

The First Epistle To The Corinthians Introduction

AUTHOR

Paul, the apostle (1:1; 16:21), joined by Sosthenes, who some think may be the same as mentioned in

Ac 18:17. The authorship of this epistle is attributed to Paul by Clement of Rome in 95 A.D.

PLACE OF WRITING

The city of Ephesus (16:8).

TIME OF WRITING

Probably in the spring of 57 A.D., shortly before the Jewish feast of Pentecost (16:8), during his third missionary journey (Ac 19:1-41).

BACKGROUND OF THE CITY OF CORINTH

Corinth was situated on the Isthmus of Greece (called Achaia in the Bible) between the Ionian Sea and the Aegean Sea, above the Mediterranean Sea. About 50 miles to the east was the city of Athens.

The Corinth of Paul's day was relatively new. The old Corinth (which was famous and powerful in the days of the Peloponnesian War) was burned in 146 B.C. by the Roman proconsul, L. Mummius. Because it was a city devoted to the gods, a hundred years were required to pass before the city could be rebuilt. In 46 B.C., Julius Caesar rebuilt the city, populated it with a colony of veterans and freedmen, and named it Julia Corinthus. It soon became a very important commercial center.

With a population of 400,000 and being a prominent center of commerce in the Mediterranean world, it was a place for all sorts of vice. An example of its immorality was found in the temple of Venus (Aphrodite), which hosted 1000 priestesses dedicated to prostitution in the name of religion. The city's close proximity to the city of Athens probably added the problem of intellectualism. As noticed in the epistle, such an environment had its effect upon the church in Corinth. It is amazing that a church existed at all in such a city.

BACKGROUND OF THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

The establishment of the church occurred during Paul's second missionary journey. It is recorded by Luke in Ac 18:1-18, which can be divided into three sections:

- ◆ Abiding with Aquila and Priscilla, fellow tentmakers; reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath (Ac 18:1-6).
- ◆ In the house of Justus, abiding there and teaching for a year and six months (Ac 18:7-11)
- ◆ An incident before Gallio, proconsul of Achaia (Ac 18:12-18)

It appears from reading the epistle that the church was adversely affected by the immoral environment found in the city. Pride caused division in the church and disruption in the services (1 Co 1-4, 11). Immorality and immodesty found its way into the church, which gave it a bad reputation (1 Co 5). The brethren were taking their personal problems with each other before the heathen courts instead of working them out among themselves (1 Co 6). Other issues affecting the church included questions about marriage (1 Co 7), meats sacrificed to idols (1 Co 8-10), women praying and prophesying with heads uncovered (1 Co 11), abusing the Lord's Supper (1 Co 11), the use of spiritual gifts (1 Co 12-14), the resurrection from the dead (1 Co 15), and the collection for the saints in Jerusalem (1 Co 16). Thus, the church was one beset with problems and questions that needed to be answered.

PURPOSE OF WRITING

The bad news concerning the problems at Corinth had reached Paul in Ephesus. It seems that this news came from at least two sources: 1) the household of Chloe (1:11); and 2) a letter sent to him (7:1), possibly by the hands of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (16:17).

Therefore, in answer to these reports Paul writes:

TO CORRECT SINFUL PRACTICES AND REFUTE FALSE DOCTRINE THEME: 1
 Corinthians 1:10

"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

BRIEF OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION (1:1-9)

I. PROBLEMS REPORTED BY THE HOUSE OF CHLOE (1:10-6:20)

- A. FACTIONS IN THE CHURCH (1:1-4:21)
- B. SEXUAL IMMORALITY (5:1-13)
- C. LAWSUITS AMONG BRETHERN (6:1-11)
- D. MORAL DEFILEMENTS (6:12-20)

II. PROBLEMS MENTIONED IN THE LETTER FROM CORINTH (7:1-16:9)

- A. MARRIAGE & CELIBACY (7:1-40)
- B. EATING MEATS SACRIFICED TO IDOLS (8:1-11:1)

- C. WOMEN PRAYING AND PROPHECYING WITH HEADS UNCOVERED (11:2-16)

- D. THE LORD'S SUPPER (11:17-34)
- E. SPIRITUAL GIFTS (12:1-14:40)
- F. RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD (15:1-58)
- G. COLLECTION FOR THE SAINTS (16:1-4)

CONCLUDING REMARKS, INSTRUCTIONS, AND BENEDICTION (16:5-24)

REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE INTRODUCTION

- 1) On which journey did the apostle Paul establish the church in Corinth?

- 2) Where do we read of the establishment of the Corinthian church?

- 3) Who did Paul first stay with in Corinth? What did they have in common? (Ac 18:1-3)

- 4) Which chief ruler of the synagogue was converted? (Ac 18:8)

- 5) Approximately how long did Paul stay in Corinth? (Ac 18:11)

- 6) Who did Aquila and Priscilla convert in Ephesus who later went to Corinth? (Ac 18:24- 19:1)

- 7) From where did Paul write this first epistle to Corinth? (16:8)

- 8) What is the approximate date of writing?

9) What two things existed in Corinth that appeared to have an adverse effect on the church?

10) What is the purpose of this epistle?

11) Where is the theme of the epistle stated?

The First Epistle To The Corinthians

Chapter One

OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING THIS CHAPTER

- 1) To understand how division is unacceptable in the Body of Christ
- 2) To see why our boasting should be only in the Lord

SUMMARY

In his opening remarks Paul expresses gratitude that the Corinthians had been enriched by God, came behind in no gift, and were eagerly waiting for the revelation of the Lord (1-9). He immediately begins dealing with the first problem, that of division which manifested itself in what we might call "preacher it is" (10-17). Discerning that the underlying cause concerns the exaltation of human wisdom, Paul demonstrates the folly of boasting in such (18-31).

OUTLINE

I. INTRODUCTION (1-9)

A. GREETINGS FROM PAUL AND SOSTHENES (1-3)

1. To the church at Corinth, and those who in every place call on the name of Jesus (2)
2. Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus (3)

B. THANKSGIVING FOR GOD'S GRACE TOWARDS THEM (4-9)

3. Enriching them in all knowledge, even as Christ's testimony was confirmed in them (5-6)
4. Coming short in no gift as they eagerly await the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ (7)
5. Who will confirm them so they may be blameless (8)
6. For God is faithful, who called them into the fellowship of His Son (9)

II. THE NATURE OF THE DIVISION AT CORINTH (10-17)

A. AS REPORTED TO PAUL (10-12)

1. His plea for unity (10)
2. For those of Chloe's household have reported contentions among them (11)
3. Evidently involving "preacher It is" (12)

B. PAUL'S INITIAL REACTION (13-17)

- 4) What is the first problem Paul deals with in this epistle? (10)

- 5) Who reported this problem to him? (11)

- 6) How was their divisiveness expressed? (12)

- 7) Who had Paul personally baptized at Corinth? (14,16)

- 8) Why was Paul thankful that he had not baptized any other? (15)

- 9) In what two ways do men view the preaching of the cross? (18)

- 10) How did the preaching of Christ crucified appear to the Jews and the Greeks? (23)

- 11) How has God chosen to confound the wise of this world? (27-28)

- 12) Upon what grounds may we boast? (31)

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Chapter Two

OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING THIS CHAPTER

- 1) To appreciate Paul's method of proclaiming the gospel
- 2) To see the need for inspiration and understand the process by which it took place

SUMMARY

Continuing to demonstrate the folly of boasting in human wisdom, Paul reminds them of how he came to them. Instead of depending upon excellent speech or persuasive words of wisdom, he proclaimed Jesus Christ and Him crucified, confirming his testimony with a demonstration of the Spirit and power (1-4). This he did that their faith might rest in God's power, not in the wisdom of men (5).

He did proclaim a type of wisdom, however, that wisdom which comes from God (6-9). He describes the process by which God has revealed this wisdom through His Spirit (10-13). Paul then contrasts the difference between the "natural man" (one who depends upon his own human wisdom) who does not receive the things of the Spirit, and the "spiritual man" (one led by the Spirit of God, such as Paul) who has the mind of Christ (14-16).

OUTLINE

- I. PAUL'S MANNER OF PREACHING (1-5)
 - A. HE PREACHED "JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED" (1-3)
 1. Declaring the testimony of God without excellence of speech or wisdom (1)
 2. Determined not to know anything among them but Jesus and Him crucified (2)
 3. Done in weakness, fear and much trembling (3)
 - B. WITH DEMONSTRATION OF THE SPIRIT AND OF POWER (4-5)
 4. Not with persuasive words of human wisdom (4)
 5. That their faith would rest in the power of God, not the wisdom of men (5)
- II. THE TRUE WISDOM OF GOD (6-16)
 - A. THE "HIDDEN "NATURE OF GOD'S WISDOM (6-9)

1. The apostles do speak a sort of wisdom (6)
 1. Among those who are mature (6a)
 2. But it is not the wisdom of this age or its rulers, which is coming to nothing (6b)
2. The wisdom of God they speak has been a "mystery" (7-9)
 - a. Ordained before time began, but hidden (7)
2. Unknown by the rulers of this age, which is why they crucified the Lord (8)
3. Man had not discovered what God has prepared for those who love Him (9)

B. THE SPIRIT'S REVELATION OF GOD'S WISDOM (10-13)

1. Revealed through His Spirit (10-11)
 1. The Spirit searches for the deep things of God (10)
 2. Only the Spirit of God can know the things of God (11)
2. Made known to the apostles (12)
 1. Who have received the Spirit from God (12a)
 2. So they might know the things freely given by God (12b)
3. Spoken now by the apostles (13)
 1. Not in words according to human wisdom (13a)
 2. But in words taught by the Spirit, comparing spiritual things with spiritual (13b)

C. THE "NATURAL MAN" VERSUS THE "SPIRITUAL MAN" (14-16)

1. The "natural man" (e.g., philosopher) does not receive the things of the Spirit of God (14a)
 1. They are foolish to him (14b)
 2. Because they are "spiritually" discerned (14c)
2. But with the "spiritual man" (e.g., an apostle), such is not the case (15-16)
 1. He is able to judge all things properly (15a)
 2. No one is able to properly judge him (15b)
 3. For he has "the mind of Christ" (16)

REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE CHAPTER

- 1) List the main points of this chapter
- 2) How does Paul describe his preaching among them? (1-2)
- 3) How does Paul describe his feelings among them? (3)

- 4) What accompanied Paul as he preached the gospel? (4)

- 5) What six phrases in verses 9-13 help to explain the process by which the hidden mystery of God was made known?

- 6) What phrase teaches the concept of "verbal inspiration"? (13)

- 7) What is said about the "natural" man? (14)

- 8) What is said about the "spiritual" man? (15-16)

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Chapter Three

OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING THIS CHAPTER

- 1) To see the proper place of preachers and teachers in relation to their work
- 2) To appreciate God's view of the church as the temple of God

SUMMARY

Paul continues to deal with the problem of division in this chapter. Its seriousness is seen in its carnality, which prevented Paul from being able to speak as to spiritually mature people (1-4). To help them see the folly of exalting preachers over each other, Paul shows their relation to one other and to their work, which is building the temple of God (5-17). To the warning not to defile the temple of God, Paul adds another not to glory in the wisdom of this world nor in men (18-23).

OUTLINE

I. THE CARNAL NATURE OF DIVISION (1-4)

A. CARNAL CHRISTIANS AT CORINTH (1-2)

1. Prevented Paul from speaking to them as to spiritual people (1a)
2. Their carnality indicated they were still babes in Christ, unable to receive solid food (1b-2)

B. EVIDENCE OF THEIR CARNALITY (3-4)

3. The envy, strife, and divisions among them (3)
4. As expressed in their calling themselves after men (4)

II. RELATION OF PREACHERS TO THEIR WORK (5-17)

A. PREACHERS ARE SERVANTS, USED BY GOD (5-7)

1. Ministers given the opportunity to serve God in various ways (5-6a)
2. But it is God who gives the increase (6b-7)

B. THEIR RELATION TO ONE ANOTHER AND THEIR WORK (8-17)

3. United in their work, though their labor and rewards may differ (8)
4. Fellow workers with God, they work on God's building (9)
 1. Laying the foundation (as Paul did) of Jesus Christ (10-11)

2. Building on the foundation, using various materials to be tested at the Last Day (12-15)
5. A strong warning, since this building is the temple of God and indwelt by the Spirit (16-17)

III. AVOID GLORYING IN WORLDLY WISDOM OR MEN (18-23)

A. REASONS NOT TO GLORY IN WORLDLY WISDOM (18-20)

1. You will only deceive yourself (18)
2. The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God (19-20)

B. REASONS NOT TO GLORY IN MEN (21-23)

1. All things (including men) are yours (21-22)
2. You are Christ's, and Christ is God's (23)

REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE CHAPTER

- 1) List the main points of this chapter

- 2) What prevented Paul from speaking to the Corinthians as unto spiritual people? (1-3)

- 3) What manifested their carnality? (3-4)

- 4) Who was more important, he that planted, or the one that watered? (6-7)

- 5) Upon what foundation is the church built? (11)

- Jesus Christ

- 6) When will the work of ministers be fully made manifest? (13)

- 7) If those converted by preachers are lost, will the preachers be lost? (14-15)

8) What sort of building is the church? (16)

9) What is the wisdom of this world to God? (19)

10) Why should we not glory in men? (21-22)

11) And to whom do we belong? (23)

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Chapter Four

OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING THIS CHAPTER

- 1) To learn further how we should regard preachers and teachers
- 2) To learn a lesson in humility by observing the examples of the apostles

SUMMARY

With this chapter Paul brings to a conclusion his treatment of the problem of division as it existed in the church at Corinth. He describes the proper estimate one should have of those who serve God, and why we should leave the ultimate evaluation of such men to God (1-5). Having already used himself and Apollos as examples to help them see the errors of their arrogance (cf. "puffed up"), Paul also uses the example of the apostles in a passage filled with irony (6-13). His purpose is not to shame them, but to warn them, for he is sending Timothy to remind them of what is proper, and he himself is coming to deal with those who are "puffed up", if necessary (14-21).

OUTLINE

- I. THE PROPER ESTIMATE OF PAUL & OTHERS (1-5)
 1. SERVANTS & STEWARDS (1-2)
 1. Servants of Christ, stewards of the mysteries of God (1)
 2. Their chief responsibility: faithfulness (2)
 2. THE PROPER JUDGE OF SUCH THINGS (3-5)
 1. Not Christians, or any human court (3a)
 2. Not even one's own self, but rather, the Lord (3b-4)
 3. Therefore leave it up to Him (5)
- II. LESSONS IN HUMILITY (6-13)
 1. PAUL & APOLLOS ALREADY USED AS EXAMPLES (6)
 1. To learn in them not to think beyond what is written (6a)
 2. That none be "puffed up" on behalf of one against the other (6b)
 2. REBUKE IN THE FORM OF IRONY (7-8)
 1. For they act as though they were the source of what they have (7)
 2. With irony, Paul rebukes them (8)
 3. THE EXAMPLE OF THE APOSTLES (9-13)
 - A. Made a "spectacle" to the world (9)
 - B. Contrasted with the pride of the Corinthians, using more irony (10)
 - C. The plight of the apostles (11-13)
- III. PAUL'S PURPOSE IN WRITING THESE THINGS (14-21)

A. NOT TO SHAME, BUT TO WARN (14-16)

1. Those whom he considers as beloved children (14)
2. Those whom he has begotten through the gospel (15)
3. Those whom he charges to imitate him (16)

B. TO COMPLEMENT VISITS BY TIMOTHY AND HIMSELF (17-21)

1. He is sending Timothy to remind them (17)
2. He himself will soon come, Lord willing, to deal with those who are "puffed up" (18-21)

REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE CHAPTER

- 1) List the main points of this chapter
- 2) What two terms properly describe preachers of the gospel? (1)
- 3) Who is to be the judge of those who serve the Lord? (3-5)
- 4) Why was Paul writing these things? (6)
- 5) What technique did Paul use in teaching lessons about humility? (8,10)
- 6) Who did Paul use as an example of humility? (9-13)
- 7) Why was Paul writing these things to them? (14)
- 8) How had Paul become like a "father" to them? (15)

9) Why was he sending Timothy to them? (17)

10) What one phrase is used repeatedly in this chapter to describe some at Corinth? (6,18,19)

11) What choices did Paul leave them as to how he might come to them? (21)

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Chapter Five

OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING THIS CHAPTER

- 1) To understand the need for proper church discipline
- 2) To understand the nature of church discipline

SUMMARY

Having dealt with the problem of division in the first four chapters, Paul now addresses the problem of immorality in the church at Corinth. He describes the particular case at hand, one which even pagan Gentiles would find shameful (1). Rebuking them for being "puffed up" instead of mourning (2), Paul then instructs them to "deliver such a one to Satan", giving them reasons why this action is necessary (3-8). Clarifying what may have been written in an unknown earlier epistle, Paul concludes by limiting towards whom such action is to be taken, and describing how it is to be carried out in practice (9-13).

OUTLINE

- I. THE PROBLEM OF IMMORALITY IN THE CHURCH AT CORINTH (1-2)
 1. THE PARTICULAR CASE AT HAND(1)
 1. Something not even the Gentiles would approve! (1a)
 2. A man was living with his father's wife (1b)
 2. HOW THE CORINTHIANS WERE HANDLING IT(2)
 1. They were "puffed up" (2a)
 2. Rather than mourning that such conduct might result in the removal of the offender (2b)
- II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR DEALING WITH THIS PROBLEM (3-13)
 1. HOW TO ADMINISTER CHURCH DISCIPLINE(3-5a)
 1. Must exercise judgment, as Paul though present has already done (3)
 2. When assembled together in the name of Jesus, deliver such a one to Satan (4-5a)
 2. WHY CHURCH DISCIPLINE IS NEEDED(5b-8)
 1. To save the sinner (5b)
 1. By destroying the flesh (its pride and works)
 2. That his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord
 2. To save the church (6-8)
 1. "A little leaven leavens the whole lump" (6)
 2. Our "Passover", should be kept with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (7-8)
- C. CLARIFICATIONS CONCERNING CHURCH DISCIPLINE (9-13)

1. Not to be exercised toward those who are of the world (9-10)
2. But towards brethren in Christ who remain in sin, with such don't even eat (11)
3. For God judges those outside the church, while we must judge those inside (12-13a)
4. The nature of church discipline: "put away from yourselves that wicked person" (13b)

REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THIS CHAPTER

- 1) List the main points of this chapter
- 2) What was the nature of the immorality that existed in the church at Corinth? (1)
- 3) What was the attitude of the church in this regard? (2)
- 4) Why does a church "deliver such a one to Satan"? (5)
- 5) Why should a church be diligent in exercising church discipline? (6)
- 6) Who is the "passover" for Christians? (7)
- 7) How should we observe our "Passover"? (8)
- 8) Towards whom is church discipline to be administered? (9-11)
- 9) Who has the responsibility of judging whom? (12-13)
- 10) What expressions help explain what it means to "deliver such a one to Satan"? (11,13)

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Chapter Six

OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING THIS CHAPTER

1. 1) To see how brethren in Christ should settle their differences
2. 2) To be impressed with the power of the gospel to transform the lives of people
3. 3) To appreciate the proper use of our bodies in service to God

SUMMARY

Having seen that the brethren at Corinth were often filled with strife, envy and divisions (3:3), and that Paul frequently describes them as being "puffed up" (4:6,18), it is not surprising that they were also guilty of the fault Paul deals with in this chapter: taking brethren to court before unbelievers. With an expression of shock and disbelief, he instructs them through a series of questions designed to help them see how absurd and wrong such a thing was (1-11).

The latter half of the chapter deals with what must have been a major problem in a city like Corinth: immorality. What might have been acceptable behavior with their bodies prior to becoming Christians is no longer acceptable, for even their bodies belong to the Lord, whose Spirit indwells them, and who will one day raise them from the dead by His own power. Therefore they should glorify God with their bodies (12-20).

OUTLINE

I. TAKING BRETHREN TO COURT (1-11)

A. PAUL'S REBUKE OF THIS PRACTICE(1-6)

1. Dare they take their personal problems to be decided upon by the unrighteous? (1)
 1. When the saints will one day judge the world? (2)
 2. When the saints will one day judge angels? (3a)
 3. How much more should they be able to judge matters of this life! (3b)
2. More rebuke in the form of questions (4-5)
 1. Do they seek the advice of those least esteemed by the church to judge? (4)
 2. Don't they have even one wise man among them who could serve as judge? (5)
3. The shame of it all: brethren suing each other before unbelievers! (6)

B. CONCERNING LAWSUITS BETWEEN BRETHREN (7-11) 1. It is bad enough that they had lawsuits to begin with! (7-8)

1. It would be better to accept wrong and be defrauded (7)
2. But no, they found themselves doing wrong and defrauding their own brethren! (8)

2. A warning and a reminder (9-11)

1. The unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God (9-10)
2. They had been such, but had been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of Jesus and by the Spirit of God (11)

II. GLORIFYING GOD WITH YOUR BODY (12-20)

A. THE BODY IS FOR THE LORD (12-14)

1. What may be lawful may not be helpful, and should not overpower us (12)
2. The stomach may need food, but that need is only temporary (13a)
3. The body, which is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, will be raised up by the power of God (13b-14)

B. OUR BODIES ARE TO BE MEMBERS OF CHRIST, NOT A HARLOT! (15-18)

1. Shall we take the members of Christ and make them one with a harlot? (15-16)
2. No, for we are to be one in spirit with the Lord (17)
3. Therefore, flee immorality which is a sin against your own bodies (18)

C. THE BODY IS THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT(19-20)

1. The body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is from God, and is in it (19a)
2. You are not your own, you were bought at a price (19b-20a)
3. Therefore glory God in your body (20b)

REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE CHAPTER

- 1) List the main points of this chapter
- 2) What was the nature of the problem being discussed in the first part of this chapter? (6)
- 3) What is Paul's solution to such a problem? (5)
- 4) What would have been better than displaying their differences before the eyes of the world? (7)

- 5) What were some of the Corinthians before they became Christians? (9-11)

- 6) Though something may be lawful, what two other criteria does Paul mention which should govern our use of it? (12)

- 7) To whom does our bodies belong? (15)

- 8) What is the body of one who is a Christian? (19)

- 9) What then should we do with our bodies? Why? (20)

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Chapter Seven

OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING THIS CHAPTER

- 1) To be impressed with basic principles governing marriage and the single life
- 2) To see the importance of studying scripture in its proper context

SUMMARY

At this point in Paul's letter, he begins to address those things about which the Corinthians had written to him (7:1). In this chapter he discusses matters relating to marriage and the single life. The first half deals with issues involving those married (1-24), and the last half covers those who are single (25-40).

It is important to notice that some of what Paul says is in light of the "present distress" being experienced by the Corinthians; also that much of what he says is clearly identified as his personal judgment, not necessarily the commandments of the Lord. In such cases, it is not a matter of right versus wrong, but good versus better.

OUTLINE

I. INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING THOSE MARRIED (1-24)

A. IN GENERAL (1-9)

1. It is good to marry to avoid sexual immorality (1-2)
2. Proper attitudes to govern the marriage relationship (3-4)
3. Abstinence appropriate for short times devoted to fasting and prayer (5-6)
4. Living the single life with self-control a gift from God, so unmarried and widows should marry if they cannot exercise self-control (7-9)

B. IN REGARDS TO DIVORCE (10-16)

1. As commanded by the Lord (10-11)
 1. A wife is not to depart from her husband; if she does, let her remain unmarried or else be reconciled (10-11a)
 2. A husband is not to divorce his wife (11b)
2. As instructed by Paul (12-16)
 1. Christians are not to divorce their unbelieving spouses (12-13)
 2. Because of the "sanctifying influence" the believer can have on the family (14)
 3. If the unbeliever departs, the believer is not under bondage, let the unbeliever depart (15)

4. These instructions given in view of the possibility of the believer being able to save the unbelieving spouse (16)

C. PRINCIPLES GOVERNING PAUL'S INSTRUCTIONS (17-24)

1. As the Lord has called each one, so let him walk (17)
2. The example of circumcision versus uncircumcision, where keeping the commandments of God is what is important (18-20)
3. The example of being a slave versus being free, where one might improve their condition if it

is possible and profitable (19-24)

II. INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING THOSE SINGLE (25-40)

A. FOR THOSE WHO ARE VIRGINS (25-38)

1. Paul gives his personal judgment in light of the "present distress": remain as you are (25-26)
2. Of course if you are married, remain so; but those who are single would be spared much trouble in the flesh in light of what is to come (27-31)
3. Remaining unmarried enables them to serve the Lord without distraction, and be totally devoted to Him (32-35)
4. If it is necessary, the single may marry (36)
5. The choice is not between good and bad, but between good and better (37-38)

B. FOR THOSE WHO ARE WIDOWS (39-40)

1. They are free to marry, but only "in the Lord" (39)
2. Though Paul's personal judgment is that such a one will be happier to remain single, which is

also the advice (though not demanded) of the Spirit of God (40)

REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE CHAPTER

- 1) List the main points of this chapter

- 2) What are Paul's instructions to married Christians? (3-5,10-11)

- 3) What does he advise those who are unmarried and widows? (8-9,25-40)

- 4) What does he tell Christians married to unbelievers? (12-16)

- 5) What underlying principle is governing Paul's instructions in this chapter? (17-24)

- 6) What advantage do the single have over the married? (32-35)

- 7) What restriction does Paul place on widows who desire to remarry? (39)

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Chapter Eight

OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING THIS CHAPTER

1. 1) To see the relationship between knowledge and love
2. 2) To understand how we might misuse the liberty we have in Christ
3. 3) To realize the responsibility we have to our brethren who may be weak or lacking in knowledge

SUMMARY

In this chapter and the two to follow, Paul addresses the matter of Christians eating things that had been sacrificed to idols. Though in the tenth chapter he will conclude with specific warnings concerning this issue (10:18-33), he begins by arguing on the basis of the supremacy of love over knowledge (1-3). While concurring that some might have correct knowledge about God and idols, he points out that all might not, and it would be very easy by an abuse of "liberty" to cause those with weak consciences to stumble (4-10). Such would be a serious offense, even against Christ, prompting Paul to say how far he would go to avoid causing a brother to stumble (11-13).

OUTLINE

- I. KNOWLEDGE, LOVE, AND EATING THINGS OFFERED TO IDOLS (1-6)
 1. THE SUPREMACY OF LOVE OVER KNOWLEDGE (1-3)
 1. Knowledge puffs up, while love edifies (1)
 2. Knowledge can lead one to think he knows more than he really does (2)
 3. While he who loves God is known by Him (3)
 2. KNOWLEDGE IN RELATION TO THINGS OFFERED TO IDOLS(4-6)
 1. Knowledge concurs an idol is nothing, and there is only one God and one Lord (4-6a)
 2. For Christians that means the Father, and Jesus Christ (6b)
- II. APPLYING LOVE TOWARD THOSE WHOSE CONSCIENCES ARE WEAK (8-13)
 1. NOT ALL HAVE CORRECT KNOWLEDGE, OR STRONG CONSCIENCES (7)
 1. Some eat things that were offered to idols with consciousness of the idol (7a)
 2. In so doing, they defile their weak consciences (7b)

5) How can one abuse their liberty in Christ? (9-11)

6) What happens if we sin against our brothers? (12)

7) How far should we go out of consideration for our brethren who are weak in faith? (13)