

The Book of 1 Corinthians

Part One: The Seven Corruptions Committed by the Corinthian Church (1 Corinthians 1-6).

Introduction (1:1-9).

I. FIRST CORRUPTION. THEY WERE FOLLOWING HUMAN LEADERS (1:10-17).

- A. The leaders involved (1:12).
- B. The lunacy involved (1:13, 17).

II. SECOND CORRUPTION. THEY WERE FAVORING EARTHLY WISDOM (1:18--2:13).

In verses 1:18-31 Paul contrasts false worldly wisdom (which the Corinthians so highly prized but did not themselves have (1:26) with true godly wisdom which centers on the Cross of Christ.

- A. The reaction to God's wisdom.
 - 1. "It is the program of a fool" (the conclusion of the unsaved) (1:18a).
 - 2. "It is the power of God" (the conclusion of the saved) (1:18b).
- B. The results of God's wisdom.
 - 1. To the Jews, who demanded signs, it was a stumbling block (1:22-23).
 - 2. To the Greeks, who demanded earthly wisdom, it was senseless (1:22-23).
 - 3. To all believers, who demanded nothing, it is sanctification (1:30).
- C. The reasons for God's wisdom (1:27-29).
- D. The review of God's wisdom (2:1-13). In these verses Paul reviews his past visit to their city during which time he established the church at Corinth. He reminds them:
 - 1. That the message of the Cross is not of this world (2:1-6).
 - 2. That the message of the Cross had been ordained before the world (2:7).
 - 3. That the message of the Cross is reserved for the heirs of this world (2:9-13).
 - a. This inheritance is concealed to unbelievers (2:9).
 - b. This inheritance is revealed to believers (2:10).

III. THIRD CORRUPTION. THEY WERE FLOUNDERING IN THE FLESH (2:14--3:7).

In these remarkable verses Paul divides all men into three spiritual categories:

- A. The corpse (the natural man) (2:14), controlled by Satan.
- B. The crybaby (the carnal man) (3:1-4), controlled by the flesh.
- C. The conqueror (the spiritual man) (2:15-16), controlled by the Spirit.

IV. FOURTH CORRUPTION. THEY WERE FORGETTING FUTURE JUDGMENT (3:8-23).

- A. The meaning of this judgment. This is the same judgment mentioned by Paul in two other passages (Rom. 14:10b; 2 Cor. 5:10a).
- B. The individuals in this judgment. Only believers will be included (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10).
- C. The purpose of this judgment. It is to determine the quality of our service for Christ from the moment of our salvation until our death or the rapture (3:13-15).
- D. The materials to be tested in this judgment (3:10-12).
- E. The method of testing at this judgment (3:13).
- F. The results of this judgment (3:14-15).
- G. The admonition in light of this judgment (3:16-17, 21, 23).

V. FIFTH CORRUPTION. THEY WERE FLATTERING THEMSELVES (4:1-21).

- A. Their twofold problem.
 - 1. They were underestimating the abilities of others (4:6).
 - 2. They were overestimating their own abilities (4:7-8).
- B. Paul's threefold solution.
 - 1. He offers a prophetic reminder--the judgment seat of Christ--at which time the Lord would deal with them (4:1-6).
 - 2. He announces a planned visit--at which time he would deal with them (4:18-21).
 - 3. He alludes to a personal example--his own sufferings for Christ (4:8-17).
 - a. The facts of his sufferings (4:9, 11-13).
 - b. The (hoped for) fruits from his sufferings (4:14-17).

VI. SIXTH CORRUPTION. THEY WERE FALLING TO DISCIPLINE (5:1-13).

- A. The need for discipline (5:1).
- B. The breakdown in discipline (5:2).
- C. The authority to discipline (5:4).

- D. The seriousness of discipline (5:5).
- E. The reason for discipline (5:6).
- F. The extent of discipline (5:9-13). Church discipline is to be limited to church members.
- G. The procedure in discipline. (See Mt. 18:15-17.)
- H. The results of discipline. In this case, it worked. (See 2 Cor. 2:6-8.)

VII. SEVENTH CORRUPTION. THEY WERE FRAGMENTING THE BODY OF CHRIST (6:1-20).

The Corinthians had been unjustly taking fellow believers to court in legal matters.

- A. This action was improper (6:1-7).
 - 1. Because of who they were judging--namely, fellow believers (6:1).
 - 2. Because of who they someday would judge--namely, this world, and fallen angels (6:2-3).
- B. This action was illegal (6:7-8).
- C. This action was inconsistent (6:9-11). They had apparently conveniently forgotten their own terrible past prior to their salvation.
- D. This action was intemperate (6:12-14).
- E. This action was immoral (6:15-20).
 - 1. Because our bodies are the members of the Savior (6:15).
 - 2. Because our bodies are the temples of the Spirit (6:19-20).

Part Two: The Six Questions Submitted by the Corinthian Church (1 Corinthians 7-16)

I. QUESTION NUMBER ONE: WHAT ABOUT MARRIAGE? (ch. 7).

- A. The two problems connected with this chapter.
 - 1. Did Paul consider marriage to be unproductive?
 - a. The fiction: That Paul thought lightly of marriage (7:32-33).
 - b. The facts: This error Paul himself amply refutes.
 - (1) Refuted by his other writings. (See Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Tim. 3:2; 4:1-5; 5:14; Titus 1:6; 2:4-5; Heb. 13:4.)
 - (2) Refuted by his comments in this same chapter (7:2, 8-9, 27-28).
The "present distress" phrase in verse 26 is thought to be a reference to a particular kind of persecution the Corinthian believers were suffering at that time in history.
 - 2. Did Paul consider his writings to be uninspired?
 - a. The fiction: That Paul admitted his thoughts on marriage to be uninspired (7:6, 12, 25, 40).
 - b. The facts:
 - (1) The word "permission" is literally "a joint opinion" and may refer to the inspired, considered opinion of both Paul and Sosthenes. At any rate, Paul was simply saying that this opinion was not a command but rather a divine suggestion. (For a comparable passage, see Rom. 12:1.)
 - (2) Verse 12 can be explained by comparing it with verse 10. In verse 10, Paul quotes a command uttered by the Lord Jesus himself while he was upon the earth (see Mt. 19:6). But here is a group situation (one partner saved, one unsaved) to whom Jesus issued no command while on earth, but now does so in heaven through Paul's inspired pen.
 - (3) The same answer given for verse 12 also applies here in verse 26.
 - (4) The word "think" here could be translated "persuaded" (1 Cor. 7:40). (See Mt. 22:42; 1 Cor. 8:2 where the same Greek word is used. See also Paul's statements in 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Cor. 2:4.)
- B. The five persons considered in this chapter.
 - 1. Singles (7:1).
 - 2. Christian couples (7:2-7, 10-11).
 - a. Rules for the husband.
 - (1) He is to remain with his wife (7:11).
 - (2) He is to render his love to his wife (7:3).
 - (3) He is to render his body to his wife (7:4).
 - b. Rules for the wife.
 - (1) She is to remain with her husband (7:10).
 - (2) She is to remain his wife even if separation becomes necessary (7:11).
 - (3) She is to attempt reconciliation after the separation (7:11).
 - (4) She is to render her love to her husband (7:3).
 - (5) She is to render her body to her husband (7:4).
 - c. Rules for both (7:5).
 - 3. Unmarried and widows (7:7-9, 39-40).
 - a. The unmarried.

- (1) Find God's will for yourself and do it (7:7).
 - (2) It is better to marry than to burn with lust (7:9).
 - b. The widows (7:39).
- 4. Mixed couples (7:12-16). The saved partner is to remain with the unsaved spouse if at all possible. Two reasons are given for this:
 - a. Because of the sanctity of marriage itself (7:14).
 - b. Because of the sanctification of the lost partner (7:14). The Holy Spirit can more easily work in the heart of an unsaved spouse if the other partner is a believer.
- 5. The father (or guardian) of a young virgin (7:36-38).
 - a. He may feel it best for her marriage to be performed (7:36).
 - b. He may feel it best for her marriage to be prevented or postponed (7:37).

II. QUESTION NUMBER TWO: WHAT ABOUT CHRISTIAN LIBERTY? (ch. 8-10).

Can a Christian do any lawful thing he or she desires to do? Paul answers this in these chapters by employing three examples.

- A. A current example: the Corinthian believers (ch. 8).
 - 1. The confusion. Should a Christian eat meat that had previously been sacrificed to pagan idols? (8:1).
 - 2. The clarification (8:8).
 - 3. The conclusion (8:7, 13).
 - 4. The challenge.
 - a. Avoid becoming a stumbling stone (8:9, 11-12).
 - b. Attempt becoming a stepping stone (8:1).
- B. A personal example: the Apostle Paul (ch. 9). Here Paul points out that no one had more right to exercise Christian liberty than he did.
 - 1. The basis of his rights (9:1).
 - 2. The extent of his rights.
 - a. To enjoy food (9:4).
 - b. To enjoy family life (9:5).
 - c. To enjoy financial support (9:7, 9, 14).
 - (1) A soldier is paid, and he was Christ's warrior (9:7).
 - (2) A husbandman enjoys the fruit from his field, and he had planted many vineyards (9:7).
 - (3) A shepherd drinks of the milk of his flock, and he had nurtured many lambs (9:7).
 - (4) A priest lives off the Temple gifts, and he was God's minister to the Gentiles (9:13-14).
 - 3. The employment of his rights.
 - a. The what of the matter (9:18).
 - b. The who of the matter.
 - (1) Concerning the Jew: "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew" (9:20). This he did, however, without being legalistic.
 - (2) Concerning the Gentiles: "To them that are without law, as without law" (9:21). This he did, however, without being lawless.
 - (3) Concerning the weak: "To the weak became I as weak" (9:22). This he did, however, without being spineless.
 - c. The why of the matter. Paul explains the reasons for using his Christian rights sparingly (9:12, 19, 22).
 - d. The how of the matter (9:26-27).
- C. An Old Testament example: the nation Israel (ch. 10). Paul here records what happened to Old Testament Israel when that nation abused its liberty and blessings from God.
 - 1. The narration (10:1-10).
 - a. The review of this freedom (10:1-4).
 - b. The rebellion against this freedom (10:6-10).
 - (1) They were guilty of idolatry (10:7).
 - (2) They were guilty of immorality (10:8).
 - (3) They were guilty of insubordination (10:9-10).
 - c. The removal of this freedom (10:5).
 - (1) Their idolatry was punished by the sword. (See Ex. 32:26-28.)
 - (2) Their immorality was punished by a scourge. (See Num. 25:6-9.)
 - (3) Their insubordination was punished by serpents. (See Num. 21:5-6.)
 - 2. The application (10:11-13).
 - a. This was recorded to admonish us concerning our fickleness (10:12).
 - b. This was recorded to assure us concerning God's faithfulness (10:13).
 - 3. The summation (10:14-33). Paul summarizes this entire section on Christian liberty by the following statements:
 - a. What our actions should be.

- (1) Beware, lest our conduct among unbelievers be compromised (10:14-22).
- (2) Beware, lest our conscience among believers be compromised (10:25-29).
- b. What our attitude should be (10:31-32; 8:10).

III. QUESTION NUMBER THREE: WHAT ABOUT CHURCH CONDUCT? (ch. 11).

- A. Rules concerning clothing (11:1-16).
 - 1. The man's appearance.
 - a. His head was to be uncovered (11:4).
 - (1) Demonstrating his relationship to his Savior (11:3).
 - (2) Demonstrating his relationship to his spouse (11:3, 7).
 - b. His hair was to be cut (11:14). This demonstrated his relationship to society.
 - 2. The woman's appearance.
 - a. Her head was to be covered (11:5, 10, 15).
 - (1) Demonstrating her submission to her husband (11:10).
 - (2) Demonstrating her spirituality to the angels (11:10).
 - b. Her hair was not to be cut (11:5-6, 15). This demonstrated her standards to the world. In those days only female slaves and harlots wore short hair.
- B. Rules concerning communion (11:17-34).
 - 1. The person of communion. The Lord Jesus Christ. The table of the Lord is to magnify the Lord of the table (11:23).
 - 2. The perversion of communion.
 - a. The Corinthian error (11:18, 20-21).
 - b. The current errors.
 - (1) That the bread and cup are sacraments--this is refuted by 11:24.
 - (2) That the bread and cup are changed to flesh and blood--this is refuted by 11:28 where they remain the same.
 - 3. The purpose of communion.
 - a. It serves as a backward look to the Cross (11:26).
 - b. It serves as an inward look to the conscience (11:28).
 - c. It serves as a forward look to the crown (11:26).
 - 4. The partakers of communion (Mt. 26:26-30).
 - a. Generally speaking--all believers, but only believers.
 - b. Specifically speaking--two groups are forbidden to partake:
 - (1) The unsaved sinner. He may qualify by obeying John 3:16.
 - (2) The unclean saint. He may qualify by obeying 1 John 1:9.
 - 5. The penalty of communion (11:29-30).
 - 6. The profit of communion.
 - a. It can be used for the judging of ourselves (11:31).
 - b. It can be used for the giving of ourselves (11:33).

IV. QUESTION NUMBER FOUR: WHAT ABOUT SPIRITUAL GIFTS? (ch. 12-14).

- A. Definition of a spiritual gift. It is a supernatural ability given by Christ through the Holy Spirit to the believer at salvation. (See 1 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:7-13.)
- B. Number of spiritual gifts. In this chapter Paul lists thirteen of these gifts. They are:
 - 1. Wisdom (12:8).
 - 2. Knowledge (12:8).
 - 3. Faith (12:9).
 - 4. Healing (12:9, 28).
 - 5. Miracles (12:10, 28).
 - 6. Prophecy (12:10, 28).
 - 7. Discerning of spirits (12:10).
 - 8. Tongues (12:10, 28).
 - 9. Interpretation of tongues (12:10).
 - 10. Apostles (12:28).
 - 11. Preaching (12:28).
 - 12. Helps (12:28).
 - 13. Administration (12:28).

In other passages Paul adds at least five more gifts to the list given here. (See Rom. 12:6-8; Eph. 4:7-8.)
- C. Extent of the spiritual gifts,
 - 1. Each believer possesses at least one spiritual gift (12:7, 11).
 - 2. No believer possesses all the spiritual gifts (12:29-30).
- D. Abuse of the spiritual gifts.

1. Action abuses.
 - a. Attempting to employ that gift not given to us (14:34).
 - b. Refusing to employ that gift given to us (14:12).
2. Attitude abuses.
 - a. The sin of envy (12:15-16).
 - b. The sin of pride (12:21).
- E. Purpose of spiritual gifts (14:4, 24-25).
 1. To glorify the Savior (14:24-25).
 2. To edify the saints (14:4).
- F. Analogy of the spiritual gifts. In 12:12-27, Paul links the body of Christ and its many spiritually gifted members to that of the body of man with its many physical members.
 1. Each member in both bodies performs a vital task, appointed by God himself (12:18, 25).
 2. No member is to be independent of the other members.
 - a. The foot and the ear are not to show envy toward the hand and the eye (12:15-17).
 - b. The eye and the head are not to show pride toward the hand and the feet (12:21).
 3. Every member is to rejoice and suffer with the other members (12:26).
- G. Indispensable ingredient in the spiritual gifts. This element is love (ch. 13).
 1. The importance of love (13:1-3).
 - a. The gift of tongues is useless without it (13:1).
 - b. The gift of prophecy is useless without it (13:2).
 - c. The gift of knowledge is useless without it (13:2).
 - d. The gift of faith is useless without it (13:2).
 - e. The gift of giving is useless without it (13:3).
 2. The impeccability of love (13:4-7).
 - a. In relationship to saints (13:4a). It is patient, kind, and not jealous.
 - b. In relationship to self (13:4-5). It does not brag, is not arrogant, never acts unbecomingly, nor seeks its own.
 - c. In relationship to sin (13:5-6). It is not provoked and doesn't hold grudges, it refuses to rejoice in unrighteousness, but finds its joy in truth.
 - d. In relationship to circumstances (13:7).
 3. The indestructibility of love (13:8-13).
 - a. Unlike the other gifts, love is permanent (13:8).
 - b. Unlike the other gifts, love is complete (13:9, 12).
 - c. Unlike the other gifts, love is mature (13:11).
- H. Comparison of the spiritual gifts (ch. 14) Paul contrasts and compares two particular gifts: tongues and prophecy.
 1. The gift of prophecy.
 - a. Meaning of the gift. This gift was twofold (14:29-30).
 - (1) Forttelling (14:29).
 - (2) Foretelling (14:30).
 - b. Importance of the gift. It is more important than the gift of tongues (14:4-5, 19, 39).
 - c. Purpose of the gift.
 - (1) Foretelling aspect: To reveal new divine truths (14:30).
 - (2) Forttelling aspect: To build up, to stir up, and to cheer up (14:3-4, 19, 22, 29).
 - d. Regulations of the gift.
 - (1) Only three prophets allowed for each service (14:29).
 - (2) Only one of them to speak at any given moment (14:31).
 - (3) Forttelling was to take a back seat to foretelling (14:30).
 2. The gift of tongues.
 - a. Meaning of the gift. Three explanations have been given:
 - (1) The supernatural ability to speak previously unlearned human languages.
 - (2) The supernatural ability to speak in a heavenly nonhuman language.
 - (3) A combination of the first two.
 - b. Purpose of the gift.
 - (1) As a prayer of praise to God (14:2).
 - (2) As a vehicle to reveal new truths (14:6).
 - (3) As a sign to unbelieving Israel (14:21-22).
 - c. Regulations of this gift.
 - (1) No more than three messages in tongues may be given in a service (14:27).
 - (2) Only one may speak at a time (14:27).
 - (3) An interpreter must translate for all three utterances (14:28). Paul now lists four analogies to demonstrate the absolute importance of the tongues translator:
 - (a) First analogy: His proposed future visit. (See 16:3-7.)

- (b) Second analogy: From the world of music (14:7).
- (c) Third analogy: From military warfare (14:8).
- (d) Fourth analogy: From daily conversation (14:9-11).
- (4) All tongues speaking must be done in an orderly manner (14:33, 40).

V. QUESTION NUMBER FIVE: WHAT ABOUT THE RESURRECTION? (ch. 15).

- A. The prominence of the resurrection (15:1-4). The resurrection of Christ was the confirmation of the Old Testament and is the central theme of the New Testament.
- B. The proof of the resurrection (15:5-11).
 - 1. First proof. The manifestations of Christ (15:5-8). There were actually ten post-resurrection appearances of Christ, and Paul lists six (counting himself) in this passage.
 - a. To Peter (15:5).
 - b. To the apostles, with Thomas being absent (15:5).
 - c. To 500 disciples (15:6).
 - d. To James, the half brother of Christ (15:7).
 - e. To the apostles, with Thomas being present (15:7).
 - f. To Paul (15:8).
 - 2. Second proof. The salvation of Paul (15:9-11).
- C. The priority of the resurrection (15:12-19).

"Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (15:12).

Obviously some were saying this very thing. Paul then lists many horrible conclusions one must be forced to hold if his statement be true.

- 1. Concerning Christ. The Easter story is a lie (15:13).
- 2. Concerning the gospel preachers. They continue to lie (15:14-15).
- 3. Concerning believers. They swallow the lie (15:14-19, 32).
 - a. We will never be raised (15:13, 15, 23).
 - b. We are still in our sins (15:17).
 - c. Our departed loved ones will never be raised (15:18).
 - d. We have no hope in this life (15:19).
 - e. The sensual way is the only way (15:32).
- D. The program of the resurrection (15:20-28).
 - 1. The villain (15:26).
 - 2. The victors (15:23).
 - a. "Christ the first fruits" (his own resurrection) (15:23).
 - b. "Afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (the rapture resurrection) (15:23).
 - c. "then cometh the end" (premillennial resurrection of Old Testament and tribulational saints) (15:24).
 - 3. The victory (15:24).
 - 4. The vindication (15:28).
- E. The prompting of the resurrection (15:29-34).
 - 1. The resurrection factor should motivate me to pick up the fallen banner of departed believers (15:24).
 - 2. The resurrection factor should motivate me to serve as a martyr if God's will so directs (15:30-32).
 - 3. The resurrection factor should motivate me toward holy living (15:33-34).
- F. The pattern of the resurrection (15:35-38).
Paul illustrates the resurrection by a grain of wheat.
 - 1. To be resurrected the grain is planted in the ground.
 - 2. At the resurrection the new stalk retains the likeness of the grain.
- G. The perfection of the resurrection (15:39-50).
 - 1. Paul contrasts the new body to the old body (15:42-45).
 - a. The old body. It is sown a perishable body, sinful by nature, dominated by the flesh, and bounded by time and gravity.
 - b. The new body. It is raised an imperishable body, sinless by nature, dominated by the spirit, and unbounded by time and gravity.
 - 2. Paul contrasts the new body with brute bodies. It is as different as human flesh is from animal flesh (15:39).
 - 3. Paul contrasts the new body with heavenly bodies. It is as different as the sun is from the moon (15:40-41).
- H. The promise of the resurrection (15:51-54).
 - 1. Concerning the bodies belonging to living believers. They will be changed without dying (15:51).
 - 2. Concerning the bodies belonging to departed believers. They will be raised without corruption (15:52).
- I. The power of the resurrection (15:54-57).
- J. The practical value of the resurrection (15:58).

VI. QUESTION NUMBER SIX: WHAT ABOUT THE COLLECTION? (ch. 16).

- A. The offering taken (16:1-4).
 - 1. The source of the offering (16:2).
 - 2. The time of the offering (16:2).
 - 3. The amount of the offering (16:2).
 - 4. The purpose of the offering (16:1).
 - 5. The custodian of the offering (16:3).
- B. The offering taker (16:5-24).
 - 1. His circumstances.
 - a. To visit Corinth later (16:5-7).
 - b. To stay at Ephesus until Pentecost (16:8).
 - 2. His commitment (16:9).
 - 3. His co-workers. Paul sends greetings from and expresses his appreciation for the following individuals:
 - a. Timothy (16:10-11).
 - b. Apollos (16:12).
 - c. Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (16:15-18).
 - d. Aquila and Priscilla (16:19).
 - 4. His challenge (16:13-14).
 - 5. His closing words (16:21-24).