

An Exegesis of 1 Corinthians Chapter 14
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Chapter One
Introduction to Chapter 14 of First Corinthians

This epistle has caused many divisions in the Church today, specifically the fourteenth chapter, which will be the focus of this study. Before beginning our exegesis of this chapter from the original Greek text, we must briefly examine all of the preceding chapters, as well as the ones that follow our chapter in view. We must first objectively analyze the author of the epistle, as well as to whom the author was writing to, the historical time and place of the writing, and the Greek words and grammar. We must also reconcile all of the pertinent scriptures so that none contradict themselves. When a Pastor or a Teacher overlooks any of these factors, it is inevitable that distortions will ensue. As you embark in this study, please continue to keep all the evidence in mind, so that the correct message comes together as the Lord intended it to be. When we read a regular book, we don't take a sentence from the middle of the book and totally ignore what comes before and what follows that sentence, do we? Why do we do this with God's Word? In doing so, we will take scripture out of the context in which it was intended to be in.

Author and Date

Paul's Authorship of this Epistle is acknowledged by the Epistle itself (**1:1-2; 16:21**), as well as by the early church fathers. Today, there should not be any contradictions to this fact; since scholars do not have a problem with the epistle's authorship, to do so would simply be a waste of time. Paul also tells us in this epistle that he was writing from Ephesus, right before Pentecost (**1 Cor.16: 8**). The time of this writing was when he was about to conclude his three year stay in Ephesus (**Acts 20:31**), probably sometime between AD 54 and AD 57.

The City of Corinth

In the time of the New Testament, Corinth was a very flourishing and roaring city due to its centralized location. Greece was basically divided into two parts with Corinth located on the strip of land connecting the two. The southern part of Greece was called the Peloponnesus; the Gulf of Corinth and the Saronic Gulf separated it from the northern section of Greece. The Gulf of Corinth was to the west and the Saronic Gulf was to the east. The only piece of land that acts as a doorway for land travel between the two sections of Greece was a very narrow, four-mile wide strip of land called the isthmus. In the middle of the isthmus, a little south, is where the City of Corinth is situated. In ancient times all north and south overland traffic had to go through Corinth, which made Corinth benefit tremendously.

Another reason that Corinth was such a thriving City was not only the land travel, but the sea travel as well. Since traveling around the Peloponnesus was, not only dangerous, but also a long journey at over two hundred miles in distance, most captains chose the alternative. That alternative was to carry their smaller ships overland on rollers across the narrow piece of land called the isthmus. This course of action was much more economical, much faster and much

safer than sailing all the way around the southern part of Greece. Since goods not only flowed by land, but by sea as well, is it any wonder that Corinth benefited from traffic in all directions and so became a major commercial trade center.

Another item of importance to remember is the number of temples that were in the city; these were used for pagan worship. One of which was the temple dedicated to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, which housed hundreds of priestesses, who were ritual prostitutes. Needless to say, these priestesses would prostitute themselves to, not only all the foreign travelers in the city, but to the local men in the name of religion. Not far from the temple of Aphrodite, was the pagan temple of Apollo, the immortal son of Zeus and Leto. These were just two pagan temples that were among several others which were dedicated to other false gods. The city was synonymous with open and unrestrained sexual immorality, drunkenness and idolatry, even among the pagan world. In an environment of this nature, is it any wonder that the church of Corinth had been plagued with numerous problems. Not only because this environment was around the church of Corinth, but because they themselves were part of this environment before they were saved.

History of the Church at Corinth

Paul had not traveled to Corinth until he was in the process of his second missionary journey. After doing missionary work at other cities like Trosas, Samothrace, Neapolis, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea and Athens, he then arrived at Corinth (**Acts 16:11-18:1**).

The first people that Paul met when he arrived in the city was, a Jew named Aquila and his wife Priscilla. Paul stayed with them and worked with them, because he was a tentmaker as they also were. During this time, Paul preached in the synagogue on every Sabbath and so many Corinthians, including Jews, began to believe in Jesus Christ (**Acts 18:2-4**). When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching and he encountered some opposition from some Jews (**Acts 18:5-6**). Even though some Jews oppose, others believed, as we see in the example of Crispus, the synagogue ruler and his entire household (**Acts 18:8**).

We know that Paul continued to teach the Word of God in Corinth for a year and a half (**Acts 18:11**). During this time, Jewish opposition continued towards Paul, but it was not successful (**Acts 18:12-16**). Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time, but eventually left Corinth along with Priscilla and Aquila to move on to Ephesus (**Acts 18:18-19**).

After Paul, a Jew named Apollos, who was a native of Alexandria, became the next leader of the Corinthian church. He was a dynamic speaker, but although he had a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, he knew only the baptism of John. Apollos knew something about Jesus, but basically he, like John, was still looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. His baptism was based on repentance rather than on faith in the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Fortunately the Lord used Priscilla and Aquila to clarify to Apollos the way of God more adequately (**Acts 18; 24-28; 19:1-4**).

First Corinthians - Chapter One

After introducing himself, Paul begins the Epistle by reminding the Corinthians of their position in Christ. All believers have been sanctified in Christ and are saints the moment they accepted His work on the cross. The Greek word

translated “sanctified” is [hegiasmenois], meaning “set apart as sacred to God, holy, purified.” We are holy because of the Lord's substitutionary sacrifice on the cross and it is His perfect righteousness, which is credited to us, that makes us holy. Likewise, the Corinthian believers had been set apart as sacred to God because of God's gift of salvation, regardless of any sins which they were guilty of committing. This was a permanent position, regardless of the doctrinal distortions that were going on among the Corinthians, as we will see as we progress through the Epistle.

From reading **verses 5-7**, Paul seems to be referring to the Corinthians as spiritual giants, but as we read in **chapter 3:1**, we see that they were mere infants in Christ. The reference was to the complete provisions that God has provided to believers. The Corinthians did not lack any of these provisions, which they had in Christ of growing and using their spiritual gift; they had simply not used them properly. This was something that caused various problems within the Church at Corinth, which Paul will begin to deliberate on shortly.

In **verses 4-5**, Paul is thankful for what God has provided to every believer during his or her life on this earth. The first provision that we have in Jesus Christ is, of course, salvation. After salvation, God has provided everything that it takes to reach spiritual maturity (**Heb. 6:1**). Every believer has the capacity to reach spiritual maturity and thus be enriched continually in his or her speech and knowledge by accurately handling the word of truth (**2 Tim. 2:15**). Paul is telling the Corinthians that he prays that in-taking accurate teaching of God's Word will continually enrich them, and that it be manifested in them being prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks to give the reason for their hope (**1 Pet. 3:15**). The blessing of speech and knowledge refer primarily to sharing the saving work of Christ to the world, and continuing with the comprehension and application of the spiritual mechanics that result in spiritual growth and maturity.

In **verse 7**, Paul is telling the Corinthians, as well as every believer in Christ, that whatever gift we receive from God the Holy Spirit (**1 Cor.12: 11**), was received the moment we were born again. As in physical birth, a newborn possesses all of his or her physical assets. As the newborn grows in stature, so does their physical assets, no new assets are added later on in life. When we become newly born again believers, we fully possess our spiritual assets as well, in those assets will be included the spiritual gift that the Holy Spirit determines we should have (**1 Cor.12: 11**). We must grow in our spiritual life to the point where we identify what that gift is, and develop it. Some believers, due to disinterest or inability to rightly divide the Word of truth (**2 Tim.2: 15**), never even recognize their gift, much less develop it, even though they already possess it.

After comforting the Corinthians in their position in Christ, and giving thanks for all God has provided for them as believers, Paul now begins to address the problems that were occurring in the church of Corinth.

The first problem that Paul addresses was the divisions that were happening within the congregation (**v. 11**). These divisions were occurring because the Corinthian believers were quarreling over their loyalty to men (**vs. 11,12**). The fact that Paul did not spare the confidentiality of the source that had informed him of this problem indicates that indeed it was a serious problem (**v. 11**).

After Paul had left Corinth, he then sent Apollos to be the second pastor. Apparently some of the believers had become devoted to Apollos and Paul exclusively. Another group of Jewish Christian was of a loyal following to Cephas (Peter). The fourth group laid a special claim to Christ. Even though the last group had the right name of our Lord, judging from Paul's

allegation, their mentality was one of self-righteous arrogance. The result of this type of self-righteous mind-set can lead to thinking that they have no need of a pastor or teacher, because they have revelation directly from God. This is a fertile ground for distortions of God's Word. These believers should have been loyal to God's unadulterated message, regardless of who God used to communicate that message, not losing perspective that the message was what was important and that these men were only the means that God used to communicate His truth **(3:5)**. Today, such divisions are evident when Christians tend to classify themselves under certain denominations or particular movements.

First Corinthians - Chapter Two

In the City of Corinth, an occult was beginning that emphasized human philosophy or human wisdom. The wisdom of the creature cannot possibly compare with that of the creator and Paul did not want the Corinthians to have confidence in man's wisdom, but in God's power **(v. 5)**. Some believers, in their arrogance had become carnal minded and were operating from human wisdom. Paul communicates to them that the only wisdom that matters is God's secret wisdom **(vs. 6-7)**, which is revealed through His Spirit **(v.10)** to those who train themselves to have the mind of Christ **(v. 16)**, and this through consistent and accurate doctrinal intake of His Word. The mind of Christ is a reference to the completed bible. To build the thoughts of our Lord in the soul is the process that must be followed in order to understand all the things that God has prepared for those who love Him **(v. 9-10)**. Everyone has an opinion as to what God must be like or if He exists. Apart from the revealed truth in the bible and God the Holy Spirit's guiding power in our understanding of that truth, it is nothing more than speculation on the part of an individual without the Spirit. On his own resources, the creature can only achieve human wisdom at the most. It is only through God's resources that the creature can achieve an understanding of his Creator and the Creator's plan for His creation.

First Corinthians - Chapter Three

In beginning this chapter, Paul continues on what he has gradually been building in the previous two chapters. In chapter one, he lovingly reminded them of their position in heaven and the provisions that their heavenly Father has provided for all His children **(1:1-9)**. After comforting the Corinthians in these matters, he continues to still progressively build his case **(1:10)**. In **verses 11 and 12 of chapter one**, Paul opens it up and point blank, addresses the first pressing issue of the Epistle. In continuance of chapter 2, the Apostle differentiates mere carnal knowledge (human wisdom) and God's perfect knowledge (divine wisdom).

In this chapter, the Apostle begins to really lay on the Corinthians a little heavier. He begins by focusing on the fact that even though they were Christians they were not the spiritual giants that they thought they were. He refers to them as carnal infants in Christ who had never grown to learn what the Christian way of life really was **(3:1-3)**. They had substituted their own set of human standards according to what their human wisdom dictated. The fact that jealousy and quarrels were the result of their actions is evidence that their motivation was not from the Holy Spirit, but their sin nature **(Gal. 5:19-20; Rom. 7:17; 8:8; James. 4:1)**.

The problem of divisions, which was the result of their idolatrous behavior towards mere man, is once again addressed and explained by Paul in **verses 5-9**.

In **verses 11-15**, Paul now uses the fear of their loss of heavenly rewards, due to their motivation being wrong. Paul is led to use a magnificent analogy to describe what occurs after God has laid our foundation to our spiritual house (salvation). The Christian who is out of fellowship (carnal) may appear to be a good and moral individual to those around him. Unfortunately, if there is even the slightest mental attitude sin of gossip or slander (**2 Cor. 12:20**) in their life, it will mean that their house was build out of wood, hay and straw. This the Apostle tells us, will results in their house burning (loss of rewards) when they stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive their rewards, yet they themselves will be saved, thanks to the foundation that was laid down in Christ.

Those Christians that train themselves to correctly divide the word of truth (**2 Tim. 2:15**) and distinguish when they are out of fellowship (**Heb. 5:14**), will use God's provision of confession (**1 Jn. 1:9**). By confession, the Christian is now restored to fellowship with God and controlled by the Holy Spirit, who is strengthen by the amount of metabolized doctrine in their soul. This will result in the right motivation and will cause our spiritual house to be made out of gold, silver and costly stones (heavenly rewards) (**Rev. 3:18**). This, of course, will result in great inequality in heaven amongst believers. This is much like those born in this country. Even though we all have the same opportunity to succeed before the laws of this country, some will use that opportunity to become rich and others will become poor. Some become famous and others are obscured, some succeed as starters for their team and others are only backups, some are in jail and some are not. Even though we all live in this country, our opportunities are manifested differently amongst each individual.

In heaven likewise, although we all had the same opportunity to buy gold from Christ (**Rev. 3:18**) by reaching spiritual maturity during our life here on earth, some took advantage of that opportunity and some did not. This will result in some having authority over nations and some not (**Rev. 2:26**), some will have the right to eat from the tree of life and other will not (**Rev. 2:7**), some will have the right to sit with Christ on His throne and some will not (**Rev. 3:21**). Even though all believers will be in heaven, the opportunity that they had here on earth will be manifested differently amongst each believer in eternity. Paul is using this example to motivate the Corinthians into getting on the right path; otherwise they risk losing great rewards in heaven, even though they themselves will be saved (**v. 15**).

In the remaining verses of the chapter, Paul stresses that the Corinthian believers are defiling the temple of God, which is the body of every born-again believer (**v. 17**). This defilement would be considered a state of moral degeneracy, which these believers were manifesting in their envy, strife and divisions.

First Corinthians - Chapter Four

Now the Apostle points out the Corinthian's self-righteous arrogance, because in their blindness, they had gotten divorced from grace orientation. Some thought that somehow they were better because of the man that they followed. They were judging themselves by human standard, in a sense saying, "**I am a better Christian because I studied under Paul.**" And whether it was Paul, Apollos or Cephas (Peter), they were taking pride in one man over against another and this is one of the root causes of division (**V. 6**).

In **verse 8** Paul uses irony and sarcasm to get the Corinthians to see how poor they really were because of the haughtiness and spiritual immaturity in comparison with apostles. And in **verse 10** the sarcasm continues. The fact that the Apostle was not praising the Corinthians,

but in actuality was trying to shame the Corinthians to see the error of their ways is verified in **verse 14**.

Paul then urges the Corinthians to stop walking in the power of their flesh and instead imitate him as he walks in the power of the Holy Spirit (**vs. 16-20**).

First Corinthians - Chapter Five

Up to this chapter, the apostle has addressed the motivational, emotional and volitional evil within each believer. Now he begins to address the evil that was being overlooked within the Corinthian church.

Paul states that there were some within the church that were sexually immoral. He specifically pinpoints the problem as being incest, for there was a man who was having sexual relations with his father's wife. He tells the Corinthians that this type of behavior is not even tolerated amongst unbelievers, yet they were winking at this man's sin instead of excommunicating the man who did this (**vs. 1,2**).

In the same manner as many Christians today, the Corinthians looked on the incest as part of their Christian freedom, probably justifying it in the name of love. The fact that so many Christians today share the same view when they say, "**well that's just one of their weaknesses and who are we to judge them for it,**" is reason to grief. Towards this attitude the Apostle tells the Corinthians that they are to pass judgment on the man by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus' power is present through His Word and His Holy Spirit; God's Word condemns the continued practice of such fornication (**Lev. 18:7-8; Deut. 22:30; 27:20**) (**vs. 3-4**).

In **verse 5**, Paul says to abandon this sinful man to the devil that he may afflict the man as he pleases. This abandonment to Satan was to be accomplished, not by some magical incantation, but by expelling the man from the church (**vs. 2,7,11,13**). To expel him was to put him out in the devil's territory, severed from any connection with God's people. So that being officially ostracized from the church will cause the man such anguish that he will repent and forsake his wicked way. Tolerating such sin (yeast) will eventually effect the rest of the church (dough) by opening the door to every type of sin imaginable such as homosexuality, lesbianism, people living together out of wedlock and all the other sins condemned by God's Word (**vs. 6- 8**).

Paul now concludes the chapter by telling the Corinthians that they are not to associate with sexually immoral people (**v. 9**). Not at all, referring to the unbelievers, for we are to witness to them (**v. 10**), but to the ones who call themselves professing Christian, yet they disobey God's Word by their sexual immorality, greed, idolatry, slandering, drunkenness or swindling (**v. 11**). To these, Paul says do not even eat with, because calling oneself a Christian while continuing to live an immoral life is reprehensible and degrading, and gives a false testimony to Christ. If the true Christian has intimate association with someone who does this, the non-Christian world may assume that the church approves such immoral, ungodly living and thus the name of Christ would be dishonored. Questions could arise concerning the true character of the Christian's own testimony (**Rom. 16:17-18; 2 Th. 3:6,14-15**).

First Corinthians - Chapter Six

In this chapter the matter of lawsuits among believers and sexual immorality are address. Paul begins by addressing the disputes that the brethren were having amongst one

another. Paul seems to be talking about various kinds of property court cases here, not criminal cases that should be handled by the state (**Rom. 13:3-4**).

In **verse 2**, Paul views believers as fully competent to resolve cases where Christians have claims against each other, because they view matters from a divine viewpoint. In comparison with the future role of a Christian in the judgment of the world and of angels (**v. 3**), judgments of this life should be insignificant. Yet Paul raises the Corinthians sense of shame by saying, **“Isn't anyone among you wise enough to settle such simple disputes, that you have to take each other to court, and this in front of unbelievers (vs. 5-6).”**

The fact that these believers were having lawsuits amongst themselves gave evidence that they had no idea what it was to have the mind of Christ (**1 Cor. 2:16**). Someone with divine viewpoint would not have retaliated when wronged, but instead would have endured it with joy practicing unselfishness, forgiveness and love—even willing to suffer loss. These believers were so concerned with their possessions of this world that they were willing to cheat and wrong their own brethren in order not to lose those possessions (**vs. 7-8**).

In **verse 12**, Paul is quoting some in the Corinthian congregation who boasted that they had a right to do anything they pleased. The apostle counters by observing that such freedom of action may not benefit the Christian, because one may become enslaved by those actions in which he freely indulges.

Again in **verse 13**, the apostle quotes some who were claiming that as the physical acts of eating and digesting food have no bearing on one's inner spiritual life, so the physical act of promiscuous sexual activity does not affect one's spiritual life. Paul denies that what one does with his body is unimportant. This is particularly true of the use of sex, which the Lord has ordained in wedlock for the good of mankind (**Heb. 13:4**).

The inner defilement of God's temple that Paul mentions in **chapter 3** is due to moral degeneracy. This moral degeneracy had ultimately manifested itself into immoral degeneracy, which Paul addresses in the second part of this chapter. He refutes the sexual evil that the Corinthians had gotten involved in (**v. 18**) and says that sexual relations outside the marriage bond is a gross perversion of the divinely established marriage union (**v. 16**).

First Corinthians - Chapter Seven

In this chapter, based on the immoral degeneracy of **chapter 6**, Paul begins to bring out some of the things about marriage.

Since there was so much immorality within the city of Corinth, it was very likely that someone who was single might fall into the sin of sexual immorality. Therefore, Paul advises that each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband (**v. 2**). And one party should not deprive the other of sexual relations because of anger, displeasure or emotional frustration. They should both build a Christian relationship with each other so that every evening before bed would be a time of prayer. This time would be a time when God the Holy Spirit is involved in their lives and if this is the case, there would be no such thing as anger or any of the other things that women and men use against one another such as, **“don't touch me, etc.”** The normal God-given sexual drive in the human is strong and depriving one another would open the door for temptation by Satan to sexual immorality (**v. 5**).

Paul then continues by saying that marriage is not mandatory and wishes that all could have the gift of celibacy as he had (**v. 6-7**). He says that if you have no desire for marriage it is good,

because your whole time can be devoted to the Lord, but if you have no control, then you should marry (**vs. 8-9**).

Now he addresses the subject of divorce, which was yet another problem that the Corinthians had. He states that a believer's first choice should not be to divorce, but to stay and win over the unbelieving spouse, unless the unbelieving spouse leaves (**vs. 15-16**).

Verse 36 of this chapter has caused much trouble to many, mainly because it seems to be saying that a man who is engaged to his virgin can do as he wants, as long as they are engaged he is not sinning. The word virgin should be translated "**virgin daughter**" and the male who is in reference here is her father.

In Jewish culture, the father had an influential role in deciding their daughter's future husband. Apparently, some fathers had dedicated their young daughters to the Lord as permanent virgins. But when some of the daughters became of the age to marry, many of them had a desire to get married. Since celibacy is a gift from the Lord, it would be difficult for someone without this gift to maintain his or her single status. This caused a dilemma for the father, because he had to make a choice whether he should break the vow that he had made for the girl and let her marry or force the girl to stay a virgin. Paul is saying that the father can choose either way that he should decide is best and that neither decision will cause him to sin.

First Corinthians - Chapter Eight

In this chapter, Paul is going to open us up to the mentality that he is going to be faced with throughout the rest of this Epistle and that's the mentality of "**I'm more spiritual than you are.**"

Another of the problems that these believers were having was about eating food sacrificed to idols. He states that food that is sacrificed to an idol, means nothing to him who has the knowledge of knowing that there is no other God but one (**v. 4**). Therefore, the idol that the food is being offered to represent no real god and possesses no power, thus it is not any different than any other food and he knows that he is free to eat it.

He then tells us that not all Christians know that an idol has no personal reality. These Christians cannot eat such food, because having a weak conscience they think that they have sinned against Christ. By thinking this, they felt guilty and defile themselves by the mental attitude sin of guilt. The apostle marbled at the fact that there were still some who had such a weak conscience and states that what you eat doesn't make you worse or better before God (**vs. 7-8**).

In the remainder of this chapter, Paul expresses to the stronger brethren not to cause their weaker brothers to stumble. The fact that knowing that this food was all right to eat was no reason to do it in front of those that taught differently, because in doing so, the stronger believers were causing the weak to sin. Paul says that he would rather refrain from eating in front of the weaker brethren than to be the cause of their fall.

First Corinthians - Chapter Nine

We must keep in remembrance that Paul is talking about the difference between those who think they are spiritual and those who think they are not spiritual based on a particular type of relationship.

Paul begins by saying that even though he may not be an apostle to others, to the Corinthians he should be. Apart from the fact that he had seen the Lord, his ministry in Corinth should have been evidence enough, because it had resulted in them being saved and sanctified into the family of God (**vs. 1-2**).

The apostles' main objective was to win as many as possible to the Lord (**v. 19**). He would adapt to any situation around him in order to witness the gospel, as he explains in **verses 20-22**. If it meant mingling in an immoral environment of the nature of Corinth and eating food offered to idols he would do it in order to preach the gospel.

The Corinthians were judging Paul because he was being what he was called to be **“shrewd as serpent, and harmless as dove (Matt. 10:16).”** A judgmental Christian is going to judge the true evangelist, because the true evangelist is every Christian who makes the winning of souls the most important part of his life.

There were some in the church of Corinth that had set standards that caused them to judge Paul. When somebody judges somebody and finds them lacking, it only means that they are better than the person whom they judging. Therefore, there were some who by judging Paul in other areas, were placing themselves above Paul, because **“I don't do such a thing, I'm glad I'm not like Paul,”** is what they said. This is what Paul writes in defense of in **verse 3**.

He then continues in **verse 11** to tell them that he had a spiritual right to expect financial support from them, for if the tax-collectors have this right, shouldn't he have it all the more (**v. 12**). Yet, Paul surrendered all his rights so that the gospel might not be hindered and may be offered free of charge (**v. 18**). Paul was living in poverty and preaching the gospel and there were those who were saying, **“it is a judgment of God upon him,”** because his reward was not the carnal things of the Corinthians.

This entire chapter, along with **chapter 8** is designed to humiliate in every possible way those who have decided to base spirituality on any outward expression. Examples of this type of outward expression of spirituality would be something like how esthetic you get on Sundays, or an outward expression of how you live, such as not drinking, smoking etc. or what you have, such as material possessions.

First Corinthians - Chapter Ten

This is a strong doctrinal chapter in which Paul uses the example of Israel to parallel the Corinthians' situation. He begins to set the stage for the high point of the epistle.

Paul begins by writing that just as our forefathers were under the bondage of slavery in Egypt and were freed by passing through the passage that God had provided across the red sea. So to, they were also freed from the bondage of the world when they accepted Christ as their savior and were baptized by the Holy Spirit into the family of God (**vs.1-2**).

At the moment they believed in the saving work of our Lord on the cross, they were born spiritually. God has provided His Word, which is the mind of Christ (**1 Cor.2:16**), to all who are born again so that they might eat it and grow to spiritual maturity (**Matt. 4:4; Heb. 6:1**).

Unfortunately, most of the Corinthians had committed the same mistake as most of the people of Israel (**v. 5**). Paul reminds them of Israel's examples so that they might turn from their idolatry, which was evident in their quarreling, jealousy and pride over who they followed, as well as them cheating one another (**3:1-4; 6:8**). And he once again warns against sexual immorality, which was occurring among them (**5:1**). He now writes to say that they should not

test the Lord (**v. 9**) by their continuance in their moral degeneracy (**chap. 3**) and immoral degeneracy (**chap. 6**), for they to might follow the same faith as Israel.

In **verse 9** the apostle tells them not to grumble as Israel had done before them because of lack of faith. For this reason, the Israelites wandered the desert and did not enter the promise land. The Corinthians as well as many Christians today, after being born again, never enter the promise land of maturity by rightly dividing God's word (**2 Tim. 2:15**) and understanding what the Christian way of life is. This ignorance will manifest itself in grumbling against God in time of suffering in the words, "**why is God letting this happen.**" Yet, those in maturity will understand its purpose and will rejoice (**Rom. 5:3**).

In continuing, Paul tells these self-righteous believers that these examples are warnings to those who may be caught in the same type of sin (**v. 11**). So he tells them not to be so sure of themselves, for they to might fall (**v. 12**).

He says in **verse 19** that a sacrifice offer to an idol is nothing and that an idol is also nothing. And then he continues to say that even though they are nothing, they are offered to demons and he doesn't want them provoking the Lord to discipline His children that He loves because of disobedience (**vs. 19-22**).

In the remaining verse of the chapter, Paul once again addresses the subject that he addressed in **chapter 8**. This was to not ask no questions about the food that an unbeliever may invite you to eat (**v. 27**), that is unless it causes someone else to stumble because of their weak conscience whether Jews, Greeks or the Church of God (**v. 32**). Paul is saying that the Christian should seek not what is only good for him, but what is best for everyone involved (**v. 33**).

First Corinthians - Chapter Eleven

Paul now continues in this chapter by saying, "**follow me as I follow Christ (v. 1).**" This was in preparation to give the order of relationship between men and women, not only in propriety of worship but also in marriage.

The basic problem in the Corinthian church did not concern doctrine but morals, not theology but life-styles. They remembered and believed the cardinal truths about God's nature and work, but they did not live godly lives. And so Paul praises them for their strengths before he again begins to correct their weaknesses. In this case was their misunderstanding of male-female roles and relationships (**v. 2**).

In **verses 3-10** we see some verses that prohibit women from claiming the gift of pastor/teacher. In the order of God's plan we should realize that the **head of every man is Christ**, and the **head of the woman is man**, and the **head of Christ is God (v. 3)**. The body (**church**) can never dictate to the head (**Christ**) what to do; it cannot lead the head because it does not have the eyes to lead. In the same way as the church is to learn to glorify or magnify Christ, so to is the woman to learn to reflect man's glory. This by reflecting all the positive attributes of the man to the extent that when people see her mate and people see her, they see the same. This is only accomplished when the man first trains himself to have the mind of Christ. It is impossible for a woman to reflect man's glory if she is trying to be the leader. This can only be done as a follower. Any woman, who is trying to reflect the glory of her husband to the extent that she is an image of him, cannot pastor a flock because she is under subjection to someone other than Christ.

The apostle then establishes this relationship once again when he writes that woman was created for man and not man for woman, and man was created for God (**vs. 8-9**). For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head (**v. 10**).

In the second part of this chapter, Paul addresses another aspect of divisions, which was occurring during the communion service (**vs. 17-18**). The early church held the agape (love) feast in connection with the Lord's Supper (**2 Pet. 2:13; Jude 12**). This meal was something like a present-day potluck dinner. In good Greek style they brought food for all to share, the rich bringing more and the poor less, but because of their cliques the rich ate much and the poor were left hungry (**v. 21**). Once again, this showed the Corinthian's standard of judging with the mentality of **"well you didn't bring anything, so you don't get anything."** For this type of behavior, Paul had absolutely no praise (**v.22**), and if continued, it will ultimately result in disciplinary action from the Lord in physical ailments or the sin unto death (**v. 30**).

All this once again is just setting up the stage for divisions occurring in the Corinthian church.

First Corinthians - Chapter Twelve

Now Paul begins to really get into it full blown by talking about spiritual gifts.

The first thing to note out of all of these gifts is that they are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He gives them to each one, as **He determines (v. 11)!** All spiritual gifts are a decision of God the Holy Spirit at the moment we are born-again, as discussed in **chapter 1**. Today Christians run around begging for other gifts after they have already been born-again. This is due to misapplication and misexegesis of scripture.

God the Holy Spirit is the builder of the body and the Spirit baptized us all into one body (**v. 13**). At the moment we are baptized, God the Holy Spirit decides what part of the body you are by giving your gift at that time according to what the body needs. What we are supposed to do is grow to learn how to operate with the gift that we have because the Holy Spirit knows that it is what the body needs.

Paul then gives an analogy of the body of Christ as liken unto our physical bodies. Only God could build such a complicated and amazing thing as the human body, in the same way only God the Holy Spirit could build the body of Christ (**v. 18**). When we have an ear infection, it can develop to the point that the balance of the whole body is effected. When the kidneys malfunction, the whole body suffers. The body of Christ in the same way must have all the parts mutually working together in order for it to stay healthy and one part cannot take the place of another.

After Paul has stressed God's sovereignty in distributing the gifts and believer's responsibility to be content with them, he now addresses the reason they were fighting amongst themselves. This was due to the fact that in their arrogance they had been seeking the showier gifts such as tongues. In **verses 29 and 30** the Apostle states that not all can have the gift of apostle, prophet, teachers, miracles, healing, speaking in other languages and interpreting. He ranks the communication gifts such as that of teacher as the important gifts and that of tongues to the lowest position. In their blind arrogance, the Corinthians had gotten their rankings backwards and had placed the speaking in tongues in the forefront. The superordinating conjunction [**de**], which is translated **"but"** is introducing a contrast to what the Corinthians were guilty of doing. Paul is now going to express a command

for the Corinthians to follow. It was a command that is contrary to what the Corinthian believers were doing.

The Greek verb [zeloo] is the Greek root word from which the words "**earnestly desire**" are translated. This verb is in the imperative mood, present tense, active voice, and is second person plural. The second person plural is indicating that Paul was talking to the entire Corinthian congregation. The second person imperative is the most forceful way of telling someone to do something. This form of the imperative mood is conveying Paul as an authority figure from God who expects those that he is addressing to do exactly as he has ordered. He is commanding the Corinthian believers to desire that when they assemble together, the best gifts such as teaching may be used instead of those in lower ranking, which tongues was. One gift is not greater than another, for it is God the Holy Spirit who gives them and they are all equally important for the building up of the body of Christ. But, in the list of spiritual gifts, tongues was at the bottom of the totem pole and was never to be coveted by the Corinthians as they had been guilty of doing. It is a sad fact that many today are guilty of this same action. In conclusion to all this, Paul states the alternative to the action of the Corinthians when he states, "**and now I will show you the most excellent way.**"

First Corinthians - Chapter Thirteen

In this chapter Paul continues by saying that the thing that they did need to seek and were not seeking was the most excellent way, and this way was the way of love.

Paul now describes the qualities of true divine love which are developed as we learn to love God through the study and obedience of His Word (**2 Jn. 6**) (vs. 4-7). He points out these qualities to show the Corinthians that the divisions of the previous chapters were caused due to the fact that they lacked these characteristics. If they had been operating from true divine love, everyone would have worked with one another for the betterment of the other as opposed to the betterment of self.

The apostle writes that this true divine love never fails (v.8), as opposed to "**prophecies which shall fail.**" The apostle tells us that there will come a time when the gift of prophecy would cease. The last prophetic words were written down in the book of Revelation by the apostle John. This marked the completion of the Bible and further addition is strictly disallowed (**Rev. 22:18**). Now that the Scriptures are completed, there is no further need for the gift of prophecy.

In continuance, we now read that "**whether there be tongues, they shall cease.**" At the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jewish people in AD 70, the gift of tongues was the first to be suspended. The words "**they shall cease**" is used for the Greek verb [pausontai] meaning, "**to stop, prohibit, be done with, cut off, come to an end.**" [Pausontai] is in the middle voice (subject is benefited by the action of the verb) and in the indicative mood (mood of reality; indicates that an event actually occurred as indicated). We have seen some of the problems that the misuse of tongues had caused the Corinthian Church. The termination of this gift would benefit the Corinthians in that these problems would cease once the gift terminated. The indicative mood declares the reality of the termination of this gift. The attempted practice of tongues today has resurfaced many of the problems that plagued the Corinthian Church, from strife to inferiority and superiority complexes (**12:15-16; 12:21**).

In addition to prophecies and tongues terminating, the gift of “**knowledge**” was to also cease. The Greek noun for “**knowledge**” is [**gnosis**] and it pertained to the temporary gift of teaching believers certain doctrines of the faith. We have to remember that the New Testament had not yet been completed, this gift was used to teach the doctrines that would eventually be part of the New Testament scriptures. These doctrines were being built to a time when they would be completed, but had not yet gotten to that point. In the mean time, those with this gift only knew “**in part**” and could only teach “**in part**” (v.9). They communicated on the basis of what they knew at the time until the “**perfect**” would be completed (v.10).

In verse 10 the phrase “**that which is perfect**” is a reference to a perfect thing and not a perfect person. The Greek noun [**to teleion**] is the nominative neuter singular from the noun [**teleios**]. The fact that it is in the neuter gender reflects that it is speaking of a thing and not a person. We could therefore translate this noun as “**the perfect**” or “**the completed**” since it is a reference to the completed bible. Another reference to the “**perfect**” is in the epistle of James when he refers to the “**the perfect law of liberty**”(James. 1:25) as being synonymous with God's completed Word.

We now see the conclusion of this chapter with Paul saying that the Corinthians should put away the childish attitudes that they were guilty of committing. Instead, they should grow to spiritual maturity so that they may walk in love, because God is love (1 Jn. 4:8) and has communicated His love to us through His Word (1 Jn. 4:10), and He commands us to love one another (Jn. 13:34-35). This divine love that we are commanded to have is obtained only through first loving God, which comes from knowing Him (2 Pet. 3:18), thereby obtaining the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16).

The Corinthians might have known God's Word, but did not understand it, otherwise they would have known what the Christian way of life was all about, they were learning but never coming to an understanding of the truth (2 Tim. 3:7). They had failed to grow to know what the Christian way of life was and had substituted God's standards for their own self-righteous moral standards, and in the next chapter Paul comes to the high point of this epistle.

Follow the Spirituality that Builds (14:1-6)

Verses 1-6: 1.) Follow after charity, and desire spiritual [gifts], but rather that ye may prophesy. 2.) For he that speaketh in an [unknown] tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth [him]; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. 3.) But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. 4.) He that speaketh in an [unknown] tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. 5.) I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying. 6.) Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying or by doctrine?

Paul had addressed the problems that had to do with divisions in the church, which had been caused by their moral degeneracy. In addition to their allowance of immorality within the church, lawsuits among themselves, divorce, food sacrificed to idols, lack of respectability in worship and the Lord's supper, Paul had one last problem to pinpoint, the problem that was causing the most distraction to the Corinthians. This problem was the fact that in their state of carnality, they had gotten to the point where they did not properly understand and improperly used

the gift of tongues. The Apostle had begun to build his case in chapter 12 and 13, but in this chapter he addresses the main and foremost problem without reservations. The Corinthians had so abused this gift that Paul devoted this whole chapter to this particular problem. Let us now examine the chapter that addresses the misunderstanding and confusion that not only to the Corinthian believers of Paul's day had, but also to so many believers of the time that we now live in.

1 Corinthians 14:1

Paul begins the first verse with the word “**Follow.**” There are two Greek words for “**follow.**” The first is [**mimetes**] meaning “**to mimic, to imitate,**” as used in verse one of chapter 11, and the second word is the verb [**diokete**] meaning “**to follow zealously, chase after with intensity,**” which is the Greek verb that “**follow**” is translated from. [**Diokete**] is in the imperative mood, present tense, active voice and second person plural. The imperative mood is use when giving a command. This command is most forceful when it is used in the second person plural. The present tense declares an ongoing continuous action. The active voice is expressing that the subject is performing the action; in this case it would be the Corinthians that Paul is addressing as the subject or, as indicated by the plural form, the subjects. The Apostle is strongly commanding that the Corinthians continually and actively be intensely desirous of something. The root word for [**diokete**] is [**dioko**]. The root word [**dioko**] is translated “**persecute**” in **2Corinthians 4:9** meaning “**hounded, chased, hunted, unrelentingly hounded,**” which would qualify the same type of persecution of which the apostle is now writing about. This verb connotes a state of “**unrelentingly hounding**” something. In **Philippians 3:12**, Paul again uses [**dioko**] for the words “**follow after**” to relate the Christian life to a race and how he presses on or quickens his step towards the goal (**1 Co. 9:24-27**). Paul is telling the Corinthians to quicken their pace, speed up, follow after, chase, march, and pursue with all zeal, vigor and abandonment. He is saying to intensely pursue something that he spent all of chapter 13 writing on. Their pursuit should be toward the way of love.

The word “**charity (love)**” is translated from the Greek noun [**agapen**], which is speaking of “**divine love**” which always has God as its primary object. [**Agapen**] is in the accusative case, which is the case that shows the direct object of the verb. The continual intense desire that Paul has just commanded the Corinthians to have is to be directed towards love as its target. The Christian love that is being spoken of in this verse is not an impulse from the feelings (emotions) or a personal love that is directed to only a few individuals such as mother, father or spouse, for even unbelievers can accomplish this type of love (**Matt. 5:47-48**). The unconditional divine love that is spoken of here is only accomplished by loving God first. If you are going to show God that you love Him, you are going to learn how to obey Him more perfectly (**Jn. 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10; 1 Jn. 2:5; 5:3; 2 Jn. 6**). If you are going to chase after His love more and more, you are going to learn to obey Him more and more. The more you learn to obey Him, the more you will learn to love Him. The more you learn to love God, the more you will manifest the virtues of His love in your Christian life toward all mankind. The characteristics of God's love that are mentioned in **chapter 13** slowly manifest themselves as one accurately and consistently learns, understand and applies God's Word in their life by the renewing of the mind (**Rom. 12:2**). This unconditional, impersonal divine love is not easy to obtain since it requires the same type of consistency, dicipline and dedication of an athlete competing in the games (**1Cor. 9:25**). For even the Humanity of our Lord had to learn and grow in the wisdom of God's Word (**Luke 2:52**), which is love (**1 Jn. 4:8**).

When we allow the Lord to be the source that fulfills our love, we don't have to depend on people for our happiness. People are limited and imperfect and will not be able to sustain the strength in our love. The Lord is the only One that is perfect enough to perpetually feed our desire to be loved. With the Lord as the source of their love, a husband and a wife can enjoy each other without having to depend if one or the other is doing or not doing something to make each other happy. There will not be any conditions to their love for one another. A person does not have time to complain about what they are not getting when they themselves are too busy giving.

Unconditional love is a tremendous problem solver when both spouses are giving totally of themselves without expecting anything in return.

After telling the Corinthians what to follow, Paul now tells them to “**desire.**” This verb is the English word that is translated from the Greek verb [zeloute], from the root word [zeloo], meaning “**to have a zeal for, to be zealous towards.**” The mood for [zeloute] is the imperative mood, which expresses a command and the present tense speaks of a continuous action. The active voice indicates the subject (the Corinthians) performs the action.

Paul is exhorting the Corinthians to “**desire,**” not spiritual gifts as translated in today's Bible, but simply “**spiritual.**” The word “**gifts**” is not part of the original Greek text, but was added on by the translators of the Bible.

The Greek word for “**spiritual**” is translated from the adjective [pneumatika], from the root word [pneumatikos], meaning “**spiritual, pertaining to the spirit.**” Again, the accusative case is seen in this adjective indicating the direct object of the verb [zeloute] “**desire.**” The desire that Paul has just exhorted the Corinthians to have is to be directly centered on the “**spiritual**” or the things “**pertaining to the spirit.**”

That which is spiritual would be the maturing act or that which love matures. As previously discussed, we receive a spiritual gift at birth (see **Intro. P.3**). This gift is of no value to us as children, mainly because we have no idea what it is. We must mature into the use of that which is spiritual. Love is what brings about that which is spiritual in our life through a process of growth that allows us to know our spiritual gift within the body of Christ. [Pneumatikos] is also used in **Colossians 1:9** where it states to “**be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.**”

We then can say that in **1 Co. 14:1**, Paul is actually saying, “**As you follow love, follow after that which is spiritual, but within you, so that you might know what your gift is and be able to exercise within it.**” The grammar here leads a person to many conclusions as to what Paul is saying. He wouldn't tell these same people who were already fighting over what were the best gifts and had been jealously coveting the best gifts, to now covet spiritual gifts. By saying, “**follow after love and desire that which is spiritual**” Paul is identifying that which is already yours (gifts), but must develop by maturing in that which is spiritual.

Spirituality for the believer is dependent on us being under the filling of the Holy Spirit. Spirituality is an absolute in that we are either under the control of the Holy Spirit or we are not. When we are not under the control of the Holy Spirit, we are under the control of our sin nature. We have to remember that God is perfect and the plan that He has designed is also perfect. Since we are imperfect sinners, He had to provide certain provisions to aid us imperfect sinners in executing this so perfect plan. The first provision is the filling of the Holy Spirit, which is dependent on us using the confession procedure through **1 John 1:9** when there is known sin in our lives. Any sin in our lives, whether known or unknown, takes us out of fellowship with God and under the control of our sin nature. The bible distinguishes the filling of

the Spirit as walking in the light, were as being in carnality, because of sin, is referred to as walking in darkness (**1Jn 1:6-7**). Being a believer does not mean that we will never sin again. **1 John 3:4** speaks, not of a completed termination of sin, since we still possess our sin nature, but of a life that is not typified by a blatant continued practice of sin. Through the filling of the Spirit, we have the ability to be in a sinless state. Unfortunately, the moment we use our freewill to sin, whether knowingly or unknowingly, we get out of the control of the Spirit and under the control of our sin nature and it is in this state that we do sin. God provided confession as a means of reversing this problem.

In **Ephesians 5:18**, Paul tells us to "**be fill with the Spirit.**" The Greek verb in this verse is in the imperative mood and present tense. The imperative mood is one of command and the present tense declares that the command is to be continually done. Paul is commanding us to continually be under the filling of the Spirit. This lets us know that the filling of the Spirit is not a one-time occurrence that happened at salvation, if it were, there would be no need to continue to be filled with the Spirit as Paul commands. We have to distinguish the difference between the filling and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Unlike the filling of God the Holy Spirit, the indwelling of the Spirit is related to God the Holy Spirit permanently residing within the temple or body of the born-again believer (**1Cor 3:16; 6:19-20**). The filling of the Spirit, on the other hand, is related on the Holy Spirit controlling our soul and influencing our daily decisions. When we are under the power of our sin nature, the Holy Spirit still lives within our body, but He has no control over our decisions. Anything done under the power of the sinful nature, no matter how good and noble it might seem is consider evil since it's source was not from God.

The second provision that is available to us is having the resources to learn the mystery doctrine of the Church Age that we are now living in (**Rom. 16:25-26; Eph. 3:4-6; Col. 1:26-27**). It is this through this knowledge and application that we gain the strength and wisdom to reside more under the filling of the Spirit than under the control of our sin nature. As food is fuel for our bodies, the doctrines of our faith are fuel for our soul. The more we learn, understand and apply, the more strength and momentum we build in our spiritual growth. This is the spirituality that Paul is commanding us to have our sights on. The Apostle is commanding us to reach the state of spiritual maturity that will allow us to recognize the gift that we received at salvation and develop that gift. Paul wants us to mature to the point that one day we may also proclaim that we have run a good race, we have fought a good fight and we look forward for our rewards in heaven (**2Tim 4:6-8**).

The second part of this verse now reads, "**but rather that ye may prophesy.**" The word "**rather**" is [mallon] in Greek and is the comparative degree of [mala] meaning "**very, very much, (adverbially) more (in a greater degree).**" The Lord uses [mallon] in **Matthew 10:28** when He says, "**And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather (very much more) fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**"

Now we come to the word "**that,**" which is [hina] in the Greek and means, "**in order that.**" Paul uses [hina] in **1Cor. 2:12** when he writes, "**Now [we] have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that (in order that) we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.**"

So far, Paul has said to follow after love and desire the spiritual, and he says to do this more correctly in order that you might "**prophesy.**" The word "**prophesy**" is from the Greek verb [propheteuo] meaning, "**to proclaim, publicly expound or explain, telling forth the Divine counsels.**" This word has never initially meant one who predicts as much as it meant one

who proclaims. Prophecy was one of the gifts of the Spirit, and its chief design was to comfort, exhort (**Acts 15:32**) and testify from the Scriptures for the teaching of believers. In the masculine form it's meaning is **“to be a proclaimer”** and in the feminine it is **[propheteia]** and denotes **“the ability of proclaiming.”** So if I wanted to say that you had the **“ability to proclaim,”** I would use the feminine and if I wanted to say that you are a **“proclaimer”** I would use the masculine.

In **Matthew 7:22** **[propheteuo]** is use by many who tell the Lord, **“...have we not prophesied in Thy name?”** This word could be translated **"proclaimed"** or **"acted as spokesmen."** In **Matthew 11:13** we see the same word used, **“For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.”** This word does not mean foretold, because the law was not prophetic, it foretold by its proclamation. An example of this prophecy can be found in the Levitical offerings. When the Israelites followed the instructions of the Lord to slaughter, skin and cut their burnt offering etc. (**Lev. 1:1-17**), they were publicly proclaiming God's instructions (God's Word). We can then see that when you are publicly proclaiming God's Word, you are prophesying. This word does not mean to have a vision or dream as many claim today (**Jer. 23:25-26, Jude 8, Deut. 13:1- 3**). God has given us all that He wants us to know in the completed Bible and nothing further is to be added (**Rev. 22:18-19**). Therefore, prophecy today would refer to publicly proclaiming God's Word.

Corrective Translation

Verse 1 Follow zealously after divine love. Furthermore, earnestly desire to mature into the use of that which is spiritual, and do this in order that you might accurately clarify to others God's Word.

1 Corinthians 14:2

In this verse we begin with the words **“For he that speaketh in an [unknown] tongue.”** The first word in this verse is **"For"** and is a translation for the superordinating conjunction **[gar]** and could be translated **"for"** or **"since."** Paul uses this explanatory conjunction to connect verse one with verse two with emphasis on what he has just told us in verse one. The Apostle is, once again, about to introduce more of the sarcasm he has displayed in previous sections of this epistle. He stressed in verse one that he wanted the Corinthians to follow after love and grow spiritually so they would be able to speak forth God's Word clearly. The conjunction **[gar]** now introduces the Apostle's sarcasm, which begins by him stating that, **“For he that speaketh in an [unknown] tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God.”**

The word **“speaketh”** is translated from the Greek participle **[lalon]**, derived from **[laleo]**, meaning **“to talk, speak, also to prattle or utter or make meaningless sounds suggestive of the chatter of children, to babble.”** In regards to speaking, the word denotes sound rather than meaning, but it also has a reference of being able to speak. A participle has characteristics of both a verb and adjective and usually has an **"ing"** ending. As to its verbal aspects **[lalon]** is in the present tense (continual action) and active voice (subject performs action). The adjectival nature of **[lalon]** would include it being in the nominative case (subject), masculine and singular in number. The subject (nominative case) here is the person who continually (present tense) and actively (active voice) is speaking or babbling and this babbling

is in a "tongue." In **1 Corinthians 13:11** Paul uses [laleo] in the same sense as here when he writes "**When I was a child, I spake (babbled) as a child.**"

Now we see that this babbling is in a "tongue" which is translated from the Greek noun [glosse] meaning "**tongue, language, utterance.**" [Glosse] is in the dative case, which is expressing the object (tongue) for which something (speaking) is done. The babbling in reference is for the purpose of being expressed in a "tongue." [Glosse] has a threefold meaning, the first meaning being that of the physical "tongue" as it was used in **Luke 16:24** or **Mark 7:33**. Intelligent meaningful "language" is the meaning in **Acts 2:11**. "**An expression which is strange or obscure and needs explanation**" is a third sense, in other words, an unknown language. The third sense of this word can be seen when the drunken religious Jewish leaders (**Isa.28: 1,3,7-8**) were mocking Isaiah's teaching (**Isa.28: 9**) and in their drunken state started mimicking the prophet's words in a slurred speech that resembled the babbling of a child, "**Do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule, a little here, a little there**" (**Isa.28: 10**).

We can see that what Paul is saying is, "**For he that babbles meaningless sounds in an unknown language doesn't babble to men, but unto God.**" The type of meaningless babble that the Corinthian believers were involved in doing had no edifying value at all. This was, of course, because it could not be understood by anyone; this so-called tongue speaking did not give them any kind of instruction or even direction. We read then that it could only speak "**unto God.**"

The Greek noun for "God" is [theo], from [theos], meaning "**God, god, goddess.**" In the polytheism (believe in or worship of more than one god) of the ancient Greeks, [theos] denoted a god or deity (**Acts 14:11; 19:26; 28:6; 1 Cor. 8:5; Gal. 4:8**). As a result, this word was seized by Jews and retained by Christians to denote our one and true God. When [theos] is used to imply the one true God, it will be used with the definite article, which is sometimes, but not always translated "**the**" in the English. This example can be seen in **Acts 7:2** in which we see the definite article translated in the English, "**The God of glory.**" Yet, five verses later in **Acts 7:6** we see that the article does not need to be translated "**the**" in the English because we know from **verse 2** that it is still talking about the one true "God." In **Acts 7:6** the article is also not translated in the English for a smoother reading, it reads smoother as "**God spoke**" instead of "**the God spoke.**" [Theos] will not always require the definite article for it to be a reference to the one true God. For example, **John 1:1** reads, "**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**" The first word translated "God" has the definite article [ton] included with it [ton Theon]. However, the second word that is translated "God" does not have a definite article but is simply [Theos] because it is still referring back to the first "God" since it is its antecedent (the noun it refers back to). The Jehovah's Witnesses' bible has erroneously translated the second "God" of this verse as "**a god**" because of the absence of the article totally ignoring the antecedent rule. This was to discredit the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ since they do not believe in the Trinity. Yet, in **verse 12** of the same chapter of John they correctly translated, even though it does not have an article, [Theou] as "God" instead of "**a god**" ignoring their own rule of translating it "**a god**" when there is no article. The [Theou] of **verse 12** is still a reference to the same [ton Theon] of **verse 1** because of the antecedent and context of the rest of the verses it follows. Therefore, in **1 Corinthians 14:2** since there is not an article or antecedent the reference is to "**a god**" and not "**the God.**"

The translation here of “a god” is also supported by the fact that nowhere in scripture are we commanded, **“to pray by babbling meaningless sounds in an unknown language that even we don't understand.”** The example of the wonderful prayer that the Lord Himself prayed in **John 17:1-26** let's us know that prayer should be done in normal and intelligent speech. The prayer that is commonly called the Lord's Prayer is certainly another great example of simple and clear speech. The Lord in fact warned against using **“meaningless repetition (babbling), as the pagans do, for they think they will be heard because of their many words” (Matt. 6:7).** His reference included the repetitious and unintelligible gibberish of pagan tongues-speaking, in which certain meaningless sounds were repeated over and over again, in much the same way as Buddhism of today.

So far, the sarcasm of Paul that has been evident throughout this epistle is once again in view in this verse. The apostle continues in his sarcasm as he writes, **“for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.”** The words **“no man”** is used for the Greek word [oudeis] meaning **“not even one”** or **“no one”** as use by our Lord when He said, **“no man comes to the Father except through Me.”**

Now, we come to the word **“understandeth”** which is from the Greek word [akouo] meaning **“to hear, listen.”** The apostle's reference is that **“no one,”** even though they may hear, understands the meaningless sounds that are being babbled. The negative use of [akouo] in this verse is certainly a contrast to the positive use of the same word by our Lord in **Matthew 13:23**, in which it is translated **“heareth.”** The positive use of [akouo] is related to hearing and understanding (**Eph. 1:13; 2 Tim. 1:13; Acts 2:6; 4:4**).

In continuing with our verse, we now see the word **“spirit”** which is [pneumati] in the Greek and primarily denotes **“a current of air (Jn.3:8), i.e. breath (2Thess. 2:8) (blast) or breeze; by analogy or figuratively, a spirit, i.e. (human) the rational soul (Acts 7:59; 1Cor. 5:5), (by implication) vital principle, mental disposition, etc. or (superhuman) an angel (Heb. 1:14; Acts 12:15), demons (Matt. 8:16), the Holy Spirit (1Cor. 2:11; Matt. 28:19).”** The noun [pneumatic] is in the dative case (indirect object/instrumental), neuter in gender and singular in number. The dative indicates the indirect receiver of the action of the verb. In this verse the **“spirit”** is the indirect recipient of the action of **“speaking,”** since that is were the action of **“speaking”** is taking place. Since [pneumatic] is in the neuter gender the reference is to the human **“spirit”** and not to God the Holy Spirit. The human spirit is also in view in **verses 14-16.** The fact that the spirit that is spoken of here is the human spirit and not the Holy Spirit, let's us know that the **“mysteries”** that are spoken of in this verse have a humanistic origin and thus, would be considered pagan.

The apostle concludes his sarcasm in this verse with the word **“mysteries.”** This word is translated from the Greek noun [mysteria], which is from a derivative of [muo], **“to shut the mouth,” “a secret”** or **“mystery” (through the idea of silence imposed by initiation into religious rites).** This word should further verify that **“a false god”** is the reference in this verse, because it would be senseless to assume that one can speak **“a secret”** to the God who knows all things (**Ps. 139:1-6; 147:4; Matt. 10:29-30; Heb. 4:13**).

We must remember that God does not need man to speak **“mysteries”** back to Him. The Holy Spirit reveals divine truth, not hides it (**Eph. 6:19**). Furthermore, in the Church assembly, the Spirit of God speaks so we may know the mind of Christ (**1 Cor. 2:16**). In addition, the Spirit of God **“groans”** in the act of unheard intercession, not **“tongues” (Rom. 8:26).**

In Romans 8:26 the Greek word for **“groanings”** is [stenagmos] meaning, **“sigh”** or **“sighing”** and the word uttered

is [alaletos] meaning “unspeakable” or “unutterable.” Some today, may distort what Paul write in **Ephesians 6:19** as asking to pray in tongues, “that utterance may be given unto me.” The Greek word for “utterance” is [lagos] meaning “a word, speech, matter, reason.” Paul's reference is to God's Word. The word [lagos] is use for Bible doctrine by our Lord several times (**Matt. 13:20-23; 24:35; Jn. 5:24; 17:14**).

We can conclude then that praying in the power of the Holy Spirit means praying in fellowship and always with knowledge of God's Word. He who prays in the power of the Holy Spirit prays with knowledge of the perfect will of God.

The mysteries Paul has in mind here are of the type associated with the pagan mystery religions (Especially important in Greece were the Eleusinian and Orphic Mysteries), out of which many of the Corinthian Christians had come from (see **Intro. pages 1-2**). As we have already seen, there was certainly an abundant amount of pagan worship to false gods at the time. This practice was so prevalent that Paul makes a reference to it in **chapter 8** and again in **10:19-22**. He even let's us know that these same Corinthians had been involved in these pagan worships before they were saved (**12:2**). Unlike the mysteries of the gospel, which are revelations of things previously hidden (**Rom. 16:25-26; Eph. 1:9; 3:3-4,9: 6:19**), the practices in these pagan worships was to babble so-called mysteries to their particular god to show their initiated elite status. These mysteries intentionally remained unknown truths.

Evidently, in their lust for the legitimate gift of tongues, they had gotten involved with the pseudo tongue speaking practice of the pagan religions. He is sarcastically trying to redirect them back on the right track of their spiritual walk, which they had replaced with this pagan mystery tongue speaking. The practice they were involved in had nothing to do with their spiritual growth, but simply "edified" the self-righteous pride of their soul (v.4).

Many today, have totally ignored the sarcasm of Paul and have distorted this verse to be a positive. The apostle's satirical statements were designed to give pain to the Corinthian's pride so that they might see the error of their foolishness. He by no means had intended to shame them but to warn them of the deception that they had gotten involved in. The apostle did this from his love and concern as a father watching out for his dear children (**4:14**).

Corrective and Expanded Translation

Verse 2 For he that speaks gibberish in an unknown language, doesn't babble to men, but to an unknown god! Indeed, no on hears him so as to understand what he is saying; for from his human spirit he utters mysteries that are not explained!

TO BE CONTINUED

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