



1 Corinthians

Chapters 14:1-16:24

Their letter to Paul and reports that Paul receives indicate a growing divergence between the church in Corinth and Paul. Paul's return letter (1 Corinthians) is written to address these concerns he hears about them and the concerns they have about him. The letter divides into these two main concerns. He first addresses the concerning reports he has heard about them in chapters 1-6. Then in chapters 7-15, he addresses the several questions and concerns that they have about Paul and his teachings to them.

The crux of the Corinthian error in beliefs and practice was the intersection of their understanding of Spirit and Body. In this letter, Paul addresses both major subjects using the two controlling paradigms of Temple of the Lord (1-6) and Body of Christ (7-15).

The Literary Structure of 1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians	Chapters 1-16
Letter Opening	1:1-9
Responding to Reports: Violations against the Temple of the Lord (1-6)	Violations against the Unity of the Temple of God—Divisions caused by False Wisdom 1:10-4:20
	Violations against the Sanctity of the Temple—Sexual Immorality and Lawsuits 5:1-6:20
Responding to Concerns about Paul and his Teachings—Bodies and the Body of Christ (7-15)	The Sexual Body: Marriage and Sex 7:1-40
	Food for the Body 8:1-11:1
	Expressions of the Body in Worship 11:2-16
	The Sacrament of the Body of Christ: The Lord's Supper 11:17-34
	The Church as Body: Spiritual Gifts 12:1-14:40
	Resurrection of the Body 15:1-58
Letter Conclusion	16:1-24

What does it mean to be a Spiritual Person in this age? The Corinthians were confusing spiritual giftedness with spiritual maturity. Paul taught in 1 Cor. 13 that spiritual gifts were actually a characteristic of this age and would ultimately pass away, and that those who walked in the "more excellent way" of the of the age to come would manifest above all else faith, hope and love, the greatest being love (1 Cor. 13:13).



Love does not insist on its own Way (14:1-40)

Paul turns to application of this first principle of love beginning with the encouragement “pursue love”.

In their arrogance and over emphasis over ecstatic spiritual experiences and gifts within their assemblies particularly speaking in tongues and words of prophecy, the Corinthian Christians were actually being quite selfish and *un-loving*. The problem is not with the gifts per say. On the contrary, Paul encourages speaking in tongues as prayer and praise spoken to God (14:2), as helpful to self-edification (14:4), as part of his own personal devotional life (14:18). His main concern is that in a corporate worship setting, that is worship in the gathered assembly as the body of Christ, that the over emphasis on the gift of tongues is counter-productive to the unity of the body and the faith of the unbelieving outsider.

Paul encourages them that in the assembly of the body to value the “building up” of the body over the individual (14:4-5, 12, 17), and the care of the soul of the outsider/unbeliever over the insider/believer (14:16-25). Simply put, by everyone “insisting on their own way” speaking in individual tongues, they were not loving the other people in their lives. Paul therefore places a premium on intelligible gifts used in a paced order. Gifts such as interpretation of tongues, teaching, and prophecy are most helpful within the corporate worship life for believers and unbelievers alike.

The key principle or test for the spiritual gifts that Paul is giving them is “principle of edification”. Does what I am doing “build up” others, or is it a negative?

What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. –1 Corinthians 14:26

So, Paul concludes his main concerns with a call for humility and decent order in the church.¹ Having addressed the unloving immaturity in the Corinthian church, he now turns to address the heart of the false teaching that led to the false practices and errors namely a denial of the future resurrection of the body.

Resurrection of the Body (15:1-58)

Paul frames this chapter on the resurrection with a reminder of the Gospel itself. What he is about to teach them is at the heart of the original “Good News” which he first preached to them and led to their

¹ On Women keeping silent verses 14:34-35. Gordon Fee makes a strong case that there is good manuscript evidence that these verses were not original with the Apostle Paul but rather a later addition to his letter. First, they do not fit the flow of surrounding context. Two they are inconsistent with the other parts of the letter where he taught about women speaking publically in the context of public worship (7:1-35, 11:4-15).



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original conversion and salvation. He calls the belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as being “of first importance” (15:3-4). Apparently, the root of false teaching within Corinth was a denial of the future resurrection of the Body.

This false teaching that there was no future resurrection of the body for the believer was the key problem that led to an over-realized eschatology. Such a belief was accompanied by the practical errors of sexual immorality, spiritual arrogance in “knowledge and mysteries”, a spiritualizing of the flesh as if they were angelic, and an over-emphasis on the ecstatic as personal validation of spiritual personhood.

Paul is giving a future hope that will help inform their present. By helping them see the future hope of a resurrected body, he is bringing them back to earth and to this age.

He begins by reaffirming something that they all agree and believe, namely that Christ was raised from the dead (15:1-12). He will then argue that the denial of a future resurrection of the believer is a denial of Christ’s resurrection concluding:

¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. –1 Corinthians 15:16-19

Having reasserted the bodily resurrection of Christ, what follows is that there remains a future bodily resurrection for believers (15:20-34). This means that this age is still in the process of being liberated from the reign of evil. God is bringing “all things in subjection under his feet (Jesus Christ)” (15:27). Paul’s point is that this has “not yet” happened in fullness. There remains more, this is the Christian hope.

***“When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.”
--1 Corinthians 15:28***

Paul then moves into a sharply negative concluding characterization of those who deny this future reality (15:29-34). First, such a belief makes silly their concern for the dead which was being manifest in a strange practice of being baptized on behalf of the dead. Secondly, it makes Paul’s risk of his life for the gospel a vain and meaningless action. Thirdly, and this gets to their own behavior, if there is no future resurrection why not live hedonistically now.

What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” ³³ Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.” ³⁴ Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is



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right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame. --1 Cor. 15:32-34

All are absurdities in light of the truth of the future bodily resurrection.

Paul now turns to his most beautiful and clear positive exposition on the nature of the present and future embodied existence. As for the present, our bodies are perishable and destined for death. But the future hope of the resurrection is for new bodies, spiritual bodies which are imperishable.

For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

"Death is swallowed up in victory."

⁵⁵ *"O death, where is your victory?*

O death, where is your sting?"

⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. --1 Corinthians 15:53-57*

He concludes his letter in chapter 16 with various personal greetings and instructions. He uses his conclusion to emphasize the importance of love:

"Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. ¹⁴ Let all that you do be done in love.... I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. ²² If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come! ²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. ²⁴ My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen."
--1 Cor. 16:13-14, 22-24
