

# Table of contents

Preface

2

Introduction

3

1 Corinthians 12:12-30

7

1 Corinthians 14:1-25

13

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

19

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

25

Complete Schedule

31

# Preface

Welcome to our study on 1 Corinthians! I never want to miss an opportunity to express my joy in serving our Lord alongside each of you at Second Baptist. Every week you go above and beyond to minister to your classes through teaching and fellowship. We have an amazing discipleship ministry and you are the very backbone of that success. So thank you for everything that you do. As Paul says in Philippians 1:3, I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you. Please know that I am weekly praying for you. You are my heroes!

Over the next three months we will walk through every verse of this wonderful letter in our Life Groups and Sunday Morning sermons. You will receive a Leader Guide like this one again in March and in April. At the conclusion of this series, which will carry us through May, we will return to the Explore the Bible curriculum.

This curriculum is built around commentary and discussion questions. The intention of the commentary is to be practical in nature. The focus is not only on what the verses are saying, but more specifically on how we can apply them to our daily lives. Most lessons will include challenges to you and your class to think through how you can put into action the principles you learn each week. Our goal as the discipleship ministry at Second Baptist Church is To Follow Jesus and to Lead Others to Follow Jesus. I believe we achieve that goal through faithful Bible study strengthened by life application resulting in life change. I hope you will find this curriculum to be helpful in encouraging your class and yourself to put into practice what is taught each week.

I would greatly value your input on this curriculum. If you have suggestions for how I can improve the content or how I can make it more practical for you, please contact me at [pastorsamcoleman@gmail.com](mailto:pastorsamcoleman@gmail.com). I want this literature to be as helpful as possible as you prepare to minister to your class each week.

Again thank you for your dedication to your ministry. May the Lord bless you and your class as you walk through the book of 1 Corinthians!

Your brother in Christ,

Sam Coleman

# Introduction

From: [www.gty.org/library/bible-introductions/MSB46/first-corinthians](http://www.gty.org/library/bible-introductions/MSB46/first-corinthians)

## **TITLE**

The letter is named for the city of Corinth, where the church to whom it was written was located. With the exception of personal epistles addressed to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, all Paul's letters bear the name of the city where the church addressed existed.

## **AUTHOR AND DATE**

As indicated in the first verse, the epistle was written by the Apostle Paul, whose authorship cannot be seriously questioned. Pauline authorship has been universally accepted by the church since the first century, when 1 Corinthians was penned. Internally, the apostle claimed to have written the epistle (1:1, 13; 3:4-6; 4:15; 16:21). Externally, this correspondence has been acknowledged as genuine since A.D. 95 by Clement of Rome, who was writing to the Corinthian church. Other early Christian leaders who authenticated Paul as author include Ignatius (ca. A.D. 110), Polycarp (ca. A.D. 135), and Tertullian (ca. A.D. 200).

This epistle was most likely written in the first half of A.D. 55 from Ephesus (16:8, 9, 19) while Paul was on his third missionary journey. The apostle intended to remain on at Ephesus to complete his 3 year stay (Acts 20:31) until Pentecost (May/June) A.D. 55 (16:8). Then he hoped to winter (A.D. 55-56) at Corinth (16:6; Acts 20:2). His departure for Corinth was anticipated even as he wrote (4:19; 11:34; 16:8).

## **BACKGROUND AND SETTING**

The city of Corinth was located in southern Greece, in what was the Roman province of Achaia, ca. 45 miles W from Athens. This lower part, the Peloponnesus, is connected to the rest of Greece by a 4-mile-wide isthmus, which is bounded on the E by the Saronic Gulf and on the W by the Gulf of Corinth. Corinth is near the middle of the isthmus and is prominently situated on a high plateau. For many centuries, all N-S land traffic in that area had to pass through or near this ancient city. Since travel by sea around the Peloponnesus involved a 250 mile voyage that was dangerous and obviously time consuming, most captains carried their ships on skids or rollers across the isthmus directly past Corinth. Corinth understandably prospered as a major trade city, not only for most of Greece but for much of the Mediterranean area, including North Africa, Italy, and Asia Minor.

The Isthmian games, one of the two most famous athletic events of that day (the other being the Olympian games), was hosted by Corinth, causing more people-traffic. Even by the pagan standards of its own culture, Corinth became so morally corrupt that its very name became synonymous with debauchery and moral depravity. To "corinthianize" came to represent gross immorality and drunken debauchery.

Like most ancient Greek cities, Corinth had an acropolis (literally, "a high city"), which rose 2,000 feet and was used both for defense and for worship. The most prominent edifice on the acropolis was a temple to Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. Some 1,000 priestesses, who were "religious" prostitutes, lived and worked there and came down into the city in the evening to offer their services to male citizens and foreign visitors.

The church in Corinth was founded by Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1ff.). As usual, his ministry began in the synagogue, where he was assisted by two Jewish believers, Priscilla and Aquila, with whom he lived for a while and who were fellow tradesmen. Soon after, Silas and Timothy joined them and Paul began preaching even more intensely in the synagogue. When most of the Jews resisted the gospel, he left the synagogue, but not before Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, his family, and many other Corinthians were converted (Acts 18:5-8).

After ministering in Corinth for over a year and a half (Acts 18:11), Paul was brought before a Roman tribunal by some of the Jewish leaders. Because the charges were strictly religious and not civil, the proconsul, Gallio, dismissed the case. Shortly thereafter, Paul took Priscilla and Aquila with him to Ephesus. From there he returned to Israel (vv. 18-22).

Unable to fully break with the culture from which it came, the church at Corinth was exceptionally factional, showing its carnality and immaturity. After the gifted Apollos had ministered in the church for some time, a group of his admirers established a clique and had little to do with the rest of the church. Another group developed that was loyal to Paul, another claimed special allegiance to Peter (Cephas), and still another to Christ alone (see 1:10-13; 3:1-9).

The most serious problem of the Corinthian church was worldliness, an unwillingness to divorce the culture around them. Most of the believers could not consistently separate themselves from their old, selfish, immoral, and pagan ways. It became necessary for Paul to write to correct this, as well as to command the faithful Christians not only to break fellowship with the disobedient and unrepentant members, but to put those members out of the church (5:9-13).

Before he wrote this inspired letter, Paul had written the church other correspondence (see 5:9), which was also corrective in nature. Because a copy of that letter has never been discovered, it has been referred to as "the lost epistle." There was another non-canonical letter after 1 Corinthians, usually called "the severe letter" (2 Cor. 2:4).

# Overview

DATE	LIFE GROUPS	SERMON
May 6	1 Corinthians 12:12-30 The Body: Unity	1 Corinthians 13:1-13 The Body: Love
May 13	1 Corinthians 14:1-25 The Body: Clarity	1 Corinthians 14:26-40 The Body: Edification
May 20	1 Corinthians 15:1-11 Resurrection: The Facts	1 Corinthians 15:12-34 Resurrection: The Hope
May 27	1 Corinthians 15:35-58 Resurrection: The Future	1 Corinthians 16:1-24 One God, One Gospel, One Glory



# 1 Corinthians 12:12-30

THE BODY: UNITY  
MAY 6, 2018

There was a lady in the church I grew up in named Ms. Louise who taught children's choir. For sixty years she faithfully led kids in "Jesus Loves Me" and "Jesus Loves the Little Children." Senior pastors, music ministers, and other staff came and went, but one constant was always Ms. Louise and her children's choir. There will never be books written about her and nothing she did was revolutionary. Despite her musical experience, she would be considered an "Unsung Hero" in our church. Yet she was a faithful servant of God and generations of children can share her stories.

**WHO IS SOMEONE YOU CAN THINK OF THAT HAS SERVED FAITHFULLY FOR A LONG TIME EITHER IN THIS CHURCH OR ANOTHER?**

In today's lesson we're going to learn that in the church there are no unsung heroes. God gives honor to all of His children to keep unity in the church.

## **EXPLORE THE TEXT**

### **EVERY MEMBER IS NEEDED**

**12:12-14**- *For just as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are one body—so also is Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all given one Spirit to drink. Indeed, the body is not one part but many.*

Paul begins a beautiful metaphor for the church as he describes it as the body of Christ. He argues that **just as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are one body**. In comparing the church to the individual parts of the body, Paul recognizes the diversity of church members. Church members are not all the same, just as the parts of the body are not all the same. We each come from different backgrounds: different family backgrounds, different ethnic backgrounds, different financial backgrounds, etc. Thankfully, since **we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body**, there can be great unity in our diversity.

**TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO DISCOVER THE DIVERSITY OF YOUR CLASS. ASK MEMBERS TO SHARE WHAT MAKES THEM UNIQUE.**

There were members in the Corinthian church that were naturally at odds with one another because of how the individual members identified themselves. Paul specifies that **whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all given one Spirit to drink**. Each of these groups would be at odds with one another in the surrounding culture, but within the church there was the opportunity to unify these groups. In the same way, there may be groups

within our own church that would clash outside of its walls. However, because of our shared faith we can be unified for the work of Christ.

**12:15-16**- *If the foot should say, "Because I'm not a hand, I don't belong to the body," it is not for that reason any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I'm not an eye, I don't belong to the body," it is not for that reason any less a part of the body.*

During Paul's time, the use of the body as a metaphor was commonly used as an argument for unity in society. The purpose of the argument was to convince the lower classes in society to accept their place in the societal hierarchy. Basically, the higher classes spoke of society as a body, with their classes being of the most important parts of the body, and that the lower classes make up the less important parts of the body. They were needed in society, but only to fulfill their small part. In this use of the metaphor, there is no equality among the members.

Paul, on the other hand, turns the metaphor on its head by showing that there is no hierarchy, no division between superior parts and inferior parts in the body. All are of equal importance. He illustrates this with noting that **if a foot should say, "Because I'm not a hand, I don't belong to the body," it is not for that reason any less part of the body.** This passage gives encouragement to those who may feel inadequate or unworthy in church. The foot and the ear do not recognize their importance to the body. The focus of the foot and ear isn't the great contribution that they both make but instead on the contribution of other body parts. Just because one member of the body or the church doesn't possess the talents or gifts of another doesn't make him or her any less a part of the church. Every one of us has a God-given purpose in the church, just as every part of a body has a God-given purpose in maintaining the life of the body.

### **TAKE A MOMENT TO DISCUSS SOME OF THE LESSER-APPRECIATED ROLES PEOPLE FILL IN THE CHURCH. WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THESE ROLES WERE NOT FILLED?**

**12:17-20**- *If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God has arranged each one of the parts in the body just as He wanted. And if they were all the same part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.*

A foot saying it is not part of the body because it is not a hand is one thing, but Paul points out the ridiculous notion of the body being made of one single part. He asks the question, **if the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?** Just imagine the body being one giant eye, or imagine a giant ear instead of a head, arms, torso, and legs. Paul uses this hyperbolic imagery to show how absurd it would be to only have one body part. This begs the question, **if they were all the same part, where would the body be?** In the church, if everyone was a teacher, who would be the student? If everyone was a student, who would be the teacher? If all led worship, who would be the ones singing? And if all were preachers, then who would be listening and pointing to their watch when the sermon has gone on too long?

This passage brings to mind sayings like, "There are too many chiefs and not enough indians" or "too many chefs in the kitchen." While leadership is vital in the church, so is the need for

followers. Just because someone is a follower in one area of ministry doesn't mean they can't be a leader in another area of ministry.

## **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN TOO MANY PEOPLE TRY TO LEAD IN THE CHURCH? WHAT HAPPENS WHEN NO ONE TRIES TO LEAD IN THE CHURCH?**

**12:21-24a**- *The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" Or again, the head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that are weaker are indispensable. And those parts of the body that we consider less honorable, we clothe these with greater honor, and our unrespectable parts are treated with greater respect, which our respectable parts do not need.*

The eye and the head are metaphors for leadership in the church. These members of the church would most likely have been more educated and wealthier than others in the church. The hands and the feet represent the working class or slave members. Therefore, the picture Paul paints is one of wealthy, influential members believing the less influential members are unnecessary. However, just like the various parts of the body, all members are necessary and significant. As Paul puts it, on the contrary, those parts of the body that are weaker are indispensable. Even the weakest member is vital to the church.

Paul furthers his argument against favoritism in the church when he says **those parts of the body we consider less honorable, we clothe these with greater honor, and our unrespectable parts are treated with greater respect.** In this statement lies one of the great distinctions between the church and the fallen world around us: the culture around us reveres those that have much and ignores those that have little. In church, we encourage and uplift those who have little. The church may be the only place where they are considered equals among their peers.

## **NO DIVISION IN THE BODY**

**12:24b-25**- *Instead, God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the less honorable, so that there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same concern for each other.*

With such diversity in the church, conflict is sure to arise. Conflict in church should reflect conflict in a family rather than in the world around us. In a family, conflict comes but there is still love among the family members. There will be reconciliation because you are family and you share heritage. In the world around us, conflict can lead to dissolution of relationships. One little argument and business partners or friends can walk away from each other and never have to see one another again. Not so in the church. Like a family, we all share one thing in common: Jesus Christ.

## **HOW DOES THINKING OF THE CHURCH AS FAMILY CHANGE THE WAY WE VIEW CONFLICT WITH ONE ANOTHER?**

Paul teaches that **God has put the body together.** At Second, God has drawn all of us here together for a reason and for a purpose. Not one of us is a part of this congregation by

accident and we each stand as equals before the cross. God does this by **giving greater honor to the less honorable, so that there would be no division in the body**. No one in our congregation is greater than another and no one in our congregation is less than another. God's purpose in equalizing the members of the body is to avoid the possibility of division in the church. If all are equal then there should be no way to divide the church.

### **WHAT ARE SOME WAYS THAT THE CULTURE AROUND US DIVIDES DIFFERENT CLASSES OF PEOPLE? HOW DOES THE CHURCH BREAK DOWN THOSE DIVISIONS SO THAT ALL CAN BE EQUAL?**

**12:26-** *So if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.*

When one part of your body is injured or becomes sick, your whole body suffers. Since all parts of our bodies are connected, what happens to one part affects every other part. In the same way, when something good happens to one of the members, we should all rejoice in that honor. Paul says it succinctly in Romans 12:15:

*Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep*

In the church, we are all connected through our Savior Jesus Christ. When one of our brothers or sisters goes through a time of suffering, we should be there for them, weeping. In joyous occasions we rejoice with them. When a member is given great honor, we are not to look at them jealously, but instead rejoice in their honor.

### **WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF TIMES THAT YOU HAVE WEPT WITH SOMEONE WHO WEPT? WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF TIMES THAT YOU HAVE REJOICED WITH SOMEONE WHO REJOICED?**

## **FUNCTIONS OF THE BODY**

**12:27-28-** *Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, next miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administering, various kinds of tongues.*

As **the body of Christ** we are all one together in the church, but as **individual members** we still have our unique functions like the individual parts of our own bodies. Paul lists three offices of the church followed by five gifts of the church. He lists three offices of the church as **first apostles, second prophets, third teachers**. The order is both a ranking of the offices and a chronological list in the life of the church. Apostle means to be an ambassador, messenger, and one who is sent out. These are the men commissioned by Jesus Christ to go out into the world and carry His message. In modern times, imagine this as a church planter. A church planter is sent out by his home church to begin a new congregation. He proclaims the Word and builds the church, so naturally Apostles are listed first. Next, prophets are raised up within the church and continue the work of proclaiming the Word. Finally, teachers further expound upon what is being taught in the church. Each office is unique and critical in the life of the

church. In our own church there are leaders that are necessary to guide ministry. Though we do not use the same terms that Paul uses, the functions of each office are still necessary today.

### **IN WHAT WAYS ARE APOSTLES, PROPHETS, AND TEACHERS STILL VITAL TODAY?**

Since Paul does not continue to rank the following gifts according to number, they can be seen as separate from the offices he just described. Each of the gifts he lists, from **miracles, healing, helping, administering, and various kinds of tongues** are gifts that are used to help others in the church. The order here seems to descend from greater gifts to lesser gifts. This passage helps prepare for Chapter 14's discussion on prophecy versus speaking in tongues which we will discuss in next week's class. For this week, the focus is on the fact that each of these gifts is beneficial to others. The Corinthians were given gifts to be used for the betterment of others in the church. In the same way, God's gifts in our lives are not meant to be used for personal gain but for building up and helping others.

**12:29-30**- *Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all do miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in other tongues? Do all interpret? But desire the greater gifts. And I will show you an even better way.*

Each of the questions Paul poses here in verse 29 are rhetorical; Obviously the answers to each is NO. For all in the church to be apostles would be the same for all of the body to be an eye. Here he again reiterates the diversity within the church. Not everyone will have every one of these gifts. Not everyone is called to fill each of these offices of the church. But just because these gifts aren't possessed by everyone doesn't mean that one cannot aspire to grow in a gift they don't currently possess. Paul calls on the Corinthians to **desire the greater gifts**. A major part of the Christian walk is our desire to grow in Christ. If we are being faithful to our calling then our lives are not the same as they were at our salvation. Growth in our spiritual lives are evidenced by the fruit of the spirit found in Galatians 5:22-23:

**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things.**

Paul's list of gifts ends with the gift of tongues, which as we will discuss next week, he believes the Corinthian church holds in too high regard. He prepares for that discussion by encouraging them to seek after greater gifts, to not rest in tongues but to seek greater ways to edify the body. We, too, can fall into the trap of simply relying on what gift we are most comfortable with. As lifetime learners, the Christian is called to seek newer and greater ways to serve our Lord. While this can be done through study, the most effective way to grow in other gifts is experience. You can do that by trying new ministries; either through joining ministries already offered at Second Baptist, or even better, by identifying an area of ministerial need and organizing a group to meet that need!

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

As we close our discussion on the body of Christ, here are a few final thoughts/actions to reflect on this week:

1. **What part of the body are you?** This week seek the Lord's answer to what function you fill within the body at Second Baptist. What gifts have God given you and in what ways can you use those gifts to grow His kingdom?
2. **Do you view others in the church with a critical eye?** Many in the Corinthian church viewed themselves too highly and others too low. Do you do the same? Ask God to reveal to you how you look at others and how you might need to change the way you see others.
3. **What are other gifts you can pursue for the glory of God?** What ministry needs do you see that you can give leadership to?

# 1 Corinthians 14:1-25

## THE BODY: CLARITY

May 13, 2018

Duct tape is one of the most versatile tools a person can have in their tool box. You can make duct tape hammocks, duct tape life rafts, even duct tape tuxedos. You can use it to repair your car long enough to get to a mechanic. You can use it to repair clothing or make shoes. Duct tape can even be used to remove warts!

### **WHAT ARE SOME CREATIVE USES FOR DUCT TAPE YOU HAVE SEEN OR DONE YOURSELF?**

While there are literally thousands of ways you can use duct tape, there is one thing that duct tape doesn't do well: Tape Ducts. Duct tape is not recommended to be used to tape ducts in your home. It dries easily and will not last. The very thing it is named for is the one thing it can't do. Instead, foil tape is the correct tool to be used in that situation. In this lesson, Paul explores a gift of God that the Corinthians used for the wrong reasons and what they should use instead.

## **EXPLORE THE TEXT**

### **SEEK CHURCH BUILDING GIFTS**

**14:1-3:** *Pursue love and desire spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy. For the person who speaks in another tongue is not speaking to people but to God, since no one understands him; he speaks mysteries in the Spirit. On the other hand, the person who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouragement, and consolation.*

In Chapter 13, Paul eloquently describes the priority of love in the christian walk. His opening words of **pursue love and desire spiritual gifts** indicate that he is not simply moving on from the "love chapter" but that the following verses must be read with love at the forefront of the mind. To pursue love brings to mind the hunter pursuing his prey. It is an active pursuit.

### **HOW CAN THE CHRISTIAN "PURSUE LOVE" TODAY?**

Paul wants the Corinthians to especially desire the spiritual gift of prophesy. Before moving forward, we need to define what Paul means by prophecy. That word may bring to mind men who speak on behalf of God and predict future events. However, in Paul's context prophecy is better defined as referring "to a revelatory message in which the Spirit inspires the speaker to pastorally apply the Jesus story to a given situation (encouragement or correction) or an expositional word in which the speaker interprets biblical texts for the edification of the community." (E. Earle Ellis). The prophet Paul speaks of is not a predictor of the future but more closely related to the modern pastor.

He begins to lay out the reasoning for his preference of the gift of prophecy over the gift of tongues. Many in the Corinthian church put too strong a focus on the speaking of tongues. In this passage, Paul is not arguing against the validity of tongues but rather the believer's use of the gift. The members of the church had lost sight of the reason behind tongues and placed too high a regard for those who could perform it. He argues that a **person who speaks in another tongue is not speaking to people but to God, since no one understands him**. The one who prophesies, however, **speaks to people for their strengthening, encouragement, and consolation**. The speaker of tongues does nothing to build up the body of Christ whereas the person who prophesies edifies the body of Christ. The result of prophecy is first strengthening. The bold proclamation of God's Word works to grow the faith of those listening. As we allow God's Word to penetrate our hearts and our lives, we are able to apply it to our daily situations. Through this, we are stronger because we know we can rely fully on the One who gives us strength. The prophet, then, does the work of strengthening the congregation.

Secondly, the role of the prophet is as an encourager. The Word of God is an uplifting book, so the proclamation of the gospel is an uplifting task. After hearing God's Word preached, you should walk away not just with areas in which you feel led to grow but also with an encouraged heart to go out and live out your faith. The world is a discouraging place. The church should be a place of encouragement and the building up of others.

Lastly, the role of the prophet is one of consolation and comfort. We live in a hurting world and while we can't leave that hurt at the door of the church, we can be comforted by His Word. This is certainly where the pastoral role of the prophet comes into play.

### **WHAT DO YOU SEEK MOST IN CHURCH: STRENGTH, ENCOURAGEMENT, OR CONSOLATION? HOW ARE ALL THREE NEEDED?**

**14:4-5:** *The person who speaks in another tongue builds himself up, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. I wish all of you spoke in other tongues, but even more that you prophesied. The person who prophesies is greater than the person who speaks in tongues unless he interprets so that the church may be built up.*

In contrast to prophecy, **the person who speaks in another tongue builds himself up**. Many in the Corinthian church took great pride in their speaking of tongues and elevated that gift above others. The problem with this is that the focus was on the building up of the self and not the church. Too often we fall into the trap of wanting to know how we can benefit personally from the church instead of how we can be a benefit to the church. Often when someone complains about a church the complaint is focused on a issue of personal preference or benefit. Complaints like "I'm just not being fed" or "I just don't like the worship style" or even "I think it's too cold" are all focused on the individual and not the congregation as a whole.

### **DO YOU EVER FIND YOURSELF CRITIQUING THE CHURCH ACCORDING TO YOUR OWN PERSONAL PREFERENCES?**

On the other hand, **the one who prophesies builds up the church**. The focus of the prophet was the building up of the church as a whole. What he said was understandable and beneficial to the church. With either of these gifts, it is the intention of the heart that matters most. Those in the Corinthian church speaking in tongues were most interested in building themselves up, whereas the prophets were focused on building the church up. The gifts given by God are not meant to be used for personal gain but rather for the advancement of God's kingdom. Because of this, Paul did wish that the Corinthians **spoke in other tongues, but even more that you prophesied**. Since tongues were being used for personal gain, Paul teaches that **the person who prophesies is greater than the person who speaks in tongues unless he interprets so that the church may be built up**. The tongues being spoken in the church were not being interpreted, so Paul saw no benefit to the church as a whole.

## POINTLESS SOUNDS

**14:6:** *So know, brothers and sisters, if I come to you speaking in other tongues, how will I benefit you unless I speak to you with a revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching?*

To illustrate his point, Paul calls on the Corinthians to imagine what would have happened had Paul come to them **speaking in other tongues** yet not being understood but the people. Had Paul come with unintelligible speech or if he returned and spoke in a manner they couldn't understand, what benefit would that have been to the church? The members of the church may have been impressed by Paul's use of tongues, but they would not have been strengthened.

**14:7-12:** *Even lifeless instruments that produce sounds—whether flute or harp—if they don't make a distinction in the notes, how will what is played on the flute or harp be recognized? In fact, if the bugle makes an unclear sound, who will prepare for battle? In the same way, unless you use your tongue for intelligible speech, how will what is spoken be known? For you will be speaking into the air. There are doubtless many different kinds of languages in the world, none is without meaning. Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker will be a foreigner to me. So also you—since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, seek to excel in building up the church.*

To further illustrate his point, Paul brings to mind the use of instruments. If you picked up a flute and started to play random notes you most likely will not be able to play a known song. Think of the child who first joins the band and practices his trumpet. The first few weeks are difficult because the sounds coming from the trumpet don't necessarily go together. You cannot recognize a song if it is not being played the right way. The Corinthians were speaking in tongues but not in any language that anyone could understand. They were basically harps playing random notes. To Paul, the effort seemed pointless.

## TAKE A MOMENT TO ALLOW YOUR CLASS TO SHARE PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF TRYING TO LEARN INSTRUMENTS OR LIVING WITH SOMEONE TRYING TO LEARN AN INSTRUMENT.

While the thought of misplayed musical notes is amusing, Paul turns to a more serious note when he asks, **"if the bugle makes an unclear sound, who will prepare for the battle?"** This

statement truly speaks to the heart of the matter. Soldiers on the field of battle depended on the distinct sound of the bugle to hear their commands. Without the bugle sounding loud and clear the soldiers would be left unprepared for battle. As we saw earlier, prophesy strengthens the church. In our lives we face daily spiritual battles. We battle temptation, apathy, distractions, busyness, discouragement, and the forces of darkness. When we come together for church we have the opportunity to strengthen and encourage one another as we prepare to go into battle each week. Speaking in tongues did not provide the edification that the Corinthians needed. They put all of their efforts and zeal into gifts that didn't build the church up. Paul implores them by saying **so also you—since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, seek to excel in building up the church**. He calls on them to build up the church with the same passion that they put into speaking in tongues.

## **WHAT ARE SOME OTHER SPIRITUAL BATTLES WE FACE TODAY? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO HAVE THE CLEAR TEACHING OF THE BIBLE TO PREPARE FOR THOSE BATTLES?**

### **THE RIGHT USE OF HIS GIFTS**

**14:13-19**- *Therefore the person who speaks in another tongue should pray he can interpret. For if I pray in another tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with my understanding. I will sing praise with the spirit, and I will also sing praise with my understanding. Otherwise, if you praise with the spirit, how will the outsider say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? For you may very well be giving thanks, but the other person is not being built up. I thank God that I speak in other tongues more than all of you; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, in order to teach others also, than ten thousand words in another tongue.*

In this section, Paul calls for the right use of God's gift. He implores **the person who speaks in another tongue should pray he can interpret**. Paul is not calling on the complete halt to tongues in the Corinthian church. Instead he calls for the return to the right use of the gift. Initially, the speaking of tongues was meant to be used to convey the story of Jesus to those who speak a language different from the one spoken by the speaker. It was meant to be a useful tool to share God's Word. The Corinthians lost sight of that and used the gifts for personal gain. So Paul calls on them to pray for interpretation of the tongues. If the tongues can be interpreted then they can be useful again. Without interpretation, **how will the outsider say "Amen" at your giving thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? For you may very well be giving thanks, but the other person is not being built up**. God blesses us with many gifts, but too often we lose sight of the purpose of those gifts and use them for our own needs instead of the needs of others.

## **WHAT ARE SOME GIFTS THAT GOD GIVES US THAT WE USE FOR PERSONAL GAIN? IN WHAT WAYS SHOULD THOSE GIFTS INSTEAD BE USED FOR THE BENEFIT OF OTHERS?**

**14:20**: *Brothers and sisters, don't be childish in your thinking, but be infants in regard to evil and adult in your thinking.*

Paul considered the selfish use of tongues as a result of the Corinthians being **childish in their thinking**. As a child, most of us are selfish. Babies don't care about your sleep schedule, they only care about wanting a bottle. For some children, most sentences begin with the words "I want!" Children have to be taught to think of others first, they do not have to be taught to think of themselves first. Adults, on the other hand, should be more selfless in their thinking. While that is not always the case, adults should know better.

### **IN WHAT OTHER WAYS CAN CHILDREN BE CHILDISH?**

While Paul calls on the Corinthians to be **adult in their thinking**, he does warn them to be **infants in regard to evil**. To be an infant in regard to evil is to avoid all things evil, to not become acquainted and well versed in evil ways. The Corinthians are to grow in their knowledge of the Word but draw back from their experiences with evil.

**14:21-25:** *It is written in the law, I will speak to this people by people of other tongues and by lips of foreigners, and even then, they will not listen to me, says the Lord. Speaking in other tongues, then, is intended as a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is not for unbelievers but for believers. If, therefore, the whole church assembles together and all are speaking in other tongues and people who are outsiders or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your minds? But if all are prophesying and some unbeliever or outsider comes in, he is convicted by all and is called to account by all. The secrets of his heart will be revealed, and as a result he will fall facedown and worship God, proclaiming, "God is really among you."*

Paul clarifies that **speaking in other tongues, then, is intended as a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers**. The initial use of tongues at Pentecost was to be a sign to the unbelievers that what was being preached was the word of God. If what was being said could not be understood, then the act itself could be a hindrance to belief. Paul states it this way: **If, therefore, the whole church assembles together and all are speaking in other tongues and people who are outsiders or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your minds?** What the Corinthians held in such high regard was actually detrimental to the building of the kingdom.

### **IN WHAT WAYS CAN FOCUSING ON PERSONAL PREFERENCES OR PERSONAL GAIN BE DETRIMENTAL TO THE GROWTH OF SECOND BAPTIST?**

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

When used properly, speaking in tongues was a useful gift in the early church. Unfortunately, the Corinthians placed too high a priority on it and lost sight of what it was originally meant to be used for. Paul exhorts them to instead focus on gifts that built up the church, gifts that served a greater purpose. Here are a couple of thoughts to reflect on this week in light of our passage:

1. **What gifts have God given to you?** In what ways are you using those gifts to build up those in the church?
2. **Are there preferences/comforts that you focus on for personal gain?** Ask God to reveal to you ways you may be misusing the gifts He has given you and ask for direction to how you can use them for His kingdom.

# 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

## RESURRECTION: THE FACTS

May 20, 2018

### DO YOU BELIEVE THAT JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD?

This may seem like a strange question to ask in Sunday school, but in a 2016 survey Lifeway Research found that out of 3,000 Americans polled only 64% believed in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Nearly a third of Americans do not believe that Jesus rose from the dead. Belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is essential for the Christian faith. Without this central belief, our faith is in vain. His resurrection should be something that we regularly reflect upon.

### HOW OFTEN DO YOU THINK ABOUT JESUS' RESURRECTION?

Jesus' resurrection is amazing: He is the only person to have ever lived, died, come back to life, and never die again. Just think about that— out of the billions of people that have walked the earth— Jesus is the only one to have ever done that. His resurrection is proof of His deity. In this week's lesson, Paul provides evidence for the resurrection and how that belief fueled his work for God's kingdom.

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

### THE CASE FOR THE RESURRECTION

**15:1-2:** *Now I want to make clear for you, brothers and sisters, the gospel I preached to you, which you received, on which you have taken your stand and by which you are being saved, if you hold to the message I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.*

As Paul draws his letter to a close, he wants **to make clear for you, brothers and sisters, the gospel I preached to you**. What he lays out in the following verses is one of the most important beliefs in the Christian faith: the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15 is a key passage for defending the reality of Christ's resurrection. As we will see in the following verses, one cannot separate the belief in Jesus Christ from the belief in His resurrection.

### WHY IS BELIEF IN JESUS' BODILY RESURRECTION SO IMPORTANT TO OUR FAITH?

**15:3-4:** *For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures*

What Paul provides in these verses is a concise statement of the gospel: **that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.** When we share the good news of Jesus Christ we share the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord. All three aspects are important to the gospel. In saying that Christ died for our sins, Paul is upholding not only the work He did on the cross for our sins but also the reality of His death. He states the importance of this fact in 1 Corinthians 1:23:

*But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles.*

The Jews were expecting the Messiah to establish political rule and the Gentiles would find a God giving His life on a criminal's cross to be foolishness. In modern times, religions such as Islam deny the death of Jesus Christ. By noting Jesus' burial, Paul confirms the fact of Jesus' death.

One argument against the resurrection is the belief that Jesus didn't die but instead lost consciousness and was removed from the cross. Known as the swoon hypothesis, this claims that Jesus simply lost consciousness on the cross and awoke later. His being buried confirms that he was found to be dead and laid in the tomb.

Finally, Paul confirms the resurrection by saying that Jesus Christ was raised on the third day. Each of these elements of the gospel were carried out according to the Scriptures.

**HAVE SOMEONE READ ISAIAH 53:3-6 AND PSALM 16:8-11. DISCUSS HOW THESE PASSAGES FORETOLD JESUS'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION.**

This fulfillment of prophecy further adds confirmation to God's role in the gospel. God said that Messiah would be raised from the dead. Jesus claimed that He would be raised from the dead. His fulfillment of those prophecies prove He is the Messiah.

**15:5-7:** *And that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. Then he appeared to over five hundred brothers and sisters at one time; most of them are still alive, but some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.*

After restating the elements of the resurrection, Paul begins to list evidence of its reality. He names witnesses that have seen the resurrected Christ, beginning with his appearance to Cephas, then to the Twelve.

**HAVE SOMEONE READ LUKE 24:36-43 FOR JESUS' APPEARANCE TO PETER AND THE DISCIPLES.**

The Twelve is the name of the original disciples, though at the time they only numbered eleven after Judas' death. The appearance to the disciples is critical to the defense of the resurrection. Each of those men suffered for what they believed. Each man went to his grave proclaiming the resurrection. Tradition holds that Peter was crucified upside down for his faith. James, the son of Zebedee, was executed by Herod. John died in exile on the island of Patmos. None of the disciples recanted their beliefs. Every single one of them died believing and proclaiming the

resurrected Christ. If the story of the resurrection was a fabrication, then why would any of them die defending it?

### **WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR LIFE FOR SOMETHING YOU DIDN'T BELIEVE IS TRUE?**

Next Paul states that **he appeared to over five hundred brothers and sisters at one time; most of them are still alive, but some have fallen asleep.** His appearance before such a large crowd provides corroborating evidence of his resurrection. One argument against resurrection is the theory that Jesus' appearances to the disciples were simply hallucinations. This would explain their willingness to die defending the resurrection since they were convinced it really happened. The appearance before the five hundred debunks the hallucination theory simply due to the inability of that large a group sharing in one hallucination. In addition, Paul notes that most of the five hundred are still alive. If the Corinthians wanted to speak to witnesses of Christ's resurrection then they could speak to those who saw Him directly. They were still alive and could share their experience with anyone who wanted to validate the resurrection.

### **HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO HAVE MULTIPLE WITNESSES TO THE RESURRECTION?**

The appearance to James is one of my personal favorite facts of the resurrection. The James listed here is James, the brother of Jesus. He is Jesus' little brother! There's no real evidence that James was a follower of Christ prior to the crucifixion. A picture of Jesus' relationship with his brother comes in Mark 3:20-21:

*Jesus entered a house, and the crowd gathered again so that they were not even able to eat. When his family heard this, they set out to restrain him, because they said, "He's out of his mind."*

While not necessarily a follower during Jesus' ministry, James does come to faith in him and becomes a leader in the Jerusalem church. The appearance described here by Paul may well have been the catalyst to James' belief. So what's so special about the faith of James? Just imagine your older brother or sister trying to convince you that they are God. What would it take for them to prove to you that what they are saying is the truth? James may have denied it during Jesus' life, but coming face to face with a resurrected Messiah was enough for him to believe in him as the Son of God.

### **WHAT WOULD IT TAKE FOR ONE OF YOUR SIBLINGS TO CONVINCING YOU THAT THEY ARE A DEITY?**

### **PAUL'S PERSONAL TESTIMONY**

**15:8-9-** *Last of all, as to one born at the wrong time, he also appeared to me. For I am least of the apostles, not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

Finally, Paul includes himself in the list of those who saw the resurrected Jesus. **Last of all, as to one born at the wrong time, he also appeared to me. For I am least of the apostles, not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.** The word he uses for one born at the wrong time is translated literally as a miscarried child, a term that refers to

a premature birth or miscarriage, where the the child, if surviving, could be severely handicapped. Paul uses this shocking description of himself to show the length and breadth of God's grace in his life. Before Christ appeared to him, he was dead. Though he thrived in his lost life, gaining respect and notoriety among his peers, he can see now the futility of his life before Christ.

**LOOKING BACK AT YOUR LIFE BEFORE SALVATION, WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT YOU WERE PROUD OF THEN THAT NOW YOU REALIZE ARE NOT THINGS TO BE PROUD OF?**

Paul's reputation before salvation was as one who zealously **persecuted the church of God**. We see Paul witnessing and giving approval to the martyrdom of Stephen in Acts 8:1. We see that his approval of Stephen's execution grew his bloodlust for the church in Acts 9:1-2:

*Now Paul was still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord. He went to the high priest and requested letters from him to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them as prisoners to Jerusalem.*

Paul was actively hunting Christians when Jesus appeared to him. There are two things to note in this: First, the fact of Paul's conversion is a great argument for the validity and reality of Jesus' resurrection. For a man who so actively and fervently persecuted Christians and to change and become a follower of the religion he is persecuting must have required a tremendous miracle. Like the other apostles, Paul would give his life for his belief in the resurrected Christ. While that is a significant fact for Jesus' disciples, it carries even greater weight with Paul because of his past of being antagonistic to the faith.

**WHAT ARE OTHER EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE YOU KNOW WHO HAVE BEEN RADICALLY CHANGED BY THEIR FAITH?**

Second, the fact of Paul's conversion illustrates the power of Jesus' resurrection that can bring anyone to faith. In the mind of first century Christians, Paul would have been the last person they would have thought would come to faith. Paul's conversion is an incredible testimony to the saving power of Jesus Christ. In our lives we may have those people who we think would never come to faith. Whether they are deep in their sins or are combative against the faith, we just assume that not even God can save them. But that's not the truth! Jesus Christ can save anyone— we simply have to be faithful in our attempts to share our faith with them. This is such an encouraging word for those of us who have prayed for friends and family members for years. We may be close to giving up hope that they will ever be saved but don't give up! Jesus can save them!

**TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAY FOR THE SALVATION OF FRIENDS AND FAMILY. IF ANY OF YOUR MEMBERS HAVE LOVED ONES THAT THEY HAVE BEEN SHARING THEIR FAITH WITH FOR A LONG TIME WITHOUT RESULTS, SPECIFICALLY PRAY FOR THOSE LOVED ONES BY NAME.**

## GOD'S GRACE, OUR MOTIVATION

**15:10-11:** *But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. Whether, then, it is I or they, so we proclaim so you have believed.*

Paul credits his salvation to God: **But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain.** God's grace for Paul didn't just come after his salvation— he recognized that God extended grace to him throughout his life. God's saving grace was not given to Paul until after his conversion, but God was patient with Paul throughout his life to allow him to come to the point of salvation. At any moment while Paul was persecuting the church, God could have zapped him dead. But God knew His plans for Paul and, at just the right moment, sent His Resurrected Son to bring Paul to faith. I am grateful for the grace God extends to me everyday, but I am especially grateful for God's grace and patience He gave me on my journey to faith. He has extended the same grace to each of you.

**TAKE A MOMENT TO REFLECT ON THE TIMES IN YOUR LIFE BEFORE SALVATION WHERE YOU CAN SEE GOD WORKING. ASK FOR EXAMPLES OF TIMES WHEN YOU COULD CLEARLY SEE GOD'S GRACE IN YOUR LIFE.**

God's grace towards Paul **was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them.** God's grace in our lives is something to be celebrated. We love to sing one of the great hymns of the faith, Amazing Grace. Reflecting on God's grace is certainly an opportunity to give thanks and praise to Him, but thanksgiving shouldn't be our only action in light of His grace. God's grace in Paul's life motivated him to work harder than anyone else for the cause of Christ. We can see evidence of his hard work through his writing, through his missionary work, through his mentoring of others, and through his willingness to give his life for his faith.

Grace should give us the same motivation. Just think of the lengths to which God went in order to save you. Think of all the times that He should have just given up on you and allow you to live with the consequences of your sin. Time and time again we disappointed Him, yet He still saved us. It's that love and care that should motivate us in our efforts to build His kingdom.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

Jesus Christ rose from the dead! Paul lays out a great outline for us to defend the reality of the resurrection. Here are a few thoughts to reflect on this week in light of today's lesson:

1. **Can you defend the reality of Jesus' resurrection?** Paul's outline can help us when we are discussing the resurrection. Take one element of his defense this week and see what more you can learn about it.
2. **God can save anyone!** Is there someone you have prayed for and just never think will come to salvation? Take heart! If Paul can be saved, anyone can be saved. Don't give up on them yet!
3. **Do you see God's grace in your life?** Paul was motivated to work harder than everyone else because of God's grace. If you want that same motivation, take time this week to recognize the way God has given His grace to you.

# 1 Corinthians 15:35-58

## RESURRECTION: THE FUTURE

May 27, 2018

Every time we have a steady rain at our house, dozens of worms crawl out of the ground onto our carport. These worms leave trails like spiderwebs crisscrossing the concrete as they search for dry land. Unfortunately, very few find what they're looking for and most die underneath our cars. One day my two boys came home from school and saw a large worm lying motionless on the concrete. One of them said, "Look at that worm, he's dead!" My other son interjected, "No, he's just sleeping!"

For the Christian, death is like sleeping; just like we don't sleep forever, neither will we stay dead forever. One day Jesus will come to wake us from our slumber and raise us from the grave. But what will we look like? The Corinthians were wondering the same thing and in today's lesson we'll explore Paul's answer.

### WHAT DO YOU IMAGINE YOUR BODY WILL LOOK LIKE IN HEAVEN?

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

### RESURRECTION BEAUTY

**15:35-38:** *But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? What kind of body will they have when they come?" You fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And as for what you sow—you are not sowing the body that will be, but only a seed, perhaps of wheat or another grain. But God gives it a body as he wants, and to each of the seeds its own body.*

Throughout chapter 15, Paul has argued for the necessity and reality of Jesus' resurrection and our own coming resurrection. In this passage, he tackles the questions of **How are the dead raised? What kind of body will they have when they come?** This is a very natural question given what Paul has been discussing. In these verses, Paul describes the doctrine of glorification. To best appreciate the power of glorification, we need to understand the process of redemption and define a few terms. Wayne Grudem defines glorification as:

*The final step in the application of redemption. It will happen when Christ returns and raises from the dead the bodies of all believers for all time who have died, and reunites them with their souls, and changes the bodies of all believers who remain alive, thereby giving all believers at the same time perfect resurrection bodies like his own.*

Glorification is the final step of God's salvation work in our lives: when we are born, we are born in sin and separated from God. Through the work of God's Spirit in our lives and the clear

presentation of the gospel, we come to the point of conversion. Grudem again defines conversion as:

*Our willing response to the gospel in which we sincerely repent of sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation.*

At our conversion, we experience regeneration (*the act of God in which he imparts new spiritual life to us*) and justification (*the instantaneous legal act of God in which he (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight*).

After salvation, the work of the Holy Spirit in our life is called sanctification: *a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives*. Sanctification is the process we go throughout our lives as we grow in our faith and strive to be more like Christ.

The purpose of redemption is to return us to a right position and relationship with God. Adam and Eve had a perfect relationship with God and incorruptible bodies, but the Fall shattered that relationship and introduced sin, death, and decay into this world. God's redemption brings us back to that perfect relationship with Him, both spiritually and bodily. We see the continued effect of the Fall in our own lives through our aging.

### **TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO DISCUSS THE EFFECTS OF AGING ON OUR BODIES. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS YOU USED TO BE ABLE TO DO THAT YOU NO LONGER CAN?**

Our current bodies will not be the same after the resurrection. Paul explains the process through agricultural terms: **What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And as for what you sow—you are not sowing the body that will be, but only a seed, perhaps of wheat or another grain. But God gives it a body as he wants, and to each of the seeds its own body.** Our bodies will be nothing compared to the body that awaits us. The seed of a plant does not look the same as the full grown plant. A grain of wheat does not look like a full stalk of wheat. It grows into something completely different from what goes in the ground. For us, what will be resurrected will be completely different from what our loved ones will place in our graves.

**15:39-41:** *Not all flesh is the same flesh; there is one flesh for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is different from that of the earthly ones. There is a splendor of the sun, another of the moon, and another of the stars; in fact, one star differs from another star in splendor.*

Paul's explanation of the heavenly body begins with the distinctions between flesh: **There is one flesh for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish.** Just as each animal has a different form of flesh, so too will our resurrected flesh be different from our earthly flesh. We will not have the same bodies after the resurrection as we did before. God created each creature on this earth with a flesh specifically tailored to its individual need. Birds were created with wings so they could soar in the air. Fish were created with gills so they can

breathe under water. All other animals are given flesh that allows them to thrive. The giraffe was given a long neck so he can eat the leaves of tall trees. Without that flesh, the giraffe wouldn't be able to survive in its environment. As humans, we are given our earthly flesh in order to thrive where we live. We have intellect to help us solve problems, we have emotions in order to protect one another, and we have beards...because beards are awesome!

## **WHAT OTHER ASPECTS OF THE HUMAN FLESH HELP US SURVIVE AND THRIVE ON THIS EARTH?**

Just as each creature has a specific flesh, so too will man have a new flesh to best thrive in heaven. Paul states that **there are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is different from that of the earthly ones.** There will be a unique splendor of our heavenly body that will be different from our earthly bodies. Many people in this world work hard to make themselves look their absolute best, but even the most beautiful person will be nothing compared to what God has prepared for all of us! They say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Even the most beautiful person on the planet (most likely a woman) is nothing compared to what our splendor and beauty will be in our heavenly bodies. Just imagine what heaven will be like and think of the beauty and splendor that God has in store for us. We will reflect that same beauty and splendor in the body he provides for us at the resurrection.

## **RESURRECTION GLORY**

**15:42-44**— *So it is with the resurrection of the dead: Sown in corruption, raised in incorruption; sown in dishonor, raised in glory, sown in weakness, raised in power; sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.*

Paul further describes the distinctions between our earthly and heavenly bodies. He describes our bodies as **sown in corruption, raised in incorruption, sown in dishonor, raised in glory, sown in weakness, raised in power.** Whereas our natural bodies were born in sin, our spiritual bodies will be raised in perfection. Aging, pain, suffering, weakness, and all the other effects of sin on our bodies will be no more. We will share in the same uncorrupted flesh as our resurrected Lord.

## **WHAT WEAKNESS OR CORRUPTION IN YOUR NATURAL BODY DO YOU MOST LOOK FORWARD TO BEING RID OF AFTER THE RESURRECTION?**

**15:45-50:** *So it is written, The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. Like the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; like the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven. What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor can corruption inherit incorruption.*

Adam, our ancestor, **became a living being** and passed his flesh on to the rest of humanity. Everything we experience in our bodies is a result of our heritage from Adam. When Jesus

came, He came as **the last Adam** who **became a life-giving spirit**. Adam gave us flesh that only resulted in death. Jesus' inheritance left for us is a life-giving spirit. Whereas from Adam we only gained death, but from Jesus we received life everlasting.

When we were born of Adam, **we were born from the earth, a man of dust and like the man of dust, so are those who are of dust**. The only thing those born of Adam have to look forward to is returning to the dust of the earth. Before salvation, that was the reality for us. We come from dust, we return to dust. We bear the image of the man of dust. We live in sin and we die eternally for it. However, at salvation we are born again, this time being born **like the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven**.

We look like those we are born of. Every time a child is born, one of the first things said is, "Awe, she looks just like her mother" or "She looks just like her father." As the child grows and you get a glimpse of his personality, you can see the influence of his parents on him. He may act like his father or laugh like his mother. He may inherit the intelligence of his parents while also reflecting their short tempers.

### **IN WHAT WAYS DO YOUR CHILDREN REFLECT YOUR IMAGE AND BEHAVIOR? IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU REFLECT THE IMAGE AND BEHAVIOR OF YOUR PARENTS?**

We each were born of the same earthly father, Adam, and before salvation we reflected his rebellious image. Praise God that we are given the opportunity to be born again. Just as we reflect the image of Adam, after salvation, we reflect the image of Jesus. In the eyes of God we are given Jesus' perfect righteousness. In the eyes of the world around us, we reflect Jesus' life through our daily interactions with others. While we strive to reflect Jesus more and more in this life, we still fall short often. After the resurrection, we will be given a body more suited for our heavenly reflection.

### **RESURRECTION ORDER**

**15:51-57:** *Listen, I am telling you a mystery: We will not all fall asleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will all be changed. For this corruptible body must be clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal body must be clothed with immortality. When this corruptible body is clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal body is clothed with immortality, then the saying that is written will take place: Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, death, is your victory? Where, death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!*

Paul assures the Corinthians that **we will not all fall asleep**. Since there are no 2,000 year old Corinthians wandering the streets today, was Paul wrong? What Paul is promising is that there will be Christians alive when Jesus returns. This is a wonderful promise for the church because if there are still Christians alive at the time of Jesus' return, that means that the church will never die out. Even in our times when denominations around the country are rapidly declining in membership, there is still a great work going on in the world around us. The church may be

in decline in our part of the world but it is exploding across the Asian continent. God will always have ambassadors for Christ on this earth.

### **HOW DOES KNOWING THAT THE CHURCH WILL ALWAYS THRIVE MOTIVATE US IN THE FACE OF ITS RAPID DECLINE IN AMERICA?**

Paul continues on to say that **we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will all be changed.** When the trumpet sounds and Christ returns, the dead in Christ will be raised first. Just imagine the sight: the trumpet sounds and graves begin to open. This may on the surface seem scary. Hollywood has made a lot of money over the years making films about the dead coming back to life and it's never a pretty sight. When the dead in Christ are raised, it will be a glorious sight! They will not be zombies coming out of the graves but rather glorious, resurrected bodies returning to their Savior. For those that will still be alive at the time, it'll be a preview of the body they will soon receive. It will not be a scary sight; it will be a glorious scene to behold!

**15:58:** *Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord's work, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*

The reality of the Second Coming should be a motivation to continue the work of the Lord. Paul implores the Corinthians, in light of the coming resurrection, to **be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord's work, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.** The reality of Christ's resurrection plus the hope that comes in our own resurrection pushes us to excel in God's work. We do not live this life like the man born of Adam. His only future is returning to dust. Christians, however, know that there is life in eternity waiting for us. It is a glorious life where we reflect heavenly splendor and our bodies are no longer weighed down by corruption. Our lives are not meaningless. We have a purpose and a future to look forward to. In light of that, we serve the Lord wholeheartedly because we know we will one day see Him face to face.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

God has something in store for us so wonderful that it's nearly impossible to imagine. What we will look like in our resurrected bodies and what we will experience in heaven is beyond human description. Paul prepares us well for what we have to look forward to. Here are a few thoughts to reflect on this week in light of today's passage:

1. **How often do you think about heaven?** Heaven doesn't come up often in our daily lives, but it is the great hope we have awaiting us. Make an effort this week to reflect on your eternal home.
2. **How well do you know Christian doctrine?** The beginning of this lesson was very doctrine-heavy and hopefully you learned something new. Knowing doctrine helps us when we defend what we believe. Make an effort this week to learn something new about what you believe. An excellent resource for this is Dr. Adrian Roger's book: *What Every Christian Ought to Know*.
3. **Are you motivated to do God's work?** Christ has not come back yet, so each of us still have a purpose on this earth. Are you doing God's work? May these verses motivate you, out of gratitude, to pursue God's purpose in your life.

# Complete Schedule

DATE	LIFE GROUPS	SERMON
March 4	1 Corinthians 1:4-9 Called: To Be Thankful	1 Corinthians 1:10-17 Divided: The Power of One
March 11	1 Corinthians 2:1-16 Divided: The Power of the Spirit	1 Corinthians 3:1-17 Grow: In Maturity
March 18	1 Corinthians 3:18-4:7 Grow: In Humility	1 Corinthians 4:8-21 Grow: In Submission
March 25	1 Corinthians 5:1-8 Judgment: Church Discipline	1 Corinthians 5:9-6:11 Judgment: Immorality & Lawsuits
April 1	NO SUNDAY SCHOOL	1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Judgment: Yourself
April 8	1 Corinthians 7:1-40 Marriage, Singleness, Divorce	1 Corinthians 8:1-9:18 Freedom: Brings Responsibility
April 15	1 Corinthians 9:19-27 Freedom: Brings Sacrifice	1 Corinthians 10:1-14 Freedom: Brings Reflection
April 22	1 Corinthians 10:15-11:1 Freedom: Brings Concern	1 Corinthians 11:2-19 The Body: Equality
April 29	1 Corinthians 11:20-34 The Body: Remembrance	1 Corinthians 12:1-11 The Body: Diversity
May 6	1 Corinthians 12:12-30 The Body: Unity	1 Corinthians 13:1-13 The Body: Love
May 13	1 Corinthians 14:1-25 The Body: Clarity	1 Corinthians 14:26-40 The Body: Edification
May 20	1 Corinthians 15:1-11 Resurrection: The Facts	1 Corinthians 15:12-34 Resurrection: The Hope
May 27	1 Corinthians 15:35-58 Resurrection: The Future	1 Corinthians 16:1-24 One God, One Gospel, One Glory