community. No one should think himself worldly-wise or lift up any man or personality. *1Cor. 3: 1-23*.

Apollo was an eloquent Jewish man from Alexandria. He was mightily powerful in the Scriptures. Alexandria was an important spiritual center at that time. Theologians here had developed a symbolic interpretation of the Scriptures, where even the simplest words received a secretive meaning. The Alexandrians were enthusiastic readers, intellectuals, worldly wise men who also wanted to intellectualize Christianity.

The ones who called themselves followers of Apollo were without question also mostly intellectuals, for whom Christianity represented a specific philosophy.

Others held with the **Christus** group, where some may even have personally known Jesus. *Acts 1: 21, 10: 41*, or they wanted to reach God without any human middleman. Paul did not praise these either, but set them even with the other groups. These could have possibly been a small, strict and **self-righteous group**, conceited people, who presumptuously declared to be the only true Christians in the community of Corinth. They acted as if Christ belonged to them personally and was their own property.

This group apparently separated itself from the other Apostles. This was **no real connection with Jesus**, when they trivialized other messengers. *Matt. 25: 40-45*. Paul asked horrified: *1Cor. 1: 13, Is the Christ divided up, or cut into pieces?*

Because of the Corinthian's orientation toward personalities, they had lost their direct view of Jesus, had cut Him up and divided. There became the danger of showing a **shabby picture** for Christ and His cause.

Paul does not give an account of the individual points of contention. Just the opposite, he argues in the positive and "paints" for the Corinthians a picture of Jesus alone in front of their eyes. With great determination he calls them **back to the cross**. He does not demand for the Corinthians **to give-up their different viewpoints**, but he asks emphatically to act **unanimous** and **in harmony**.

For everything they have was a gift from God and no reason to become arrogant about it. His simple message is: **“Everything belongs to the believers.”** *1Cor. 3: 21 b.* –They again belong with everything they have and are – to Christ, therefore, to God. Therefore Paul expected for the **different parties** within the community to re-unite, to complete each other and therewith present **a united front** against the Devil, to sin and the godless world.

Paul made it clear that all **names such** as Paul, Apollo and Peter are **witnesses for the Lord**, but not heads of any community. **They are servants but not a lord.** Christians belong to the sole leadership, rulership and authority of Jesus Christ. Forever HE is their sole ruler and He is the One who gives the gift of unity, because He brought it all about by His sacrifice on the cross. Every lifting up of an individual person will without question bring about quarreling and a rising of tensions. Paul had recognized the reasons for the divisions in Corinth.

1 Cor. 1: 13. WHAT? **Has Christ been divided up?** Was Paul crucified for you? Have you been baptized in Paul's name? These **three questions** make it clear that the viewpoints of these different parties in the community were far removed **from the center of the Gospel.**

At a last consequence Paul is asking them: “Has Jesus been **divided up?**” can a body that's divided up live? Anything **at odds** with itself cannot exist. *Matt. 12: 24-30, Mark 3: 24-26, Luke 11: 17-1.*

Paul did not use statistics, especially not **success-statistics** of all those he had baptized.

1Cor. 1:14. **Paul never led people to himself, or bound anyone** to himself. He never even baptized anyone himself, except Crispus, the earlier head of the synagogue in Corinth. Acts 18: 8, and Gaius, his host in Corinth. *Rom. 16: 23*, who was a respected person in Corinth. **Therefore no one can say:** I was baptized in Paul's name. Later he remembered that he had also baptized **Stephan and his household.** *1 Cor. 1: 16, 16: 15.* They were the **first-lings** in Achaja. They had first opened themselves to the Gospels and became zealous servants of Jesus Christ. He adds their names at last and says: **Otherwise I do not recollect**, if I have personally baptized any others.

1Cor. 1: 17, 2: 5. **For Paul, the Word of the cross, is the central message of the whole Gospel.** The cross of Jesus Christ has brought the reconciliation. God, as Father full of love, has done in His Son (full of light and Wisdom) the for us unbelievable act that no human being could have accomplished. This **deed of God** exceeds the whole of human **wisdom** and **Philosophy**, including all of the human works and accomplishments, as for instance the **baptism.** *1Cor. 1: 17.* God, the Father sent HIM to preach the gospel and not to baptize, which does not lower the value of baptism. Baptism is not the first and most important in becoming a child of God. **Foremost of all is the proclamation of the gospel.** *Matt. 24: 18-20, Mark 16: 15-16, Luke 24: 47, Acts 2: 37-38.* Because without the act of reconciliation by Jesus and the inner **work of God** in the human person itself, that without **atonement** (turn-around) and **belief** *Rom. 10: 9-11*, is a baptism completely **worthless.**

Baptism is only the answer of humans to the message of God. In the bible, only those were baptized who received and believed the Word. *Acts 2: 41.*

1Cor. 1: 18. That, which a human receives and perceives through the cross of Jesus Christ is neither what the Greeks or the Jews were looking for. The cross is the answer for **the question of guilt** for the whole human race, that which reconciles us with God.

With the cross of Jesus Christ, God makes all of worldly wisdom look absurd. HE picks the foolish and weak things that Christians and people in general **can only be proud of Jesus** and IN HIM find justice, healing and redemption. *1Cor. 1: 30.* However, he totally puts aside all of the wrong path and imaginations, discussing only the positive. Neither did he try to design a new theology to explain his theses, he simply delivered the message his Lord had personally ordered him to give. In this way he leads the community into **the Center of God's salvation activities.** *1Cor. 3: 18-23.*

The Word of the cross was for Paul the central turning point for salvation. This three-pronged process, starting with justification than continues with sanctification until finally ending in glorification. It aims for a complete self-denial, being voluntarily obedient to God's will, which as in Jesus case can lead to humiliation and death. At which end was not self-destruction, but real preservation and the spiritual increment. *2Tim. 2: 12, Rev. 22: 5.* In this vers as in the whole letter, Paul deals with the second one, of the three before named phases, **progressive sanctification.**

What was actually still missing with the Corinthians, was a **renewal through the Holy Spirit** *Rom. 12: 2*. They had the gifts of the Spirit, but they were still living **on the base of an unsanctified lifestyle**. Thinking from a logical and human standpoint, their highest aim was their self-preservation and self-glorification. In the center of their being, they were still proud, conceited, egoistic and **self-centered**. To them, Paul brought the message of the cross *Luke 9: 23-24*, which was aimed at total self-denial and humble degradation. This was for arrogant Greeks and also Jews the greatest foolishness.

From the **four great sermons** out of Acts, we notice, *Acts 2: 14-39, 3: 12-26, 4: 8-12, 10: 36-43*, that **each sermon** repeated certain **re-accruing** facts over and over.

- ! It declared that the time, promised by God, had arrived.
- ! It gave an overview of the life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- ! It testified that all prophecies were now fulfilled in Him.
- ! It announced a return for Jesus Christ.
- ! It asked all listeners for an urgently needed turn-around and to receive the promised gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Apostle Paul divided human kind into two ethnic groups; the Greeks, which were the pagans at the time and the Jews, who were the pious ones.

The Jews **represented the believing ones**, because they knew to have the by God revealed belief. They were sure to know they had the truth – given by the Old Testament. But in truth, they had already, for a long time, abandoned the directions given by God. They only observed their formal traditions. In reality they had a long time ago given up the Word of God. They interpreted the Holy message for themselves, the way they felt to serve them best. This is why the message from the cross was such an offence to the Jews.

- **The Jews could and would not believe** that anyone hanging or even dying on a cross could have been the chosen of God. *Deut. 21: 23, Isa. 53*. The Jews could and would not even imagine a suffering Messiah. *Rom.9: 32-33*. For Israel, Jesus was under the **sign of a curse**. The cross of Jesus was and is until today a sign of offence and a scandal.
- **That is why the Jews kept searching again and again for spectacular signs**. In their view should the time of salvation be preceded by astounding and world-shaking events. Therefore, they saw in Jesus only a weak and unimportant person, even-though He did many proven, mighty miracles. Because His life ended on a cross, it became for them an impossible thought that He could be the chosen of God. Even when God as a sign of His mighty power had Him raised up from the dead, they turned the evidence into some self-produced **lying stories**. *Matt. 28: 11-15*.

The **second ethnic group** which Paul always refers to are **the Greek**. For the Greeks also, the message of the cross was **foolishness**.

- In the Greeks opinion was a sign from God before all other things the "Apatheia", and much more an "apathy" that means **completely insensitive**. The Greeks, after the Olympic era **declared God to be completely insensitive**. They stated that if God would feel feelings like JOY, PAIN, ANGER, GRIEF and such things, He would be able to be influenced, therefore the person who was able to do it would be greater than God and that is impossible. Therefore they followed, God must be totally without any feelings. Therefore was a suffering God a contradiction in itself.

The **philosopher Plutarch** stated: It would be an insult to God to have Him involved in human affairs. And even the thought of an incarnation, to have God become a human being, was in their eyes **outrages**. For them God was the very highest, the top of the seins-pyramid of the cosmos. He is an immovable, pure being. In contrast, a God that moves and even becomes a human being, one that goes to the cross, to be beaten, ridiculed and allows to be killed, was for the Greek thinkers simply dumb. It was a degradation of God. For the Greek thinkers, this kind of God would never be or exist.

In the writings of **Greek philosophers** you can find parallels to almost all Christian teachings, but in none of them it said: "**The Word became flesh and lived among us**".

For the thinking Greeks "The becoming flesh" by God is a total contradiction. They simply could not believe, that someone who loved them, felt with them, and suffered as Jesus did, could be the Son of God.

- Beyond that, **the Greeks looked always for wisdom**. The teachers of wisdom were to begin with smart and knowledgeable men in a positive way. Later on, one understood them to be men with a keen mind but also a sharp tongue.

They were so-called mind-acrobats, who understood with brilliant word-play to change a bad thing into a better one. They were most interested to enjoy their own thought games and to proudly shine in front of their listeners.

The Greeks ask for wisdom. Their whole striving and exploring was done systematically to grasp and then categorize their findings.

Also meaningless, if this **human wisdom** came from Jewish scholars or from the Greek “Wise men” –Even the smartest could never grasp the plan of God. *Isa. 55: 8-9*.

1Cor. 1: 19-25. Through the cross of Jesus, God brought to nothing the **wisdom of the wise**. As it was announced hundreds of years before. *Isa. 29: 14*. As the cross **unites one with God**, it will separate anyone from God, who rejects Jesus. The ones limited by **human thinking** (Jews as well as Greeks) cannot comprehend the deep wisdom of God because of their shallow pride and vain conceit. *1Cor. 2: 6-16*. They simply cannot comprehend that the **helplessness** and **weakness** of the natural man is for us the only entrance to God. *1Cor. 1: 27, 2 Cor. 12: 9-10*.

Because what the human really needs, he cannot find among his human fellows. The power and the wisdom of God can only be given by God Himself. This is why HE calls people to Himself. **By the preaching of the crucified Jesus**, and this, by the Holy Spirit opening our eyes and hearts, that we may trust in the Words of the Gospel. Therefore it is not our smartness or wisdom but **the belief** alone, the trust in God’s promises, that allow us to recognize the ways of God and to walk in them.

1Cor. 1: 26-29. **The community itself is proof of God’s intervention**. Paul pointed to the fact that all of his argumentation was **not his theory** but God’s sovereign action. “You can see it yourself, what the community is made of.”

Not many wise in the flesh, not many mighty, not many respected are called.

When God called His people in Corinth, He did not do it after men’s standards. The wise and mighty are not excluded, but there are **not many!** The **powerful** were Christians with political influence or with state-given power. There were also few “**Nobles**” or people from distinguished families or in high regard. But Paul also knows the necessary humility it takes to accept this reality.

God picked what is foolish to the world. This, **God picked for Himself**. *John 7: 48-49*, that He might disgrace the proud and brake their haughtiness.

The educated Greek despised labor and hard-working people. For him, work was a disgrace. To think and discuss, to enjoy life, to rule and to win, and also sports, were their goals in life. But, **what was weak**, as sick and disabled, people without influence, those God chose. The **pious Jew** also turned away from them and despised them. *Luke 18: 10-11*. Contrary to that, they believed **God rejected them and His punishment** was upon them. The Greeks also, had no use for any like that.

But why did God choose especially these people of low standing? **The answer is three times the same**.

- That He might bring to nothing, to underline the **NO** of God to all of **human standards**. The: bring to nothing could also mean to make worthless or to bring shame, or to uncover shame.
- God therefore picks the foolish, weak people without standing, name, rank, reputation or influence and with it, discards all human valuation. *Isa. 53: 3*.
- Why is God acting this way? Paul explains this by saying: **That no flesh may boast before God**.

And again Paul directs the view of the Corinthians **toward Jesus Christ**. *1Cor. 1: 30*. Through Him, or exactly translated “out of Him”, namely out of God, the Corinthians became something, but not of themselves *Rom. 3: 24, 10: 4, Matt. 1: 21, 9: 2, Rom.4: 25, 1 Pet. 2: 24, 1 John 3: 9, 5: 18*. It happened only through Jesus, who “became our healing”. *John 17: 19, 1Cor.1: 31, Jer. 9: 22-23 a.s.o*. When they came into the community they had for instance **no wisdom**. Now they do, because Jesus is their wisdom.

CHAPTER 2

1Cor. 2: 1-16. For Paul **the Gospel does not consist only of words, but before anything else, the mighty power of God.** He simply declares the witness of God and for that he does not need fancy words nor deep thinking, special bible knowledge, man knowledge or God knowledge, to find listeners. He declares simple and plain and with personal certainty the redemptive work of God in Jesus. **That is his treasure and the saving power.**

He reminded the Corinthians of their first meeting him and writes: **“When I came to you, it was not with enticing words and great wisdom”** Here we see a self-consciousness, fully marked by the Spirit of Christ. He makes it clear that his own actions and appearance are an expression of God’s activities.

1Cor. 2: 1-5. Paul explains that he did not come to them with **the superiority of words** because these would not have convinced you to believe or to become obedient. He declared **the suffering of God**, of how God **gave Himself** in Jesus, for all of humankind. It was the eternal secret of God that he revealed to them. Jesus’s act of reconciliation came as origin of eternal truth and godly wisdom that would enlighten and save mankind. **Every declaration of the Gospel**, where the cross is not center-stage and from which everything goes out, is not apostolic and therefore not godly. **Our whole salvation and redemption** we owe to the cross of Jesus.

Paul clarifies that the **road to the inner self** of a person does not necessarily lead through the mind, (wisdom, signs and wonders) but mainly through the heart.

That’s why he presented himself to them in **weakness, fear** and great **trembling**. *1Cor. 2: 3, 2 Cor. 7:15, Eph. 6: 5, Phil. 6: 5.* This was true for a real servant of God. These three terms cannot simply be spiritualized, they have to be seen as reality.

- **Weakness** describes the **physical inability** because of an **illness**. It can also show failure through **inability**. The Apostle also knew he could not convert anybody. It was the Lord who had to authenticate His Word.
- **Fear** was not meant as to worry because of a need, but rather a fright of the **size of the task**. Because the fright was a **fear of God**, the knowledge that the messenger could do nothing on his own or by himself.
- The **great trembling** was mainly a physical reaction because with his appearance he did not want to **impress anyone**. *Matt. 26: 37.*

In weakness, fear and trembling Paul served among the Corinthians. To prove that all the good things that happened, their conversions, changes in behavior, the giving of spiritual gifts, had nothing to do with his ability to convince, nor **his eloquence in speech**. It was alone God’s powerful workings. For the Greeks it would have otherwise be a sign of a **gift from God**.. He simply came to them as a **witness to Jesus**, who did not manipulate them.

Their belief came from simple preaching. *Rom. 10: 17*, and this happened through the grace of God, to prove the undisputed authorship to be no other than of **the Spirit and the Power (or dynamics) of God**. In this way, the Apostle was only a tool of God, where no other but God Himself built and established the community. This way no one could get the idea it was Paul or **his convincing language** that got it accomplished. “ That your faith may not be built on human wisdom but only on the power of God. *1 Cor. 2: 5, 2 Pet. 1: 16, Eph. 1: 19.* Their looking and **listening only to man** were the reasons for the **divisions within the Corinthian community**. With this, Paul wanted to expose the uselessness of the Corinthian debate.

1 Cor.2: 6. He declares: **Before men can recognize the wisdom of God**, the power of God has to be proven to be working in him. It has to **shake** the security and presumptuousness of natural man, to convict him **of sin** and to **lead him** to a new life. Only then will he recognize the **highest wisdom** and completeness in him, which before seemed only to be foolishness. Only at this point is the believer a **complete person**, an enlightened one, an initiated one, one who knows, a person of age. One who reached a different level of thinking, living now in true faith.

The **wisdom** (the Sophia) is Christ Himself. *1Cor. 1: 30.* The Wisdom that is testifying the Gospel **is therefore a person** and not a thing. biblically speaking, to be complete means to become more like Christ, to look more like Christ. *Rom. 8: 29, Col. 3: 10.* To become **complete** is therefore **not a call** to know, or to learn more, because in principle, we become only then complete when we give ourselves fully over to God’s Spirit and His renewing power. In *1Cor. 3: 1*, Paul calls the Corinthians **“underage children”** not because they did not know enough, but because they were still **acting out of their flesh**. *1Cor. 3: 3.* In their

self-seeking, ambitions and causing to take sides; to be on bad terms with one another, they hindered the Spirit of God from working in their midst. **Complete** Christians are not perfect or all-knowing, but people fully dependent and acting out of their heart, ones who gave their whole life to Christ.

1Cor. 2: 7. The wisdom of God is a secret to the world and hidden from all of those unbelieving people. *Matt. 11: 25. The rulers* of this time in the world, as also the spiritual Jews, as also the Romans in power and people of authority, **stayed blind** to this wisdom and the Gospel of God. **Pilote** for instance, with his skeptical question: "**What is truth**", *John 18: 37-38*, despite his personal acquaintance with Jesus, *Matt. 27: 19*, he did not recognize Him. Instead he unappreciated Him, condemning Him to death. But also the invisible evil, the demons and Satan, the god of this present world, nor **the fallen angels**, the mighty-ones of the underworld who rule over this world, have grasped the plan of God. *1Cor. 15: 24-25, Eph. 6: 12, John 12: 31, 14: 30, 16:8-11, 2Cor. 4: 4*, even though the plan of God's salvation was known and revealed **from time immemorial**. *Gen. 3: 15, Deut. 18: 15, Isa. 7: 14, Mic. 5: 1, Sac. 9: 9*.

1Cor. 2: 10. But God is revealed to us by His Spirit. For the Spirit explores all things, even **the depths of the God-head**. All that no ear has ever heard. *1Cor. 2: 9, 2 Cor. 5: 19, Matt. 16: 17*.

This is **the big difference from all other religions! Men's ways** to learn, recognize, study or meditate to gain understanding can never lead us to God. For here, **God Himself** makes Himself known to man. *1Pet. 1: 13, Rev. 1: 1*, and **the Spirit of God** allows us to look into the heart of God. New Testament faith is a religion of revelation, because **the Spirit searches out all things**. HE even reveals the very depth of His God-head. **God can only be recognized by God.** *Eph. 1 : 3-14*.

1 Cor. 2: 11. Here the Apostle recognizes in his own human ability **of his own self-recognition** a parallel to god-recognition. We ourselves can only perceive and recognize our selves by our own natural spirit power. In the same way, none other than God Himself can recognize or perceive what is in God, **except God** Himself in the person of the Holy Spirit.

1Cor. 2: 12. But we have not received the spirit of this world. We do not recognize or perceive God with our own spirit powers, our contemplation or possibility-thinking. For us God is someone supernatural, a reality that is foreign and beyond any normal experience, who connects to us by personal revelation through the Spirit of God , or its simply given to us as a gift of His grace. That is why this whole salvation message can never be grasped or reasoned out by the **spirit of the world**.

1Cor. 2: 13-16. The natural man of flesh and soul can **by himself not receive anything** from the Spirit of God. Despite his greatest efforts, or ability to learn, not even with the healthiest common sense can natural men perceive or understand the Godhead, Jesus or the Holy Spirit. *John 14: 17, 6: 44, 65*. The reason is not even an evil desire of a person or a defiant NO. **It is impossible for him** . It is the terrible and tragic result that followed the act of sin and the fall of mankind. **Only the Spirit of God is able to open the heart of man from the inside out.** *Acts 16: 14*, and **open** The Word of God and redemption. *1 John 2: 20, 27, John 14: 26, 15: 26*. That is why only a "bornagain" person can perceive anything about the Kingdom of God. *John 3: 3, 5, Isa. 40: 13*.

CHAPTER 3

In **1Cor.2**, Apostle Paul is describing **two groups** of people, the **natural man** and the **spiritual man**. In **Capital 3**, he takes another step, showing us these believers in two categories, the fleshly and the spiritual Christian. Because some, he says, are fleshly and others are spiritual. Their position becomes visible in their life, the service to their community and also in the "food" they eat.

1Cor. 3: 1. Here Paul uses the words **fleshly** and **spiritual** with a different meaning than in *Rom.7: 5, 14, or Gal 3: 1*. He compares the Corinthians to **new-born** babies. They are in fact children of God in Jesus Christ and they are brought forth spiritually from the Spirit of God, but in their behavior and in their reactions they are completely **underage** and immature, and they are therefore still **fleshly**. With such fleshly, materially and earthly thinking people, Paul could not discuss anything **deeper** spiritually. He always addresses these believers as **brothers**. Despite their immaturity he keeps in close fellowship, even-though he is not afraid to name the scandals, sins, tensions and damage to the community, head-on. He held on to his brotherly love and "lovingly" reminds them. *John 13: 35, 1Pet. 3: 8, 2 Pet. 1: 7*. Because, he claims, every criticism, correction, or admonition brought forth without real brotherly love would kill any community thinking and destroy the Spirit of completeness.

1Cor. 3: 2-3, Paul did not **overtax** these "young children", since they had just broken through from spiritual death unto life. *Mark 4: 33-34, John 16: 12-15*. He did not actually devalue their standing when he said: "As spiritual babies you could not digest solid food yet, that's why I fed you milk." It is clear, normal, wise and obvious. Milk is food for a baby. *1 Pet. 2: 2, Heb. 5: 11, 6: 1-4*. Only a spiritually growing Christ (in them) needs solid food. He makes one clear statement and insight after another. But the Christians there had not grown anymore. Their spiritual life became **stagnated** because of their continuous **struggles** and **disputes**. They remained like little children. This happened especially to those **who boasted of their deep spiritual insights**. *1Cor. 3: 18, 14: 1*. But they had already taken the wrong road by **overestimating** themselves and **became blind** in their pride. *Mark 14: 29-31, Luke 22: 31-34*.

Paul asked them questions, which they had to answer themselves to make their own opinion about themselves, **For an active self-recognition is the best recognition**. *Matt. 5: 46*.

1 Cor. 3: 4-11, Envy and quarreling uncovered the "fleshly state" of the community. To live and fight against each other in this manner corresponds to the natural or worldly state, the way fleshly world people come to terms with another. The Corinthians wanted to belong to Jesus, but their main actions were still in their pernicious former and natural way. The **jealousy**, self-striving and zeal directed at neighbors and friends, existing at their cost, by envy and lowering others, just like the old natural person in the world. *Rom. 13: 13, 2 Cor. 12: 20, Gal. 5: 20, James 3: 14*. Out of which usually develop **separating disputes** and people start to **concentrate on persons**, to identify with them, **instead of uniting around the Name of Jesus**. Paul declares that if someone appeals to another servant of God, he takes away the honor that belongs to God Himself. *Matt. 23: 8-11*.

Every **witness** and **co-worker** in the Kingdom of God has received an unchanging call from God. *1Cor. 3: 6-8*. But real **prosperity** and growth comes **from God Himself**. That is why any self-praise (or even praising others) becomes totally impossible, or fruitless. Unfortunately, the natural man always wants to lift himself up, or be someone special, needing validity or gaining a reputation.

Paul declares that both servants, the one who **plants** and the one who **waters**, will be standing side by side before God. That's how the sinful traits as jealousy, envy and pride are neutralized. Even though not everyone has received the same job, all were commissioned by the same Lord. Paul is not trying here to raise everyone to the same level, he simply wants each believer to find his own place "under God." The wages for the work are not dependant upon results, but their steadfast loyalty and obedience toward Him. *Matt. 5: 46, 6: 1, Luke 6: 22-23, John 4: 36-37*.

1 Cor. 3: 11. Apparently were not all in the Corinthian community working toward the one high, godly goal. That is why Paul exhorts them with these words, as a warning and instruction: **No one can build on another foundation, but the one that was built by Jesus Christ**.

1 Cor. 3: 12-17. Here Paul speaks to different groups of servants in the community of Corinth.

- ! There were to begin with, **the technical and trade experts**. *1 Cor. 3: 14*.
- ! then **the incompetent** *1 Cor. 3: 15*.
- ! lastly, the ones who destroy. *1 Cor. 3: 17*.

But even the materials used in building things, can be divided into at least three groups.

- ! The **gold**, the **silver** and the **precious stones** are probably pointing to the durability of the work. In comparison to wood, hay and stubble, which would be symbols for shortness of life and worthlessness.
- ! The three **expensive materials** most likely underline the right teaching which the builder invested into the lives of the believers. The three **other materials** however pronounce wrong and **worthless** teachings.
- ! The first three materials point to **good motives** by the builders, the three last ones to bad motives.

This should be **the concern of each worker**, building on the Kingdom of God, to know which material to pick for the foundation. The question of the value and authenticity and therefore the **longevity** of the work is a most responsible question that needs to be answered by each servant of God. *Matt. 7: 24-26, Luke 6: 48-49*.

The **fire**, or the coming judgement will authenticate the job of each worker. *2 Tess. 1: 7-8, Rev. 18: 8*. The one, **whose work remains**, will receive praise. *1 Cor. 4: 5*. On the other hand, the incompetent builder has to watch how the work of his life is burned up. Only **he himself** will be, just like a burning branch, plugged out of the fire. *Jude: 23*.

1 Cor. 3: 16-21. Not only each individual **co-worker of God**, but **the whole community** will be judged by the Lord at the day of probation.

The whole community, the body of Christ, is the temple of God. *John 2: 19-22.* The believers are part of His body. *1Cor. 6: 15,* and the community is the temple of the Holy Spirit. If there are quarrels, conflict and divisions within the community, then the **temple of God** is being broken-up and destroyed. Under those conditions it will be impossible for the Holy Spirit to be active. As soon as bitterness enters a community, the love of God is instantly pulling back. In an atmosphere like that, the Spirit of God is dampened and grieved and God is not present anymore. The sign of a true community of God is **pure, true, merciful,** sympathetic and selfless love. *Acts 4: 32.* Whoever destroys this love, annihilates with it the community and the temple of God. And whoever ruins the temple of God, also corrupts God Himself. The results of that you will see at the Holy Communion. *1Cor.11: 29-30.*

1Cor. 3: 22-23. This connection to Christ and God (Jesus) is the only connection. The ribbon of saving love in which the disciple exists. Whoever subjugates himself to other connections, denies his own Lord with it. Of this, Paul wanted and had to remind and admonish the Corinthians, no matter what names or persons were involved.

CHAPTER 4

1 Cor. 4: 1-21. In this section, Paul corresponds **to the competitive thinking of the Corinthians.**

Here Paul started with a request. Let a man so consider us, as servants of God and stewards of the mysteries of God. At least let us be judged that way. A servant of Christ is only subjugated to Him. HE alone is the One who **commands** an Apostle. He is bound to Jesus just **like a slave** and is therefore the **guiding authority** for all of his actions. With that he is the standard by which the community should direct and test their servants.

1 Cor. 4: 2. The servants of God should be loyal and take good care of the by God entrusted things. Luke 12: 42, 16: 1.

1 Cor. 4: 3-5. Now the Corinthians may have judged him, if he was loyal in his service to them. Their view was not important to him, for he had learned to live independent from mens opinions. He knew he could only be held responsible before God, His Creator and Father. Even when others now **judged his work**, he may have taken notice of it, but if either positive or negative, it had **no impact on him.** Paul was fully convinced that only the more than holy and everlasting God would speak the first and last word.

1Cor. 4: 5. That is why he admonished the Corinthians: **Do not judge before your time.** The final judgement regarding the community in Corinth **about individual servants** of Christ, may it be praise or fault, **was not their right to give.** When the Lord returns, **HE will bring everything to light.** He meant all their fighting, discouragement, also joy and hidden pain. This includes also the things we ourselves do not fully comprehend, our feelings, drives and powers. The Lord of all that is living knows His loving servants best. Paul expressed this here **in a very positive way.** Everyone will be rewarded **for his loyalty,** their attitudes and service and **praised by the Lord.** *Matt. 25: 21-23, Luke 12: 42-44.*

1 Cor. 4: 6-8. Word against arrogance. Here, the Corinthians are being consciously addressed as **brothers**, who should learn through **spiritual insight** to overcome all jealousy and dividing quarrels, with which they should not lift up or lower anybody anymore. Because **human glory is short-lived and foolish.** *1 Cor. 3: 19-20.* and that by lifting up of preferences for certain teachers. Their human glory as their judgements were dangerous, for they could have learned that **from the Scriptures**, but now also by the **strong rebuke** by the Apostle. He talked very seriously with them but he did not scream or shout at them. He only asked the rhetorical question: Who told you to do it? Definitely not God. Then he continued: **All you have** need of, you have already received.

For how can you **as Christians proudly lift yourself up** and forget that you are living by God's gifts? Paul made it clear that there are three steps for turning away from humility to pride. They are:

1. Making yourself of prime importance.
2. To forget to praise God for His rich and bountiful gifts, which leads to:
3. To a sinful self-honor. Here the true giver of gifts is put into the background and Christ Jesus loses out to self-honor.

1 Cor. 4: 8. As background on the spiritual problems of the Corinthians. Are you already full, are you already rich, you have reigned as kings without us, and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you.

With this wordplay Paul once more uncovers their **selfish pride** and exposed them of contempt toward those who loyally devoted themselves in their work for them.

1Cor. 4: 9. Here Paul is contrasting his own life to theirs, expecting them to instinctively come to question themselves. He says: We are the **lowliest ones**, a spectacle for the world, for angels and men. The whole Cosmos, even the invisible world is viewing the suffering of the Apostles. Only the fleshly and unspiritual Corinthians saw and felt nothing.

The **devoted service of the Apostle for God** remains a Christ-walk, a cross-road of suffering. *Matt. 5: 10, 10: 23, John 15: 20.* Whoever already wants to rule now is not going the road of Jesus. *Matt. 20: 28, Mark 10: 45, John 12: 25-26.* The Apostles are still walking "the road of Christ." They not only preach the Word of the cross, they are living the message.

1Cor. 4: 10. The Corinthians were living in great self-deception. You believe yourself to be wise, big, strong and distinguished. But the Apostle knew better, that for the world he was a fool, dishonored and **weak** in a sense of being powerless, without influence, insignificant and needy. Between the lines you can read that the Corinthians had gained **some influence** from society, at least a few of them and they became therefore somewhat **famous, honored and respected**. With this, they probably did not exaggerate, for the Christian community was respected in the City. This worldly acceptance brought with it a negative effect into their **spiritual life**.

1 Cor. 4: 11-13. Here Paul describes in detail what a true following of Jesus means. From being full, rich and to rule, you probably wont hear or see anything. He counts here **what his own Apostleship** consists of. Hunger thirst, being beaten, poorly clothed and homeless, reviled and persecuted. As a tent-maker and with hard work, he not only provided for his own needs, but also for some others.

1Cor. 4: 14-21. As a father he reminds the Corinthians, (for he says, I have made you.), he is addressing them as: **My dear children!** This is showing his deep love and heartfelt connection to these Corinthians. This is why he is admonishing and fighting for them. As father he wants them **to see the truth**. He says: **Imitate me.** *1 Cor. 4: 16.* Here he challenges them to become his concrete successors. All the other teachers of the Corinthians were only **disciplinarians**, themselves mostly **former slaves**, who held the children with firmness on the right path. *Gal. 3: 24.* That is why Paul did not send another disciplinarian to them, but his beloved (and loyal) son Timothy to Corinth. He would represent the loving concern the Apostle had for his people and to remind them of Jesus's directions, which Paul proclaimed in all of his communities. *1Cor. 4: 17.*

1Cor. 4: 18-21. Some imputed Paul of using unfair practices. Because he sent Timothy instead of coming himself. He gave the Corinthian community a choice of how he should come and speak to them. *1 Cor. 4: 21.* With a **rod**, (that happens only in Paul's letters) by which he probably means **with firm words**, The other alternative was a soft and pleasing reminder.

CHAPTER 5

1Cor. 5: 1-6, 20. Regarding the deplorable moral state of affairs in the community.

1Cor. 5: 1-13. Paul heard that one **important community member** was living together **with his mother in law**. The law of the Old Testament considered this to be ceremonially unclean and forbidden. *Lev. 18: 8.* For most of the **proselytes** (former pagans), the Rabbis looked the other way. This is why **tolerance** toward this sin within the community was understandable. Since the Corinthians in general had very liberal views, going by the motto: "**All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful.**" *1 Cor. 6: 12.*

The council of the Apostles forbade the continuation of old (bad) habits, still in use by these former pagans. *Acts 15: 20.* It looks like Paul is picking up a typical Jewish proselyte problem, for he closes this question with typical Jewish thoughts and phrases. Like "Sauerteig, Passalahrn", servants of idols and **outsiders**, *1 Cor. 5: 12.* who did not belong to the community. *Mark 4: 11, Col. 4: 5, 1 Tess. 4: 12, 1 Tim. 3: 7.* In this connection, he addressed the **misunderstanding** which arose from **the other Corinthian letter**, that had been lost.

The whole Pauline-ethics, is not questioning what is right and what is wrong, but to find out what would be beneficial and help in the growth of the new born-again believers in Christ. *Rom. 6: 15*. For Paul was the real freedom not a lack of restraint, but *Gal. 5: 13*. a service to God that would be favorable to Him, the new and only true Lord. *Rom. 6: 22*. To whom the believer belongs, for whom he lives and dies. *Rom. 7: 1*. This **main thought draws through the whole Epistle to the Corinthians**.

No believer should therefore have an impartial, casual or thoughtless attitude toward **sin**. The Christian community in Corinth was **like a small island in the middle of an ocean**, surrounded at all sides by pagans. On top of that, they were themselves young Christians. That why it was not easy for them to break old traditions and customs that had been every day occurrences for generations. This is why the Church, if it wanted to remain pure, had to take strong measures to separate them from the pagan lifestyle. Whoever closes his eyes toward these things and does not take them seriously becomes guilty himself, especially if he himself is drawn into it and is also contaminated by it.

1 Cor. 5: 9-12. To stay away and not to keep company with sexually immoral people, but have no contact with any of them. This is describing all those people that sin against themselves, living by the selfish principle of doing what feels right and are therefore given over to the power of sin. Throughout the whole bible sexual sin is considered totally ungodly, self-destructive and a sure sign of someone belonging to the world. It is best to have no friendly connection to **this kind of people** in the community.

With God and in the Faith, there is an outside and an inside. Paul makes it abundantly clear that “the people of Jesus” **have to separate from the world**. *Mark 4: 11, Luke 13: 25, Rev. 2: 15*.

CHAPTER 6

With the expression: **Don't you know?**, Paul is asking them to analyze things six times in this chapter alone and pointing to certain themes. In all of the books of the new Testament authored by Paul, this only happens three other times.

1 Cor. 6: 1-11. Christians brought legal cases before pagan courts. That was for Paul an absurdity. Was it not enough that the Corinthians quarreled among themselves, but they carried their personal and religious differences before pagans in their worldly courts, instead of in Christian manner to reconcile and to forgive each other. Christians are **called out of this world** by God and their structures, they are holy, and should not return back into old “worldly-material” ways that had been abandoned.

The **Greek world**, of which the Corinthians were part of, were known for their addiction for trials. Every argument leads to lengthy legal battles. It was actually one of the preferred ways of entertainment for a free Greek man to judge court cases. Every male over 30 years of age had the right for ownership and every male over 60 could become a judge. By drawing lots, men were picked daily to decide over the upcoming cases. They would either **judge** or be part of the **sworn-in ones**. It was probably the pagan-Christians that went constantly to court. As a rule, **Jews** usually did not go to any public trails. They cleared up their disputes before their elders of a village or in **the synagogue**. The administration of justice was something they liked to accomplish in a private setting. **Their laws prohibited** them from going before Non-Jewish courts. It was actually **blasphemy** in the eyes of God to do so. In opposition to the Jews, the Greeks enjoyed **public judgements** as some of their best entertainment.

For the Corinthian Christians it was normal to go before a worldly judge. This shows clearly that their actions were showing the community in a negative light, by allowing themselves to be drawn into situations that were normal for the world. But these Christians were not supposed to be existing in what was otherwise normal, they were the “called-out” ones, into something new. **This godly new thing** was to live in brotherly and sisterly love, which is not normal or average in this world. Christians should not look for their **justice** among **the unjust** of the world.

1 Cor. 6: 3-6. Christians will at a future time even judge angels and rule over them. Paul reminds them here of their high eternal destination. *2 Pet. 2: 4*. And at this time they were not even able to settle their own little affairs. This is a clear **reprimand** to the believers. The Apostle is marking the limits of his community, setting them apart from the materialistic world around them. This thought moves like a **red thread** through the whole Epistle. It is actually logical that total unbelievers, people who never personally knew or experienced the grace of God, **could possibly make a righteous judgement**.

1 Cor. 6: 7-10. These public quarrels before worldly courts brought shame over the whole community. All of those legal arguments between members of the community did not help to glorify God.

It became clear that something **was missing** with them, that there was a short-coming, otherwise there would not have been **the constant legal differences**. For such a charismatic community this was a dramatic defeat and disgrace. It does not correspond to the way of Jesus or His disciples or spiritual wisdom, but the energizing power of love was missing and that was the big loss for the community. There was the absence of living godly or in brotherly love. *Rev. 3: 1.*

Then Paul listed a whole catalog of vices of real actual deeds of sins and what they will do to individuals.

- ! **Immoral** ones are delivered to their own drive.
- ! **Idol worshipers** are tempted to worship dead things.
- ! **Adulterers** are unable to keep lasting loyalties in their relationships.
- ! **Weaklings** are people who live in excessive pleasure, ruining themselves.
- ! **Boy violators** are sexually confused, destroying themselves and others.
- ! **Thieves** are those, who do not respect the property of others.
- ! **Avaricious ones** and misers, are people who recklessly cheat and exploit others.
- ! **Drunkards** are ones, who have no control over themselves. They are ruled by alcohol.
- ! **Blasphemers** are people who slander and hurt others mainly with malicious words.
- ! **Robbers** are such, that take with brutal force what they want.

1 Cor. 6: 11. The community in Corinth was a miracle of God. God Himself had taken them out of slavery from sin, washed, cleaned, healed and made righteous through Jesus. *John 3: 5, Acts 22: 16, Eph. 5: 26, Heb. 10: 22, Rev. 1: 5, 7,14, Acts 2: 4, Rom. 15: 16, Eph. 5: 27, Col. 1: 22, 1 Pet. 1: 15.*

1 Cor. 6: 12. Again Paul is using the slogan: **All things are lawful for me** and continues: **But all things are not helpful. The bodies of Christians** are part of Jesus and the temple of the Holy Spirit. That is why Paul quoted: **I have all authority, but nothing and no one should gain authority over me**, except Jesus and the Holy Spirit. From this aspect he looks at the following themes, **marriage**, the whole discussion about **subordination, ordinances, the use of gifts, etc.**

1 Cor. 6: 12, 7: 40. Problems concerning marriage and divorce. The beginning comments adhere to the viewpoint that marriage helps to curb sexual offences *1 Cor. 7: 2*. Then he responds to the questions of the Corinthians. Paul also touches **the theme of divorce**. Here Paul most likely agrees with the words of Jesus in *Mark 10: 11-12*, to release the partner from the bond of marriage. This clause reflects the Roman legal reality, because Jewish law only gave the man and not the woman the right for separation and divorce. Paul advises, that if a non-Christian partner, either male or female, desires a separation, for the believing partner to agree to it. Marriage is more than sex, it is a deeper relationship between body, soul and spirit. A Christian and a non-believer are two far separated worlds, whose spirit and soul have no common base. Here it also validated what it says in *2 Cor. 6: 14 -17*.

Marriage is really a question of will. If the other marriage partner does not want to be part of it anymore, the marriage is over. *1 Cor. 7: 12-16*. **Marriage should never be slavery**, *1Cor. 5: 15*. But a help for the time on earth. The partners should be helping each other. Marriage is more of a pure worldly thing, as sleeping, crying, or as pain, the death. *Rev. 22: 3-5*. The current plan of this world with all of her appearances, ordinances and feelings is passing away.

Paul also mentions the unmarried. *1Cor. 7: 17-24*. as a model of life. Paul see's the end of this epoch on earth by the return of Jesus and believes, **it would be better** and not necessary to burden yourself with the earthly problems of a marriage, instead try to **please the Lord** with your whole heart. In this case it was the best way, but **there are other possible solutions**.

1Cor. 6: 13-20. What is lawful for a Christian and what is not. Actually everything is lawful, if it has to do with the body, soul or spirit of man. God said: "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it." *Gen. 1: 28-31*. After Paul had dealt in this chapter with a whole row of human problems, he closes this section with the comment: **Praise God with your body**. Here we experience a little more about the meaning of life. The body exists not only to be satisfied as: sexuality, pleasure, fun, and human multiplication, *1Cor. 6: 13*.

The body as such, is not only for this world, but also for the eternal world of God. *1Cor. 10: 31*. Here Paul contradicts strongly with the thinking of the Greeks, for whom the physicality of the human body was almost

meaningless. For them the body represented the cover for the soul or more its prison. **From claims made by the bible, the body is much more than just transitory in nature.** Man's transitory body is closely connected to the heavenly, spiritual (and invisible) body. What is relevant to the body is relevant to the soul as well and the other way around. **Only a complete man becomes a personality.** That is why man belongs completely to God, because this relationship is reciprocal in nature and cannot be separated, or it would become spiritually **immoral**. *1 Cor. 6: 14-17*. No living thing can exclude itself from the connection with the Lord, **not even sexuality**. Purposely Paul is using the picture of sexuality, because human coupling is **only** meant for this world. *Matt. 22: 30, 1 Cor. 6: 17-18*.

1Cor. 6: 15. With a reproachful question justified Paul why the ones present should not get involved in sexual offences. But it is still not fully clear what he meant by it. The individual believers are **part of the body of Christ**. *1 Cor. 12: 27*. But here he speaks of **bodies of believers**, of their whole person in connection to the visible world. By following Christ, the whole person is seized and sanctified throughout. This includes our thinking, feeling, our actions, all physical aspects, including sex. By the way, we do not talk here about the bodies all people possess, but **only of the bodies of the baptized**.

1 Cor. 6: 16. Here it concerns **the temple whores of the goddess Aphrodite**, who were available in great numbers in Corinth and who offered a "religious" intercourse. Whoever had this type of connection with her, *Gen. 2: 24*, united himself **with her heathen goddess**. He became one flesh (or body) with her and could therefore not belong to the body of Christ anymore.

The **possible background for this formulation** or argumentation could be, because Jews believed that sexual offence with women of other Nations would loose demonic powers over the man (the human being) that would violate him, or be awakened in him. *Num. 25: 1-3*. This is the first time the word "sexual offence" is being used. *Num. 31: 16*. That's why Paul stressed that **sexual offence is the only sin** that fundamentally violates the body of a man, or people. Even though there are **much worse sins** to ruin a body, like gorging or drinking in excess; but Paul did not speak here of a "drinkers body."

1 Cor. 6: 17. Paul acknowledged that this type of offence binds that person to another Lord (God). And whoever binds himself to the true Lord, **is not one body with Him, but one spirit**.

1Cor. 6: 18. Flee whoredom, escape! Therefore it does not say: Fight or resist. There is only flight, to refuse, or to separate from. *James 1: 14-16*. This is a chosen reaction. For **flee**, it actually says: **avoid**.

1 Cor. 6: 19. The body of a believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Paul contradicts the old thinkers **who despise their human body** and gives it a new evaluation. However, **he does not idolize the body**, but he explains that the value of the body is not in itself, but in the residency of the Holy Spirit.

In the first letter to the Corinthians **we have two different but comparable temple metaphors**. In *1 Cor. 3: 16*, the community as a whole is representing the temple. Here we have the picture, that each body who is inhabited by the Holy Spirit and surrounds him, is a temple of the Holy Spirit; on the other hand also every individual body. *1 Cor. 3: 16-17, 6: 16, 6: 19*.

Even-though the Jewish temple in Jerusalem still existed at the time of this writing, we already clearly see a turning-away from the idea of a Jewish temple-idea, or from a temple concept, as he continues to build on it.

1Cor. 6: 20. "You have been expensively purchased." This means, we are highly valued by God, with the price of His only begotten Son. *John 3: 16, Gal. 4: 5, 2 Pet. 2: 1*. As expensively purchased ones, we are allowed to **praise** God, (exactly to glorify). With our body means: through the daily reality of our life, therefore, to be correct in our thinking, speaking and acting. Correctly translated we should read: **Therefore honor the God with your body**. Older texts add also: **And with your spirit, which is from (this) God**.

Chapter 7

1.Cor.7,1-39. Paul **gives answers to specific questions** and answers to certain needs of the church at Corinth (*1.Cor. 8,1 ff.; 12,1 ff.; 16,1 ff.*). The matter is marriage, respectively singleness, what is allowed and what is not and how far **a Christian is free to act in this regard**. Maybe the Corinthians asked him if **marriage and sexuality are contrary to God's will**.

Perhaps he answers their questions one by one. We do not have a **generally binding answer or statement** concerning marriage. The **main principle to solve** the questions is developed vaguely in *1Cor.7,17,20,24*,

where it says: *Each should remain as they were when they were called*. This still leaves open questions. Paul later gives concrete **instructions concerning marriage**, etc (in Col 3,18 ff.; Eph 5,22–33 and in 1. Cor 11,3-12). „**Touch**“ refers only to the purpose of sexual intercourse (1. Cor.7,1-9), because for an **orthodox** (legalistic) **Jew** it was even forbidden to speak with a woman publically (except for his wife) or even to be seen with a woman in public.

Here we see **a former pharisee and rabbi teaching typical rabbinic solutions** with a strong **personal character**, (1. Cor.7,6-8). We can see this in his statement: ***It is good for a man not to touch a woman***, as if **women** and **sex** are filthy and of the devil. At first sight this argument is even contradictory to Gen.2,18 (***It is not good for man to be alone***). Paul wants to **provide a foundational rule for the Corinthians** by telling them that **among the believers in Christ and the fellow Christian believers the loneliness of Adam is no more**. The word Paul uses for „**good**“ is actually rather „commendable“ (compare Mat.19,10,12). But in the continuation it does not say: **marriage is bad**. Even though the apostle adopts the attitude of an ascetics, he does not approve of their disposition. **He wants to encourage them to have a sound mind**.

That Paul would start his instruction to the Corinthians **with such a passive parole** and wording (1. Cor.7.1) could be a result of a **blatant case of immorality** (1. Cor.5,1-2) and that there were **people in the church holding various views on sexuality**: from complete self-indulgent to abstinence.

In addition some **fanatical Christians** believed with regard to the coming apocalypse and return of Jesus it would be much better **to remain unmarried**. Paul corrected **their exaggerated opinion**. To understand **Paul's answers** and put them into context it is important to note what motivated him to make such statements. **Remaining unmarried** seemed to be some kind of eschatological life style of the Corinthians.

1. Cor.7,2 Every man should have their own partner (to avoid sexual immorality), and especially because of the danger of **self-imposed sanctification** (sexual asceticism).

1. Cor.7,3-6 Sex and affection is commended to spouses. Paul exhorts both, man and woman, to fulfill their mutual emotional (sexual) duties toward each other. It is **not a sign of perfection** when spouses deny themselves marital unity in the physical, because marriage involves the whole person. Both spouses no longer **„have authority over their own body“**. Both entrusted themselves to the other, yes almost surrendered, and this also applies to their bodies. Marriage is some kind of **property situation**, where one partner has authority over the body of the other.

1. Cor.7,5 But there is no unexceptional enforcement of sexual intercourse. Because when both spouses agree, they can determine a certain time of abstinence to devote themselves to prayer. But both have to agree.

1. Cor.7,8-9 To the unmarried and widows I say... There is a fulfilling life without marriage. Paul writes quite soberly that each person in the church should have the freedom of choice between marriage and singleness. Nobody should feel forced to do either. Everybody who belongs to Jesus can come as they are, **with all their characteristics**, and be accepted and sanctified by Him.

Furthermore some **fanatic Christians** believed it would be better to remain single with regard to the soon return of Jesus. Paul corrected **these exaggerated** ideas. The apostle Paul did not view marriage and sexuality **as an obstacle** to spiritual life. Marriage and sexual intercourse are not sin. Apparently there were women in the Corinthian church that aspired singleness and spiritual perfection through radical ascetic lifestyle and wanted to be holy in body and spirit (1. Cor. 7,34), while the men rather struggled with this concept.

1. Cor.7,8-19 In this chapter he touches on the **issue of divorce** again. This primarily deals with **„mixed marriage“** (believer and unbeliever, compare with Ezra 10,11). Through the believing spouse the unbeliever (non-Christian) and the children are blessed and sanctified (Gen.30,27; 39,5) which does not mean that they will **automatically be saved**. But the obedience of faith, daily prayer, the love of the Holy Spirit, the patient bearing with one another and the experiences of joyful reconciliation **sanctify** the atmosphere of such a marriage. If it does not work out this way, however, one does not have to be a hostage to such a **mixed marriage** and be bound to the other spouse like a slave (1. Cor.7,17).

The **will of God and our calling is** that man would live at peace in all their personal relationships (1. Cor.7,15), and man would not be **a slave** other people (1. Cor.7,23), which also applies to marriage. Therefore Paul considers divorce more peaceful and pleasing to God than a marriage continued against the will of one spouse. **Marriage is a gift of God** (Gen.2,24), and in case of failure it can only be turned over to God (the only superhuman instance) with remorse and repentance.

1.Cor.7,17-24 Paul relays some foundational commands of God for all churches, and not just the Corinthian church. The believer is supposed to live according to „**God's call**“. **God's calling** – however, is different for everybody and this is a **loose concept**.

The calling is **not to** a certain state but **in** a certain state. Each should remain **in the state** where God called them. That applies to **the life circumstances** in which God called a person, whether single or married, slave or free man, and he also adds some remarkable words: **You were bought at a high price... do not become slaves of human beings**.(1.Cor.7,24). By the ransom of Jesus Christians are now slaves of the Lord and not of people. He also encourages **slaves** if they can gain their freedom they should do so.

1.Cor.7,25-35 Paul talks about earthly realities, where the overall statements are more important than singular terms he uses. Paul does not have a command of God regarding **singleness** but with regard to the tough times to come, he recommends to remain **unmarried**.

1.Cor.7,36-38 Regarding „engagement“. The term „**virgin**“ should be translated „**daughter**“, and it primarily refers to the **Father's matter of conscience**. **A man must also decide for himself** if he still wants to marry the girl to whom he was engaged before his conversion and baptism. That **what applies to the widow** (1.Cor.7,39 ff) also applies to fiancés, they should only marry a Christian.

This whole chapter must be understood within context. At first Paul speaks of singles, then of the married and then widows. At last he refers to „**fiancés**“, who are engaged at the moment of their conversion. To them the principle to **remain in the state you were in when God called** cannot be applied (1.Cor.7,17, 20,24).

In 1.Cor.7,37-38 Paul also mentions „**permanent engagement**“, which means the two could remain together **unmarried**. This would then be a spiritual and interpersonal companionship **without sexual intercourse**. This would also apply for seniors or older people when they are no longer able to have children. The term „**burning with passion**“, refers to the longing to **have children** and then marriage is suggested.

1.Cor.7,39 By **the law** woman is bound to her husband,(Rom.7,1-3). Only death delivers people from their **old life** and its **bondage**.(Rom.6,7). A man is then free. In the bible there is the option of breaking a vow (Mat.16,19; 18,18). and in Judaism there was divorce (Deut.24,1-4; Mat.19, 1-9; Mark 10,1-12). At the time of Jesus in Judea and also in Corinth matters were governed by **Roman Law**, and also **a wife could release a husband from a marriage**. Perhaps Paul is answering to the question of a **Jewish-Christian**. According to Paul, the decision concerning divorce is primarily depending on the decision of the unbelieving spouse.

„**Divorce**“ is mere **human failure**, where two people have devoted themselves to something and then realise that they cannot keep the promises they have made to each other.

Apparently the wives of the Corinthian church longed to be single and live in sexual abstinence and reach spiritual perfection through radical ascetic lifestyle and holiness in body and spirit (1.Cor. 7,34), while the men struggled with this concept. These ideas were inspired by **Hellenistic godheads** and their Gentile piety which were worshipped and idolized at that time.

Everything that Paul says about **relationships between the sexes** must be understood in light/ context of **Jesus and His church** (Eph. 5,22-26).

CHAPTER 8

1Cor 8,1 – 13 In Corinth there were **controversies about the consummation of meat** that was offered to idols. This refers to **meals** at the **Isthmic games** and was offered only to the **Roman citizens** (in connection with worship of the Emperor) and these meals were sometimes even eaten publically at the temple.

The former Gentiles who had become Christians but had grown up worshipping idols, could not forget the religious back round of **the consummation of that meat**. In addition all meat that was sold at the markets at that time was **offered to the gods** and were not butchered according to Jewish tradition, which means that the meat still contained blood, and there was also a resolution concerning these things **at the Apostolic Council** (Act.15,20,29; 21,25). And surely there were also Jewish-Christian members of the church, that denounced **this kind of idol worship** (Ex 20,3; Lev 19,4; Act 21,25; Eph 5,5).

For **spiritually mature Christians** there was no problem. They knew that **in fact there are no other gods/idols**, there are only **idolators**, (Is 41,29; Hos 13,2).

Paul still exhorts them to relinquish on behalf of the **„weak“** and for love of their neighbor. He contrasts selfishness and love. Even though the believer is allowed to do all things they can relinquish out of love for their weaker brother **if they want to**. Because each **faith-knowledge** must be sustained **by brotherly love** (see 1.Cor.13 – **the heart piece** of 1st Corinthians). We should **not be a stumbling block or obstacle for our fellow Christians** (Mat.17,7;18,6-7; Mark.9,42; Luk.17,1-2). Our focus must always be on our weaker brothers, because this is the **mark of true love**.

Paulus is convinces that with love, sincere understanding (without being puffed up), logic and the help of the Holy Spirit all **problems in Corinth** can be solved.

1.Cor.8,3 The Christian is acknowledged by God and loved by God (Hos.2,21-22; 4,6;6,6;). **The knowledge of God** must precede human love. The love of God, loving our neighbor and loving ourselves are inseparably connected. True Christianity consists of **„loving God“**.

1.Cor.8,4-6 Paul tells the weaker Christians that there **are no other gods** and presents the old confession of Israel to the new believers (see Deut 6,4; Mk 12,29 - 32; Rom 3,30; Jam 2,19). From this **divine knowledge** (Deut.6,4; Exod.3,14; 1.Kin.8,56-60; 18,21; 2.Kin.19,15-19; Amos 4,13; 5,8; Is.40,20; 41,21; 42,8; Zac.14,9) **a Christian lives and acts** and this distinguishes them from the Gentiles.

The **Christians acknowledge only one God, the Father** who revealed Himself through Jesus (1.Cor.8,6; Col.1,15; Phil.2,6). **Idols** are called gods by people and they worship and idolize them (Rom 1,21-23), but they are only **primitive deceptions** (nothings, imagination) and **have no power over the Christians** because Jesus has already freed His followers of them but not everybody has reached this knowledge yet (1.Cor.8,7) and therefore **their conscience** is still weak. Their conscience is not yet completely surrendered and focused on Jesus. But these weak need to be helped. Because true Christianity is revealed in our **dealings with the weak**.

But those who are solidly anchored in the truth that there is only one God and one Lord, for those the idols are not existent and therefore there cannot be any idol meat but only **meat**.

1.Cor.8,7-13 In this conflict it deals with the tension between the **„progressive“ and „conservative“** streams within a Christian church, as well as the understanding and use of Christian freedom in the context of the **Gentile and religious world surrounding them**.

Paul consciously picks up the matter of **food** because it applies to all men, and he emphasises that our food has no influence on our relationship with God and our faith (no advantage, no disadvantage, not consequences, etc) It could be translated this way: *„Food will not bring God's judgment on you“*, or *„will not bring us closer to God“*... This is also a **clear rejection of Judaism** with their many **hygiene - and food regulations**, (1.Cor.8,8),

CHAPTER 9

In **1Cor.9,1-27** Paul explains **how to deal with our freedom in Christ**. There is no absolute „freedom“, because there are **clear boundaries**, (1Cor.9,19-27). We could also call this chapter **„The example of Paul in matters of renunciation“**. Being an example in his own life and mentioning 4 rhetorical questions Paul outlines what exactly **this freedom is**. Now all of these 4 questions should be answered with a clear **„yes of course“**. In this chapter he keeps asking rhetorical questions, **where he always asks himself a question, and then answers himself**. This also proves to the Corinthians how **„self-reflection“** always **leads to insights and solutions**.

By this way of reasoning Paul tries to **shame and teach** them at the same time. He could boast of all those things they have and pretend to be, but he does not do it. He has not tried to prove or defend his freedom towards them. He demonstrated to them as the weaker brothers that he can renounce certain things when he fellowships with them. He also did not take any **money** from them.

That he picks up these accusations in this letter and also in 2nd Corinthians shows how strong this mindset was. This is regarding his **commission** and **financial provision**, (1.Cor.9,8-10). He uses a parable of the field (the ox should not be kept from eating as he treads, Deut. 25,4) and also the **Mosaic law**, so that **every**

worker should receive his due wages. But Paul voluntarily renounced his payment in Corinth. He also mentions that the priest is due his wages (Deut 18,1-8 ff.; Numb. 18,8,31) and Paul surely is labouring as a priest without ceasing (1.Cor.9,13-18, 20-22; Mat.10,10).

Paul does not defend his rights as an apostle but rather shows the Corinthians „how he renounces his rights“ and how freedom looks like in real life and practically applied.

1.Cor.9,6 At this point Paul mentions Barnabas who had not been mentioned before in this letter, and he also admits the right to receive the provision of a priestly minister. Paul and Barnabas did not make use of this right, but the renunciation of it does not cancel their rightful claim. To renounce payment caused the apostles a double burden. Maybe there had been critics because Paul still worked as a tent maker. But Paul preached the gospel to them for free and proves to them that he is not bribeable.

The only thing that Paul asks of the Corinthians is their acknowledgement of his ministry among them and not to receive wages. As an apostle of Jesus (as messenger), he had brought great personal sacrifices, renounced many things and overcame himself and became everything he was not, which means that he adjusted to them and endured different religious extremes, to win the people for Christ as a missionary (1.Cor.9,20-23). Despite the massive opposition of the Jews against the gospel, he had not given up on the Jews (Act 9,23.29; 13,50; 14,2.5; 17,5; 18,12; 21,27.31; 23,12-15; 2 Cor 11,24.25). He circumcised Timothy because of the Jews, so that they would not reject him from the start (Act 16,3). He even performed some cleansing rituals in order to not offend the Jews (Acts 21,23 ff.). With his conversion, however, he had abandoned it as a tradition. In the Christian church there is no Jew or Greek (1 Cor 12,13; Gal 3,28), but only Christians (Rom 10,4).

1.Cor.9,24-27 Gives us the answer to the question why Paul is doing all that. He compares it to the Isthmic games, the athletic competitions, perhaps he even took the more important Ceasaric games (which took place 55 AD in Corinth) as an occasion for this argument.

He is not only the audience, but rather a competitor. He explains his renunciation by an illustration from sport. Every successful athlete renounces many pleasures in preparation of the competition and the victory (1.Cor.9,24-27). A strict discipline, self-control and perfect devotion are all requirements for success. Paul makes it clear: Without perfect concentration on the competition and abstinence it is not possible to win the victory (Phil.3,12-16). The Corinthians knew this and could relate to it. He also mentions „fist fights“ (boxing), and that you would have to be prepared to endure tough strokes (especially in the face).

CHAPTER 10

1.Cor.10,1-13 The Exodus story of the children of Israel is supposed to be a warning to the Corinthians. He is referring to the rich blessing of spiritual gifts that the Corinthians had received and to warn them of spiritual arrogance, superficiality and recklessness. Because at the same time their human weaknesses (such as self-praise, exaggerated confidence, despise of the weak, rejection of their father in the faith, immorality, etc.) manifested and became apparent. But the Corinthians believed and were convinced of themselves that their standing with God was solid. But Paul told them that despite of their baptism and participation in the Lord's supper, they could still be lost and have no warranty of salvation, if they do not live according to the will of God. This warning was earnest and serious. This is also established on the illustration of the early history of Israel. By the example of the disqualification of Moses (Deut. 4,21-22), and the rejection of the old generations of the Israelites (because of their pride, lamentation and rebellion), Paul also warns the Corinthians. The Israelites saw countless wonders in the desert, experienced God's blessings and miracles and yet had not understood, learned or reached their goal. All of the Israelites saw the divine signs (Ps 105,39), experienced God's power, His guidance and His supernatural provision (Exod. 16,4.15; 17,6), but only a small minority of them reached their goal (2 of 2 millions, Joshua and Caleb, Numb. 14,29-30), all others who left Egypt fell under the wrath of God and died in the desert, because they were not worthy of the promised land. The Corinthians were not supposed to follow these examples (1.Cor.10.6), but should rather take to heart the warning of the story of Israel, as it applies to their situation at the church. Paul deliberately uses examples from the Old Testament to reach the Jewish Christians of the church (Hebr.3 -4,10) and to prepare them to hear about showing oneself worthy of the communion supper (1.Cor.11,17-34). Christians should act different from their „fathers“ during the walk through the desert (Exod.17,6-15; Numb. 21,4-9; 14; Hebr.3,11,17), they should „stand firm“ in faith and turn away from God.

His **method to teach** the Corinthians is based on the strategy: „**perceive– judge – act**“, and he always tries to help the churches **to come to the correct conclusion by reflecting on the examples he gives** (1 Cor 10,14.31-11,1; 11,27.33), by encouraging them to think about it (1.Cor.10,19) and exhorting them to change their lifestyle. He speaks to them as understanding, mature people (1.Cor.10,15-16).

The blessed cup was the Jewish term for the **cup used for the pass over meal**, over which the father of the house spoke the blessing, and which was also passed down for communion supper with a word of blessing. Thus the Christian communion meal should encourage fellowship among the believers. **The Lord's supper** is a „meal of fellowship, thanksgiving and remembrance“ (Mt 26,26; Rom 12,5; 1. Cor 12,12; Eph 1,23; 4,4; 5,30; Col 1,18; 1,24; 3,15), to remember the death of Jesus (1 Cor 10,[1/]3-4; 10,16-22; 11,17-34). According to Mat.26,27 Jesus blessed the second **cup of the pass over ritual**, and as we can see in 1.Cor.10,16 this cup is referred to as **„the cup of praise“**. The **Lord's supper** continues the fellowship of the believers, the body of Christ.

1.Cor.10.20, these **demons** are angels who submit to Satan (Mk 3,22 ff; Eph 2,2), who are especially active during the Last Days (1.Tim 4,1; Rev.16,13 ff). These are **idols**, that try to bind believers, especially Gentile Christians (Deut. 32,17; 1. Sam 16,14; Ps 106,37; Lk 7,21; Eph 6,12; also Mt 10,1; 12,28; 12,43 ff.; Mk 1,23; 3,11; 5,8; 7,25; Lk 8,2;10,20). When someone **sacrifices to idols** (gives to them or provides or supports, etc.) that person is back in touch with **demonic spirits**, which Christians are actually supposed to **„flee from“**. This is something totally other than to eat **„meat offered to idols“** (1.Cor.8,4-6), which does not burden a Christian. It also has not influence on them, but the opposite is true of **„offering to idols“**. (1.Cor.10,14-22).

1.Cor.10,23-33 explains the freedom of Christians and how this is practically applied and put into action.

It is important to note what happens where and for which purpose.

- Is it a cultic meal after a pagan ceremony of sacrifice, which took place in a temple (1,Cor. 8,10; 10,14-21).
- is it a **meal in a private home**.
- is it a religious, collaborative meal at a cultic place that is not following a pagan, sacrificial ceremony.

The **meat** (regardless where it came from, whether something was spoken over it, whether it was sacrificed to idols or not) should be received and consumed with **thanksgiving** (1.Cor.10,30), because then the **meal is consecrated to the Lord**(Mark16,16-16). But by doing this the Christians should not cause **vexation** (1.Cor.10.32), or **cause someone to stumble**, (Rom.14,13,16).

CHAPTER 11

The following chapters 11 to 14 the modern man of today cannot easily understand. But it is surely interesting to **look into these chapters of the letter** because they reveal typical **church problems** and **service orders** of that time and give us insight into the life of the early church and their members.

1.Cor.11.2 It seems like a **new letter by Paul to the Corinthians starts here**. This chapter starts with a **praise of the Corinthians**, whereas based on the previous chapters he would not have reason for that, because they had doubted his apostolic authority, etc.

When we look at **The 1st Epistle to the Corinthians** and correctly analyse it, this should be a collection of at least **ten different letters** (independent chapters) that were put together (1 cor 6,1-11; 6,12-20; 8,1-13; 9,24-27; 10,1-17; 10,18-11,1; 11,2-22,23-26, 26-34; 16,22-24). Otherwise this **abrupt change of topic** would either be ironic or hypocritical by Paul.

1.Cor.11,2-16 The church should become mature and think for themselves. They should understand the divine **order of creation**. God is the head of Jesus, Christ is the head of man, the man is the head of the woman, etc.(1.Cor.11.3; Gen 1,26-28; 3,16). This refers to the **submission in the church**. The Old and New Testament **does not contain divine instruction** concerning the head covering of the woman. This was a tradition from **Rabbinic Judaism**, the Talmud and its interpretation, referring to Moses who covered himself with a veil. Therefore the **veil** was a „**Rabbinic solution**“. The Jews (men) had to cover themselves with the Tallith – **a prayer cloth** – to pray. This only referred to the men since women were not allowed to publically pray. After conversion, however, they should not cover their head (1.Cor.11,4) because Jesus is now one with them and their head. In addition man and woman were considered equal in the church (Gal 3,28) and the women also wanted to pray and prophesy, etc...

The Corinthian church was strongly influenced by **mysticism** and **superstition** (fear of consuming idol meat, the question about the baptism of the dead), and they also believed that **angels could not distinguish who is man or woman**, because angels are without sex. **Therefore the question concerning the veil was on behalf of the angels.** The Corinthians believed the **angels**, as the servants of God would be present in their service and they wanted to be mindful of good conduct. Paul exhorted the Christians to maintain their identities of their sexes, because as long as man lives the creation order between man and woman will be maintained.

In the NT, unlike the AT, **angels are no longer attending the service** because the **Holy Spirit** and **Jesus are now present**. Paul does not correct them in this aspect and recommends the Corinthian women to cover their head when they pray. **He exhorts the man**, contrary to Judaism, not to cover his head when he prays.

1.Cor.11.15, Paul says that God has already given **women hair as a veil**. But there were also „**shaven**“ **women in the church**, which refers to **former prostitutes**, who had no hair for covering. For those **he recommends** to cover their head with a veil, especially when such a woman prayed or prophesied, to save her public shame, discrimination or despise.

That Paul recommended **a veil for women especially for the Corinthian church** is also because there were many former **followers of mystical religions** who wore their hair particularly long and loose. For both groups of women the veil was a simple solution.

Paul allowed that women **would pray and prophecy in the church and in the service** (1.Cor.11,5; 14,33-35), and then he forbids them to talk, shout or ask their men questions when they had not understood and to wait until they can ask him at home. Paul **forbids** that a woman „**teach**“ the church, which means that she should not lead the church as a bishop etc (1.Tim.2,11-14). The **difference between teaching and prophecy**: Prophecy is based on spontaneous inspiration and revelation, the preaching / teaching is based on the intelligible interpretation of the Word of God.

According to the law of the Old Testament women were excluded from the **priestly service** at the temple, This ministry was exclusively set apart for the descendants of **Aaron** (Exod. 28-29). Even though women were allowed in the temple, synagoge and the church and also had numerous opportunities to participate, they never **functioned as a leader**. Paul does not **compromise on this matter** (1 Cor 14,38). A woman is allowed to do all things in the church, **except to be the overseer and leader**. She may preach the gospel and has no disadvantage with regard to salvation, etc. Paul argues his point of view based on the **order of creation**, (Gen. 2,4). It has something to do with the **firstborn right**. There is a creation order between man and woman that is not overruled or suspended by **salvation order**. Just like **men** cannot conceive children a woman should also not **become the leader of the church**. The NT did not **teach the way of Judaism**, where a woman was not even allowed to study the Thora, nor the **way of Paganism** where they had priestesses. The Gospel provides a **new freedom for the woman**, as she fully participates in the salvation of God and offers many opportunities to minister at the church, without putting the heavy burden of church leadership on her, as this is the privilege of men.

In the NT **women serve Jesus and His church**, they walk with him, serve Him (Mt. 27,55; Mk. 15,41) and also use their own possessions to support the church (Lk. 8,3). In Rom. 16,3-12 at least six women of the church in Rome and their ministry is mentioned by name: Phoebe, Priscilla, Maria, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, and perhaps Junia.). **Women** pray: Acts 16,13f , **women** prophesy(29): 1.Cor. 11,5; Acts. 21,9. **Women** teach women and children (Tit. 2,3-5; 2.Tim. 1,5.3,14f). **Women** help to correctly preach the word: Act. 18,24-28. **Women** support the service of their men,(1.Tim. 3,1-13 and Tit. 1,6-9). **Women** travel with their husbands on mission journeys(1.Cor. 9,5).

God is a God of order, and that also applies to His church. God is the head of Jesus, Jesus is the head of the man, the man is the head of woman (1.Cor. 11,3). That means **each Christian**, whether man or woman, has to submit, and not superordinate.

At the same time man and woman are equal before God and in Christ (Gal. 3,28; 1.Petr. 3,7; 1.Cor.12,12, 22-26). The office of the overseer of the church is the only office that God reserves for men only because **the church** is still a mysterious, earthly project of God (Rom16.25-26) and **not yet** perfected , (Eph.5.21-25; 1.Petr.5,1-3; Col.3.18-25). Woman has to learn how to „**submit**“, because the sinfall had to do with rebellion and **by-passing the man**.

1.Cor.11.17-34 Thoughts about the Lord's supper“(communion). In the previous texts Paul talked about the consumption of **meat sacrificed to idols** and told the Corinthians how to deal with this issue. Now he comes to talk about the **sacrifice of Jesus** and the **meals of the Christians** and its form and meaning. The **„Lord's supper“** in Corinth **was a typical meal according to the Qumram meal tradition**. Similar to the **feedings with Jesus** which we can see in the Gospels, they took the bread, gave thanks and shared it (Matt.14,19-20; Joh.6,11; 21,13; Act.27,35).

The Lord's supper is exclusively to maintain the unity of the church. When they share communion they are all the same. All were purchased at the same price, the blood of Jesus. All receive a piece of Jesus, the bread of life, and become one with Him and the church, His people (1.Cor.10,17). The **Lord's supper** or communion, is not a regular meal, but a command of Jesus (Mark.14,24-25). **The pass over meal and communion** are not the same. **Pass over** only reminded the Israelites of their exodus from Egypt and has nothing to do with our redemption or our history. The **Lord's supper** has not spiritual connection or reference with the pass over meal, because it was celebrated every day and all through the year, and not just once a year (Act.2.2;1.Cor.11,26).

The **Lord's supper** reminds us of the **redemptive work of Jesus at Golgotha**, the most radical revelation of the love of God toward us. No pious Jew would consider celebrating communion. To refrain from communion is to refrain from Jesus (Joh.6,51-56). When we **break bread together** we encounter and become aware of the risen Jesus, who lives on the **inside of the believer** (Luk.24,35-38). The Lord's supper is something for the soul (**nourishment for our souls, the meal of faith**), and a secret of the kingdom of God, a realization of Jesus. With each supper we are filled with Jesus. Therefore it is more than just a regular, selfish **meal at the church** (1.Cor.11.20-22).

The other meal to be shared at the church is the **Agape meal**, a love meal at the church where everybody brings something and the meals are shared and fellowship is promoted. But especially this **meal at the assembly** caused division and discord. But already in the early church this meal caused trouble (Act.6,1).

1.Cor.11,26 The Lord's supper is the confession of salvation, the church members announce their devotion to Jesus and His death on the cross for our salvation, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks (1.Cor.1,23,24). Communion supper should be **„sanctification“** for the church (1.Cor.11,29-33). Before eating this meal each person should **examine themselves**, how their own standing with God and the church (the brothers and church leadership) is. When the relationship with God or other members at the church is not right, then the meal is consumed unworthily, and this person **drawing God's judgment on himself** (1.Cor.11,27-30; Numb. 5,11-31 where the holy water was supposed to reveal the truth). The body of Jesus is the whole **assembled church** and the meal is consumed there in love, unity and reverence.

CHAPTER 12

This chapter discusses the questions **„who has the Spirit and which gifts does the Spirit distribute“**, it deals with the charismas at the church in detail (1.Cor.12,1-14,40). A sober, solid teaching was necessary here, otherwise this church would have been led astray. The believer must have a sure understanding or knowledge of things, otherwise he can be tempted and confused easily. **Lack of knowledge concerning the spiritual gifts opens the doors for other spirits.**

There are **different gifts of the spirit** (charisma) in the church but they all come from the Spirit of God. Through baptism all Christians are members of the body of Christ. No member of the body can exist alone, so that also no spiritual gift can exalt itself above the others. Each has their own gifts of grace and function in the church (1Cor.12,1-31).

The **highest and most superior of all is love** (1Cor.13,1-13). It also remains after all the partial works are gone (1.Cor.13,13)

After the doxology of love Paul explains the relation between speaking in tongues (glossalia) and prophecy (1Cor.14,1-40). **Speaking in tongues** primarily serves your own self-edification, unless it is interpreted. **Prophecy serves for the edification of the church**. Therefore this is to be preferred. **In the church gatherings** speaking in tongues should only be allowed when it is interpreted.

1.Cor.12,1-3 Foundations concerning the work of the Holy Spirit. The gifts of grace and their offices are always submitted to a ministry (1.Cor.14,32). Therefore the **apostles** serve on the first, **and the ones speaking in tongues** on the last place of the church hierarchy. Everything that is done or said **through the spirit** is a work of the **Holy Spirit**. The Corinthians do not have **authority over the Holy Spirit**.

Previously they only served silent idols and a dead religion (1.Cor.12.2). But no the Holy Spirit speaks and manifests Himself through them and to them.

Through the Holy Spirit they can call **Jesus „Lord“** (1.Cor.12.3), a **title** that is worthy of God. Nobody can say: **'Jesus is Lord!'** if not through the Holy Spirit.

Whosoever speaks **inspired by the HS** will not curse Jesus, mock Him or work against Him (Mat.12,28-30; Mark. 9,38-40), **because the HS glorifies Jesus**, (Joh.16,14). Paul wants to encourage the Corinthians in their new faith, as they had been confronted with a multitude of cults (especially pagan mysticism) and certain religious practices, **which kept them insecure**. The **cursing of Jesus** is also a characteristic of someone who does not talk or walk in the spirit of God and faith (Rom.14,23) or in the name of Jesus (Mark.16,17,18), and God / Jesus will also not **acknowledge them** (Mark.16,20) and bless them. **Today nobody can curse Jesus anymore** (neither the Jews, the religious, the anti-Christ nor the demons) because **God has lifted Him up** and has given Him a name above all names (Phil.2,9-10).

1.Cor.12.4-10 The Christian life (especially in the New Testament) **consists of a multitude** of spiritual works, services, powers and gifts that are administered by the **Holy Spirit** and are maintained by God, Whose reality can be seen and experienced by the **fruit of the Holy Spirit** (Gal.5,22).

The tri-une God Himself coordinates the distribution of the gifts, and equips every person individually for ministry through grace and into unity and harmony of the body of Christ. He makes everyone to be useful and does not inspire competition. The model for this concept was the **church at Jerusalem** (Act.2,42-47), where each contributed something to the fellowship and lived worthy of God's calling on their life. All gifts that were given through the Holy Spirit serve the **edification of the church**, (1.Cor.12,8). The **diversity of gifts** is bound together to a unity of service / ministry (1.Cor.12,11).

The works and grace gifts of the Holy Spirit are not deserved but they are distributed freely as gifts to the believers (Rom 12,3; Eph 4,7). This **excludes any reason** to be conceited or arrogant. **As different as the spiritual gifts** may be, they are yet worked by the same Spirit to everyone. The **value of a grace gift** can be measured by its usefulness to maintain the unity and to edify the church (1.Cor.12,12,13; 1. Cor 11,3; Eph 1,22; 4,15; 5,23; Col 1,18). Only God Himself can create a present, real unity that removes all human division within the fellowship of the church. The **preaching of the gospel** is for the **foundation** and the **gifts of the spirit** etc. are for the **growth**, respectively edification of the church and for the increase of faith. Only through the work of the Holy Spirit the believers were able to **accept and bear with one another**, as well as being united as members of the body of Christ and complementing each other and **working together**. (Gal 3,28; Gal 5,22). **Unity does not exclude uniqueness**, (1.Cor.12.14-18). The **image of the human body** points to the functions of the gifts and ministry of each member, and it also points out that all members and their gifts **belong together within the church** and have their God-appointed place (1.Cor.12,19-23).

Paul wants to stop the Corinthians' **arguments about „honor“ and conceit**. „Who was taught by the teacher with the highest authority?“ (1.Cor.1,10 ff.), „Who had greater wisdom?“ (1.Cor.. 2), „Who had greater power?“ (1,Cor. 4), „Who had greater tolerance?“ (1.Cor. 5), or „the greater freedom?“ (1.Cor.6) Who made „the greatest sacrifice?“ (1.Cor. 7) or „had the greatest gift?“ (1.Kor. 14). Paul emphasizes that God does his work especially among the weak.

1.Cor.12.26-31 Jesus works in all of His body. The **church of Jesus** is not only „body“ or „like a body“ but it is the **"body of Christ"**. The **single members**, just like the body, all the members are inspired by **the head** to do their tasks / assignments in a harmonious and loving manner (1.Cor.12,29-31).

CHAPTER 13

1.Cor.13 The "better way" (the way that is superior, or the gift that is superior) for the practice of the grace gifts **is LOVE**. This love chapter in 1st Corinthians forms the heart piece of the letter. Paul describes the love of God and His changing power in our lives. The person who has this love can believe in all things (such as the salvation of a person), never ceases to hope, bears all things and is long-suffering. Love knows how to adjust (1. Cor 9,19–22).

A believer may speak with the tongue of man or angels. When Paul refers to the **tongue of angels** he is not necessarily referring to a foreign or alien language (tongues), but he is rather referring to the characteristic of angel's speech (especially devout or religious) to appear as if one is very familiar with the heavenly world and its secrets. Paul is referring to **pretended and shammed holiness, spirituality, humility and love**. (2.Cor.11,13-15; Mat.6,16; Pro.26,24). Without love all piety, all gifts and ministries, all knowledge and revelation are only primitive, shallow and without value.

1.Cor.13,4-13 Paul mentions **fifteen, characteristic marks** of Christian love and shows the Corinthians that **the essence of love** is in their deeds. He even **personifies love** and accredits to her certain character traits, what she does and does not do. Such as **Love is not self-seeking**, such as the strong in Corinth, who just lived according to their own understanding of freedom without consideration of their weaker brothers.

Paul does not count **love among the grace gifts**, but if the grace gifts should have any value for eternity they must be exercised in love.

CHAPTER 14

After the apostle showed the Corinthians the "**better way**", to exercise their grace gifts, he continues by referring to 1.Cor.12,31 and deals with the ministry of the **Christian prophets**.

The **prophetic function** should generally be **public** and the ministry of prophecy should be integrated in the church and serve to **encourage and edify the body**.

Paul places prophecy, pronouncing or announcing the Word of God, before or higher than the **gift of tongues** (glossalia, language of prayer). This does not refer to predict the future, but rather to **proclaim** the will and message of God.

Prayer in „tongues“ (ecstatic speech in an unknown language, glossalia) is not for other people (1Cor14,2), because **nobody understands**. The **praying in tongues** is intercession through the spirit **who prays without understanding of the natural mind**. It is only for God, worship, praise and the **individual edification** of the one who prays 1.Cor.14.4).

When I pray in tongues, it is **my spirit** (the Spirit of God that works on the inside) that prays, my mind (understanding) remains without fruit, which means my mind is not participating, is not involved (1.Cor.14,14). God wants to work on the whole man, soul, spirit and body. Therefore the **person who prays or speaks in tongues** is not the **one who is perfect, as the Corinthians thought**, because God is only at work in part of that person. This was a clear **rebuke** concerning the overestimation of that gift.

1.Cor.14.3 The spiritual gift of „prophecy“ is for the people, it is a spirit-operated and spirit-filled proclamation, comparable to the OT prophet's proclamation. It is a God-inspired **rhema-word**, the right and fitting word, in the right moment for a certain person and their particular situation, and it is a **proclamation suggesting certain action** (Lk 3,18; Act 2,40; 14,22; Rom 12,1; 15,30; 16,17; Eph 4,1; 1. Thess 3,2; 2. Thess 2,17; 1. Tim 2,1; 5,1; 6,2; Tit 1,9; 1. Petr 5,1; Hebr 3,13). It can also be **a word of comfort or encouragement** in times of affliction (Act 20,12; Rom 1,12; 2. Cor 13,11; 1. Thess 2,11; 5,14). Therefore, **who prophesies** is greater (resp. His ministry is **more valuable or usefull** for the building up of the church) than he who only prays in tongues. The main reason for the higher estimation of that gift is its usefulness for the church. The church is not **edified** by the praying in tongues, but by the Spirit-given and clear, understandable and accurate **word „of revelation“, of „knowledge“ and of „teaching“**. (1.Cor.14,6-19). For better understanding Paul uses the parable of music instruments to illustrate what he means. **Firstly, the notes must be right, second the notes must be clear** and audible, so that the melody can be known, understood and serve as a signal for certain action. If **somebody speaks in tongues at a public gathering / service** it should also be interpreted (1.Cor.14,13).

Therefore Paul requires a strict division of **public gatherings** (1.Kor.12,2-3) and spiritual manifestations such as speaking in tongues. The public service is for the general **building up of the church** and to **presence of God**.

Singing praise in „tongues“ could be done privately as well as **during the service** and must not be interpreted. It is subject to the **will** of the spirit-filled Christian (1.Cor.14,15).

The **building up / edification of the church** is the main goal and all contributions, gifts and offices must serve this aim.

Paul uses the quote from **Is.28,11-12** to conclude that speaking in (different) tongues is a **"sign" for the unbelievers** (the non-Christians, others) because they do not understand the speech and works of God. They would say they have lost their minds (1.Cor.14,21-23), and thus speaking in tongues would rather have a **repulsive effect on the visitors at the service**. Therefore one should not perform these signs and cast the pearls before the swine (Mat.7.6). Both, glossalia and prophecy were referred to as **„signs“**, which means they were **indicators pointing to God**.

In addition the church was also not **subject to prophecy**. There were **orders / rules** (not more than two or three witnesses) and the **duty to test (1.Kor.14.29-31; 12.10), whether that which was said is in accordance with scripture and the words and teachings of the apostles** (Act 17,11; Rom 12,2; Eph 5,10; 1. Thess 5,21; 1. Joh 4,1). Since prophecy and revelation during the service were spontaneous contributions during the service, there had to be certain instructions (1.Cor.14.30-31).

The **prophetic spirit** and the work of the Spirit is subject to the one who has the gift (1.Cor.14.32). And it **is not a sin** if a message is not delivered. In the contrary it is a sign of **humility and spiritual maturity** to be able to keep silent. In addition **the church is not a forum to present and glorify yourself**, but rather a place where God should be honored and the people should be built up in their faith (1.Cor.14.33; Rom 14,19; 15,33; 1. Cor 7,15; 1. Thess 5,23).

1.Cor.14,34-40 This is concerning the service order for the public assemblies, and women were not supposed to **speak** during the service (literally **chatter /** or asking their husbands when they did not understand) to **not disturb the service and to keep quiet**. The place this order is referring to is **the place of assembly** (1.Cor.14.34-35).

As Paul had already explained in 1.Cor. 11,5 that women are allowed to **pray and prophecy** during the service, Paul did not forbid such speaking, they were commended to cover **their head** as a sign of their **„submission“**. During **the whole discussion** concerning **women, the veil, glossalia, prophecy** and the use of gifts, etc Paul is only giving **orders for service / the public assemblies** (1.Cor.14.40)

CHAPTER 15

At first Paul had to deal with the **„carnality“** and then he explains things to the Corinthians that seemed important to them.

Paul changes subject **from „carnality“ to „spirituality“**, and speaks about the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is a great thing, that God would give us a gift of His Spirit. And finally Paul continues to describe the **main aspect of love, the results** of the Spirit / the fruit of the Spirit. He says that through the gift of His spirits and the fruits of His spirit He wants to reach and produce fruit in every believer.

In Chapter 15 Paul touches on a third, huge, spiritual aspect and event, which is the resurrection of Jesus Christ and our own resurrection. Paul **starts** his letter with the message of the cross (1.Cor.1,23; Act 17,31-32) and closes with the message of the resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the **seal of God** for the obedience of the Son on the cross. **Death, the grave and resurrection of Jesus** are summarized into one sentence as a confession (1.Cor.15.4), and are an important part of the biblical (Is 53,4-12; Jona 2,1; Hos 6,2) story of salvation.

Since the resurrection of the dead was **a controversial topic for some of the Corinthians** (1.Cor.15.12), he mentions a number of **witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ** and encourages the Corinthians to **test the accuracy of that**. He also refers to himself as a witness (1Cor.15,1-11 Act.9,1-9). Therefore the resurrection of Jesus is **a historical event, which is attested by many witnesses** (Deut19,15; Numb. 35,30; Is. 8,2; Mt 18,16; Joh 8,17).

The resurrection is the **foundation** of the Christian faith. **Since Christ resurrected**, all who believe in him will also be made alive again. In this context the apostle announces some kind of **apocalyptic outline**. The **procedure of the resurrection** is compared to the **seed and the sprout of the seed** (1Cor.15,12-58).

The **resurrection of Christ** (He is the „prototype“) and the resurrection of the dead are inseparable. If the testimony of the **resurrection of Christ** is denied, misinterpreted or changed, then this has broad, destructive consequences. A gospel without confession of **the resurrection** would only be useless talk, that causes the Christian faith to collapse (1.Cor.15,17-19). To believe in resurrection is not so much about faith in life after death, but rather to be mindful of the present actions which should be influenced by that faith.

Through **the resurrection of Jesus** the new creation of God was introduced into a dying world of depravity (Act 26,23; Col 1,18; Rev 1,5; Rom 8,29). He was the „**first fruit of the dead**“ (1.Cor.15.20; comp.Lev 23,9-14 a. o.) The **term "first fruit"** refers the transfer of the first yield of the new harvest to the Godhead. Christ is the **first fruit of the dead**, (1.Cor.15,23-24), and at the end of all days all powers, at last also death, will be subdued and brought to **submission unto God** (Ps.8,7; 110,1; 1.Cor.15,28; Rev 21,2ff.; 22,5).

1.Cor.15,29 To be „baptized on behalf of the dead“. To be baptized on behalf of the dead meant to die as a martyr. Jesus also understood **His suffering and death as baptism** (Lk 12,50; Mt 20, 22ff.). For the Christians at Corinth this meant to give their life for Christ, such as Stephen, James, etc.) **If there was no resurrection from the dead**, martyrdom would be a foolish and light-hearted attempt. Paul is pointing to the resurrection, therefore he is not referring to a symbolic or substitutional baptism here. For better understanding he asked „**why are we in danger every hour**“ (1.Cor.15,30; 4,9). The „baptism on behalf of the dead“, **the threat of the death of the martyr** was always on his mind (1.Cor.15.32; 2 Cor 1,8; 11,23-29; Acts 19.10; 20,31; 22,25-29).

1.Cor.15,35-53 Paul describes the procedure of the resurrection. The earthly body becomes a spiritual body, just like a caterpillar – cocoon turns into a butterfly. There are different steps and phases of transformation. The **carnal man**, becomes heavenly, spiritual, a new creation and receptive for the Divine as soon as he starts to believe in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

CHAPTER 16

1Cor 16,1-24 This is about the collection for the church of Jerusalem, recommendations and greetings. The Christians in Judea had gotten into great economic / financial need, **partly due to the persecution that Paul had ordered back in the days**, which is why it was his heart's desire to remember the poor. It was also a **sign of unity** between the Jewish and Gentile Christians to follow the **request of the Apostolic Council**, to provide for the poor (Rom.15,26-28; Gal.2,10; 2.Cor.8-9; Act.24,17; 11,29-30).

Then the apostle tells the Corinthians about his travel plans (1.Cor,16,4-9).

Where God **works** the adversary, Satan, also is at work to cause people to argue against the gospel and its messengers. And this is how it also happened at Ephesus (Act 19,23 ff.).

Then he addresses them with some recommendations. They were supposed to treat **Timothy** good and receive him with hospitality (1.Cor.16.10 -11) because his nature was timid and sickly (1.Tim 5,23; 2. Tim 1,6ff.; 2,1).

Apollos did not want to travel to Corinth (1.Cor.16.12).

1.Cor.16,13-24 Final exhortation and greetings.

- **„Be watchful“** - a Christian is not going to reach his goal when he is not watchful (Mt 24,42ff.; 26,38-41; Mk 13,34ff.; Lk 12,37; 21,36; Eph 5,14; 6,18; 1. Thess 5,6; Rev 3,2ff.; 16,15).
- **Let all that you do be done in love.**
- **Submit to one another** (1.Cor.16.15,16). Lack of **submission** was a problem at the Corinthian church.
- Give recognition to certain people (1.Cor.16,17).
- **Without the love of God** the kingdom of God cannot advance (1.Cor.16,18,19)

1.Cor.16.20 The holy kiss, was primarily a symbol of love, forgiveness and unity that was supposed to be among the Christians (Rom 16,16; 1. Thess 5,26; 1. Petr 5,14). As such this was linked to the communion supper and the breaking of bread. It was an expression of a domestic bond that unites the believers.

Test questions

- 01 Did the apostle Paul write the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians himself?
- 02 How many circular letters does 1st Corinthians consist of?
- 03 What is the message of 1st Corinthians?
- 04 What is the essence of Christian life?
- 05 Why does Paul recommend women to wear a veil and when should they wear it?
- 06 What are women not allowed to do in the service and why?
- 06 What is the central message of the gospel according to Paul's understanding?
- 07 Why does an immature Christian not need more solid spiritual food?
- 08 Why should we be considerate of the weak?
- 09 Why were there so many spiritual problems in the Corinthian church?
- 10 Is the communion meal and pass over meal the same? Explain why.
- 11 What does „a better way“ refer to in this epistle?
- 12 What is the difference between speaking in tongues and prophecy?
- 13 Why is prophecy more important in the church?
- 14 Why is speaking in tongues a sign to unbelievers?
- 15 What is the „baptism for the dead“?
- 16 Why did Apollos not want to go to Corinth?
- 17 Why is Paul collecting intensively for the poor in Judea?
- 18 What is the body of the Lord?
- 19 Which people (list the names) are namely mentioned in 1st Corinthians?
- 20 Why should women not lead (pastor) a church?
- 21 How long did Paul stay in Corinth?
- 22 What were the problems of the Corinthians? (name them)
- 23 How does Paul solve their problems?

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