

# **Major Themes in 1 Corinthians**

*Back to the Gospel and the Christian Philosophy of Man*

*David Gooding*

A Myrtlefield House Transcript



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## Two Surveys of 1 Corinthians

You have asked me to give a survey of the first epistle by Paul to the Corinthians and then to comment on its first two chapters; and to do it all in the space of thirty-five to forty minutes, from which it is obvious that you believe that the age of miracles has not yet passed!

Now, introductions can take many forms, can they not? Some of them go into great detail such as the name of the author and who his parents were and where he was born and when he was born and where he was brought up. And then after several pages of that, they come to the date of his writing and the circumstances in which he wrote. After that, they come to all the people to whom he wrote and who they were and what they were, and what were their circumstances, and so forth. Then these introductions consider the validity of the manuscripts upon which we are dependent for our reconstruction of the text. All that I shall pass over in silence because you can find it written in the many commentaries that have such introductions and are written in much more clear English than I could possibly command.

What I will attempt to do now is to give two simple surveys of some of the prominent features of the general landscape of this epistle so that, as you come to consider the detail, you may be able to put them in their proper perspective against the major themes of the epistle. And having done that briefly, I will then attempt to sum up the point and purpose of chapters 1 and 2.

### **Survey one: Back to the gospel**

The Corinthians, our ancient brothers and sisters in Christ to whom this letter was written, were, one might say, a very reliable group of believers. If there were two ways of doing a thing—the right way and the wrong way—they could be relied upon to do it the wrong way! Only I must temper my language about them by the memory that one of these days I must meet them in glory, and if I speak too severely of them perhaps they will then accost me and want to know why then I was guilty of the same things of which they were guilty, when I criticized them so severely.

Nonetheless, the interesting thing about them is not their faults so much, though they too are instructive for us, but the way in which Paul goes about correcting their faults. From time to time, of course, he issues his apostolic command and, when necessary, he doesn't hesitate to do so. 'If anybody is spiritual,' he says, 'let him recognize that the things that I write are the commandments of the Lord' (see 14:37). At the same time, what interests me particularly is the way he generally goes about correcting the misdemeanours and faults of his fellow believers; for he does so, time and time again, by bringing the Corinthians back to the basic principles of the fundamental Christian gospel. In other words, he doesn't correct their faults

merely by turning up the rulebook and quoting rule two hundred and seventy five, subsection c. and point 1. What he does is to analyse their situation in the light of the basic principles of the fundamental Christian gospel. And he is constantly seeking to draw the believers back to the gospel message of Jesus Christ our Lord.

So let's follow him in the text as he proceeds to do this. You may have it in your hand; I do not have time to read it in detail.

### **Divisions in the church (chs. 1-4)**

In chapters 1-4, for instance, he is telling them that they must stop this incipient denominational labelling of themselves: this party strife within the church. And why must they stop it? 'Because,' he says, 'it conflicts with the fundamental message of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.' In engaging in this party strife, they are living inconsistently with what is the basic gospel message that Jesus Christ our Lord was crucified for us.

### **Immorality in the church (chs. 5-7)**

Or, if you move over into chapters 5-7, Paul is there to be heard rebuking them once more. 'You just cannot carry on like you're carrying on,' he says, 'of permitting immorality such as would shock even a pagan Greek.' And why must they stop that immorality? 'Because,' Paul says, 'it is contrary to the fundamental gospel that we Christians preach. Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us to deliver us from bondage to Satan and to sin' (see 5:7-8). But just as in Israel, the Passover had to be kept simultaneously and inseparably from the Feast of Unleavened Bread. 'So it is with us,' Paul says. Our Christian gospel is not merely that Christ died as our Passover Lamb to deliver us from bondage. Our Christian gospel contains, as an inseparable element, that those who are delivered from the guilt of sin must be delivered from the power of sin, and to live in sin is to contradict, not some rule in the church book; it is to contradict the basic principles of the gospel.

### **Compromising the Lord's table (chs. 8-10)**

'You can't go on eating meat sacrificed to idols in the idol's temple and appear to be taking part in ceremonies of the worship of idols,' Paul says (see 8:8-13). And why can't they continue eating at the table of demons? 'Because to eat at the table of demons,' he says, 'is quite inconsistent with eating of the table of the Lord' (see 10:14-22). Oh what blessed things there are, what a wonderfully rich banquet it is upon the table of the Lord — all those 'blessednesses' of which the ancients and the moderns speak. 'Oh the blessedness of the man and woman whose sins are forgiven and whose iniquities are covered, to whom the Lord will not impute iniquity' (see Ps 32:1). These are the glorious blessings with which God has laden his table of salvation. But if we eat those fundamental blessed things, those fruits of salvation, then let us know that we must live consistently with them. And it is utterly inconsistent with the Christian gospel, and all its benefits, to then go along and partake of the table of demons.

### **Misuse of the Lord's Supper (ch. 11)**

Similarly, when Paul comes to regulate their behaviour at the Lord's Supper, he says, 'Now, come, my fellow believers; this is just downright disgraceful, for when you come to eat the Lord's Supper the result is that it is utterly impossible to do so.' The reason was, of course, that the Corinthians had the habit of having a love feast before the celebration of the Lord's death. And at Corinth that love feast had got completely out of hand and turned into a mere social meal where the rich brought rich supplies and ate themselves to the full and were sizeably drunken; and the poor believers, only being able to bring a crust or two, were ashamed out of their very lives and crept into a corner (see 11:17–21). And in all that self-indulgence and social discrimination, it was impossible any longer to see the significance of the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup in memory of the Lord Jesus.

'And that won't do,' Paul says. 'To carry on like that in the church and so magnify the social side of it, and all the distractions of that communal meal, that you can't give attendance to the celebration of the Lord's body and blood, would be to contradict the very purpose for which the Lord Jesus instituted that celebration supper.' When he handed us the cup, the Lord Jesus said, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood' (see v. 25). And when we come to take the cup on the Lord's Day we are to remember the terms of its institution, are we not? We have come to have dealings with God. We have come to do business with Christ as we take the cup into our hand and hear his gracious promise: 'I will write my law on your heart and on your mind will I inscribe it' (see Heb 8:10; Jer 31:33). We must be free in mind, undistracted by any extraneous thing, so that we can have business with the Lord and say, 'Yes, Lord, even as you died to forgive me, and rose to empower me, as I take this cup, I stand with you. Please carry on and write your laws on my heart, Lord, and write your laws on my mind.' We can't afford to be distracted by all sorts of irrelevances in those sacred moments, because that would be to go counter to the very basis, and the whole point of, the gospel.

### **Abuse of spiritual gifts (chs. 12–14)**

'Now,' Paul says, 'the way you're carrying on with your gifts is positively childish, you know, really. God has endowed you with many, many gifts in Corinth, hasn't he? But the way you're using them is not profitable. You're like a lot of little children, the way you're carrying on. The way you're using your gifts for you own gratification, regardless of the edification of the church, that must stop. And it must stop for this reason. The way you are using your gifts positively goes against the very basic principle and motivation of Christianity. The mainspring of Christian life and ministry is *love*,' Paul says. 'And if I have not love, though I give my body to be burned, it profits me nothing' (see 13:3). 'Come, come, you are allowing behaviour in the church that contradicts the very basic principle of the gospel.'

### **Denying the resurrection (ch. 15)**

When he arrives, finally, at chapter 15, it's the same message, isn't it? It wasn't some simple little aberration that they caught hold of at Corinth when they taught that the resurrection of the body was impossible. They perhaps hadn't seen the implication of the false doctrine that they had imbibed; but it was no less serious. 'For,' Paul says, 'how say some of you that there

is no resurrection? If there is no resurrection, then Christ is not raised, and if Christ is not raised, then you are yet in your sins. There isn't any gospel left to preach. So, exit the whole of Christianity' (see vv. 12–19).

### **Back to the gospel**

So, once more and again, to correct the faults of the believers at Corinth, Paul is bringing the church back to the basic, fundamental principles of the gospel. And I could hope that today, as we study the Epistle to the Corinthians together, that the Holy Spirit may emphasize that in our hearts. It is nothing but healthy for a church, from time to time, to come back to the basic principles of the gospel; for, in my small experience, and in the light of the bigger experience of church history, it seems to me that very often it is the gospel that goes.

In great evangelical awakenings, people who are being converted straight out of the world and the darkness of paganism magnify the gospel, do they not? In every such wave of the workings of God's Spirit down the centuries, the recapturing of the gospel, and men and women getting converted to God, has proved to be a tremendous powerhouse. Churches have been planted all over the place, and missionaries have been sent out to the four corners of the earth on the tidal wave of the gospel. The second generation keeps it up, generally, but when it begins to come to the third generation it might be a different story. Having been brought up in Christian homes and not having had such clear-cut conversions, the danger for them is that the appreciation of the gospel begins to go low. Presently, all kinds of extraneous things are brought in by way of entertainment instead of the pure gospel of Christ. Then you get a situation where the preacher doesn't know whether he's preaching to the unconverted or the converted. The distinction between the two begins to blur, and people are allowed to take part in the Lord's Supper without being converted. And presently the edge of the gospel is gone.

I remember, in the northeast of England where I once lived, when I came to lodge in the house where I was to stay, I was told that over the road there was a gentleman who had been an atheist, but had recently been converted to Christ. When I met him he told me that, one night as he was sitting by his radio, he heard Billy Graham preach on the text, 'How shall we escape?' He said, 'David, I was overwhelmed by the sense that God was offering me something, and if I rejected it, I should never have another chance. And I knelt down by my chair, atheist though I was, and received the Saviour. The next day, I said to myself, "Well, I've become a Christian, but I don't need to go back to church. I can stay put where I am."'

But he began to read Scripture until he came across the verse, 'Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is' (see Heb 10:25). 'Well,' he said to himself, 'then I must go back to church, then.' But which church? So he decided to go back to the church where he was brought up as a boy. Then came the Sunday morning when he turned up at the door, and the elders on the door were surprised to see this atheist, as they thought, come to church. And they said, 'What has happened? Good to see you, but it's unusual, isn't it? What have you come to church for?'

'Oh,' he said, 'gentlemen, I've been saved!'

'No, no,' they said, 'there's nothing in that! That'll soon go. That's only a flash in the pan.'

It can happen, my brothers and sisters. Our Christian churches lose hold of the gospel and then allow all kinds of practices that are inconsistent with the basic gospel.

That is my survey number one.

## **Survey two: The Christian philosophy of man**

Because the First Epistle to the Corinthians contains so much reference to the gospel, here, perhaps more than anywhere else in the New Testament, we are given to see what is the Christian philosophy of man. This is my survey number two.<sup>1</sup>

What is the Christian view of man, that is, of human beings—*man* in the generic sense? I would like now to point out how beautifully this epistle outlines for us, and discusses at some length, the Christian philosophy of man. That isn't, as I say, surprising, because of Paul's emphasis on the gospel in this epistle. What is surprising, perhaps, when we first notice it, is the beautiful way Paul has constructed his letter and arranged its subject matter.

It is commonly said that in 1 Corinthians Paul is doing two things. He has received a report with some disturbing news of misbehaviour in Corinth, and he writes to correct it. Then, he has received from Corinth a number of questions, and he is writing to answer those questions. And that is that—a very practical, down-to-earth dealing with problems and answering of questions. But the First Epistle to the Corinthians is far more than that. It is written, of course, under inspiration and is very carefully ordered.

Take, for instance, the fundamental matter of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. It is so fundamental to the faith that you might have expected that when Paul wrote to the Corinthians it would be the very first thing he mentioned. 'Oh my brethren, there is this fundamental thing. You're beginning to teach there is no resurrection. That would destroy the gospel. First thing's first, so let's deal first with the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus.' Actually, he leaves it until the end, until last. And he has reasons for it, as presently we shall see.

### **Man in relation to God: a question of basic confidence (chs. 1–4)**

I advance, therefore, the thesis that here is Paul's (Christianity's, if you like) philosophy of man. In chapters 1–4, it soon becomes evident that Paul believes that natural man is a fallen creature with perverse attitudes that can be called *soulish*. 'The soulish man,' he says, 'doesn't understand the things of the Spirit of God' (see 2:14). 'The carnal man,' he says, 'behaves in such and such a way' (see 3:1). And what is more, it becomes evident that, according to Paul's understanding, the perverse attitudes of fallen man are perpetuating themselves in the Christian church, even though these people have been born again and have been saved. They need to be brought back to a proper estimate of man and his relationship to God.

Man didn't make himself, did he? If you will understand what a real man is, what true humanity is, you must understand man as he is in his relationship to God. And the central thing of a human being's proper relationship with God his maker is that the human being concerned should put his ultimate confidence absolutely in God. God spoke it through Jeremiah and enunciated this basic principle: 'Let not the wise man put his confidence in his wisdom. Let not the mighty man put his confidence in his might. Let not the rich man put his

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<sup>1</sup> See the Appendix for a summary of the following points.

confidence in his riches' (see 9:23). But then mankind, ever since *the fall*, has been inclined to do that, hasn't he? All of us are tarred with that brush. Instead of letting our confidence be in the living God, we'll put our confidence in any old thing: our wealth, our wisdom, our intellect, our homes, our families or even in great Christian leaders like Paul and Peter and Apollos; instead of allowing our confidence to be utterly in God. 'He that has confidence,' God says through Jeremiah, 'let him put his confidence in the Lord' (see v. 24). So in 1 Corinthians 1-4 we see man in his relationship to God; and the danger of being Christians continuing to live as if they were unconverted and putting their confidence elsewhere.

### **Man in relationship to the body and marriage (chs. 5-7)**

Chapters 5-7 are man in relation to his human body. I don't need to tell you that this is an exceedingly important subject. It was so then because, in the ancient world, many of the pagan nations had quite a perverted view of the human body. Many major religions in the world still have a perverted view of the human body. Hindus, for instance, and adherents of Theosophy, and that misnamed Christian Science affair, would tell you that the human body is an illusion. They say the best thing to do is to ignore the human body and try, like old Socrates and Plato after him said, to get as far away from the body as you can and keep your soul untainted by the body. Many religions would say that the body is a bad thing, on the whole. That is not Christianity. To have a healthy Christianity we have got to come to a healthy estimate of our relationship with the human body.

On the other hand, the Corinthians were going to the other extreme. Redeemed and free, they were using what they felt to be their newfound liberty in Christ to allow a permissive morality in the church. So one man in the church had taken his father's wife as his own wife, which was shocking even to the pagan Greeks (see 5:1). The danger was, therefore, that Christians should desecrate the very temples of God. 'For your body', Paul says, 'is the temple of the Holy Spirit' (see 6:19).

So, in these first few chapters we have man in relation to God, and man in relation to his body.

### **Man in relation to God: a question of disloyalty through idolatry (chs. 8-10)**

Then chapters 8-10 show us man in relation to God once more. Here, it is not so much a question of man putting his confidence somewhere else than in God. This time the danger would be that even Christian men and women would be disloyal to God and engage in forms of idolatry that would, I repeat, be utter disloyalty to God and provoke God's jealousy.

It was a marvellous thing in Corinth, and still is in some parts of the world, when Christians believe the gospel and are delivered from their fear of spirits and idolatry and demons and so forth. They come to know the living God, the one Lord Creator, as their personal Saviour. It lifts a tremendous burden of fear from their minds, and drudgery from their backs. But that freedom could go into licence, couldn't it? It was in danger of doing so with the Corinthians. Freed from fear of demons, they might nonetheless feel that their freedom allowed them to partake in idolatrous meals in the temples of the pagan deities. Our Lord himself, later on, had to complain of the church at Thyatira, 'You've got that woman

Jezebel there who teaches my servants to commit adultery and to eat foods offered to idols' (see Rev 2:20).

In many Greek towns there were trade guilds. If you wanted to be a silversmith, it would be difficult if you weren't a member of the trade guild. If you were a member of the trade guild you would be expected to go along to the dinners of your guild. At the dinners there would be plenty of women present, but they wouldn't be the men's wives; they would be certain ladies provided by the host for the occasion. And before the meal had been eaten, the meal would be offered as a sacrifice to the patron deity of the trade guild. The question would arise whether it was all right for a Christian businessman to go to the dinner parties of the trade guild and virtually take part in fornication, or consent to it as being done before their very eyes, and consent to eating food that was offered to the patron deity of the guild. And there were in the church at Thyatira teachers who said that was perfectly okay. And, of course, there are teachers in Christendom still who tell Christian businessmen that they can be members of secret societies who, in their ceremonies, worship the same old pagan deities as the ancient world worshiped, and stir it all up together as a pseudo-Christianity. But it is false, isn't it? It is disloyalty to God.

So, in the first half of his letter, Paul is dealing with his philosophy of man. First: man in relation to God. The danger here is that man puts his trust in something else than God. Second: man in relation to his body. The danger now is that he desecrates the temple of the Holy Spirit. Third: man in relation to God. The danger here is that man would be disloyal to God.

### **Man in relationship to Christ (ch. 11)**

With that we come to what is, formally, the second half of the epistle; and this now has the emphasis on man's relationship to Christ. We see that if we look at 11:3.

I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

And I fasten your attention for a moment on that last phrase, 'the head of Christ is God'. It is a phrase we could easily overlook, but what majestic wonder lies in it. How is it that the second person of the Trinity, who was equal with the Father, came to have God as his *head*? If I ask myself the question then I open that whole wonderful treasure box—the glorious story of the incarnation of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, 'who, being in the form of God, thought it not a thing to be grasped at to be equal with God, but emptied himself and took upon himself the form of a servant, and being found in the likeness of a man, he became obedient, even unto death, and that the death of the cross' (see Phil 2:6–8).

Herein stands the beginning of the other side of our Christian philosophy of man. We Christians come to God through a man. His name is Jesus. Let me remind you that Abraham didn't come to God through any man. Moses never ended up his prayers, 'In the name of the Lord Jesus.' David didn't give thanks to God for God's Son. Those Old Testament men came to God direct, didn't they? We Christians are different. We believe that, for the sake of our salvation, God himself became man—truly man! And the blessed Lord Jesus, as man, subjected himself to the Father as his head, and all for God's glory and for our salvation. And

this lies at the very heart of the gospel, does it not? For God is not just in process of forgiving us and cleansing us and restoring us to paradise. The wonderful story of salvation is that God has started all over again with mankind. God has started a new race of human beings. He is not just patching up the old, but starting all over again with a fresh race. And the head of that race is no longer Adam; it is Jesus. This is the wonderful story: God become man, and he who was equal with God now becoming man and obedient and accepting God as his head.

So here we have man, therefore, in relation to Christ the head, and the Christian man in relation to Christ the head, and the Christian woman in relation to the man. It is the protocol of redemption. And what is the danger here? It is that, as Christians, we become disloyal to the Lord Jesus.

How would we be disloyal? Well, at Corinth, on the one side it was by their refusal to use the God-given symbols by which we point to Jesus Christ as our head. Christian men did not pray with their heads covered. Why not? To give testimony that their head is Jesus—the Christ. And in Corinth they were refusing those God-given symbols and thus being disloyal to the Christian gospel and to the Lord as their head. And, worse still, at the Lord's Supper they were taking the symbols of his death without thinking what they really meant. And Paul had to remind them that it was on the night that the Lord Jesus was *betrayed* that he took bread. It is possible for us to be disloyal to the Lord Jesus even at the Lord's Supper.

### **Man in relationship to the body of Christ (chs. 12–14)**

What do we find in chapters 12–14? It is man in relation to the body once more, but not this time his own human body, but to the body of Christ. Christ has baptized his people in one spirit, into one body. And the danger here is that we would be disloyal to our fellow members in the body and to use our gifts, but not use them by love.

### **Man in relationship to Christ, the second man (ch. 15)**

Finally, we have man in his relation to the Lord Jesus once more. In that glorious chapter 15 we read, 'now is Christ risen from the dead' (see v. 20). Hear the lovely story: 'The first man was of the earth, earthy: the second man, the last Adam, is the Lord from heaven. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, so we shall bear the image of the heavenly' (see vv. 47–49). Oh, how it warms our hearts, doesn't it? What a noble salvation this is, not just the cancellation of our debt, but the creation of a completely new order of humanity! Christ, a real man, is the head. And we have the protocol of redemption: Christ the head of every man; and the man the head of the woman. Here we think of man made in the image of the glory of God and, when that image was spoiled, God beginning again with 'the last Adam', the man from heaven. It is, therefore, a wonderful picture that Paul presents to us. And all of it is necessary for a complete picture.

## **A summary of chapters 1 and 2**

Now I come to chapters 1 and 2, which I have to describe, not in detail, but in summary. I recur, therefore, to the question with which Paul begins: man's false attitude towards God. The practical question was what you might call 'incipient denominationalism'. In Corinth they

were beginning to group themselves around various Christian leaders: Paul and Peter and Apollos and so forth. What was the trouble? Well, like a Geneva cake, it was many-layered.

Firstly, it was the business of taking labels to distinguish each group from other groups of genuine believers. It is wrong, isn't it? I know some people will say, 'Well, labels don't matter; there's nothing in a name, you know.' But there is, isn't there? Imagine a dear lady, Mrs Smith, and one day her visiting card falls out of her handbag and Mr Smith picks it up. The visiting card reads: 'Mrs Brown.' And he will say, 'Who, my dear, is Mrs Brown?'

'Oh, that's me.'

'You? Your name is not Brown, is it? Your name is Mrs Smith.'

'Ah, yes, but there are so many Mrs Smiths about, that, you know, I thought it would be a very handy thing for me to distinguish myself from all of them and call myself Mrs Brown.'

Her husband would say, 'Have you gone crazy? Who is Brown?'

'Well, he's the man who introduced me to you, my love, and I thought it would be nice if I took his name to distinguish me from all the other Mrs Smiths.'

And what would the husband say? Would he say, 'Oh, that's okay, there's nothing in a name.' He wouldn't, would he?

Of course, it was worse than that. Paul claims that they were now guilty of *division* in the church. When we start grouping ourselves and labelling ourselves, very soon it leads to divisions, because these groups have a way of then organizing themselves into federations of groups. I do remind you of the evident fact of history that all federation leads to division, by definition.

I have had some people say to me in this connection: 'Look, the names by which different Christian churches call themselves is very natural. It's like different members of the family. They have different names, don't they—John and Betty, and Emmeline and so forth? Their names are pretty, and that's like it should be in a Christian family.'

But that won't do; that is false. John is John, and Mary is Mary, but (you will allow me to speak freely, won't you, and here particularly?) who are 'Christian Brethren'? They are not one group amongst all the many people of God, are they? Aren't all believers Christian brethren? If we use that term, we must mean every single believer, mustn't we? It is not a small group of churches that have agreed to federate. Who are Baptists? There is only one baptism, isn't there? I mustn't use the word 'Baptist' of myself if I mean thereby to distinguish myself from other dear believers. Shouldn't all believers be baptized?

You see, my brothers and sisters, I am not a member of 'the Christian Brethren'. You wouldn't want to distinguish yourself from me, I hope, would you? Do you really want to tell the world: 'Now, we are Christians. And that Gooding fellow, he's a Christian, but please understand, we're different from him'?

'Why can't we be content,' Paul says, 'with the name of the Lord Jesus?' It is equally applicable to all true believers, for was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? Mercifully, throughout the whole of Christendom, Christians of all kinds and shapes and sizes have at least maintained that. I've never heard of anybody getting baptized 'in the name of Christ and Paul', or 'in the name of Christ and Luther'; have you? No, folks are baptized solely in the name of Christ. And if it is enough for baptism, my brothers and sisters, why do we want any other name for our churches?

Why mustn't we do it? It is because once we start grouping ourselves around leaders or systems of theology, the danger is we get our eyes off the Lord and our confidence goes to the big men that we follow instead of our confidence remaining in the Lord. If we allow that, it is perilous.

So you will find these are the reasons Paul gives. Do not thus allow divisions to come in with their ugly labels for *it diminishes the glory of the Lord Jesus*. Was Paul crucified for you? No. Then don't call yourself after Paul. Only *one* was crucified for you. It is his name and his name only that we take.

*It defeats the strategy of God*. Why does God choose the preaching of the cross by which to save us? It is because the cross is God's deliberate strategy to break man's faith in man. See man when man had done his best, and he was so bad that it took the cross of God's Son to save him.

And, thirdly, *it detracts our attention from the Holy Spirit*. We thank God for all teachers of his word, but Paul points out in 2 Corinthians 2 that, ultimately, it is only the Holy Spirit who can give us understanding of the things of God. Therefore, when we meet, it is not to men we look, however great they are as teachers; it is to God's Holy Spirit that we look. God help us in these modern days. You sometimes hear the comment: 'We're not coming to the assembly tonight.'

Why not?

'Well,' they say, 'because we can get better on the TV from the TV evangelists.'

You can, but what about coming together with your fellow believers, not to wait upon the preacher, not to wait upon the evangelist, but to wait on God the Holy Spirit so that our confidence and expectation may be from the Holy Spirit himself? That is the path to true riches. And if we allow our confidence to be misplaced and to go over to men, in the end it will lead us out into the wilderness.

So may God encourage us in our day and generation. What a healthy thing it is that you have chosen this weekend to study this epistle once more. May it help all of us to get back to the basic principles of the gospel, to uncompromised loyalty to God and uncompromised loyalty to the Saviour. So shall we be blessed, and so shall our work for the Lord be fruitful.

## APPENDIX

### Major Sections in 1 Corinthians

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**1. Chapters 1–4: Man in relation to God**

Danger: Man's confidence in man rather than in God

Answer: The cross: Christ crucified; the wisdom and power of God

1:9—GOD IS FAITHFUL

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**2. Chapters 5–7: Man in relation to his body and to marriage**

Danger: Desecration of the Holy Spirit's temple

Answer: Passover and unleavened bread; Christ sacrificed; bought with a price, not your own

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**3. Chapters 8–10: Man in relation to God**

Danger: Idolatrous disloyalty to God

Answer: The table of the Lord; God's jealousy

10:1—GOD IS FAITHFUL

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**4. Chapter 11: Man in relation to Christ**

Danger: Disloyalty to headship and lordship of Christ

Answer: A new regime

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**5. Chapters 12–14: Man in relation to the Body of Christ**

Danger: Infringement of love

Answer: A new entity

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**6. Chapter 15: Man in relation to Christ, the Second Man: Man's true evolution**

Danger: Denial of the resurrection of the body

Answer: Back to the gospel

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## About the Author

**DAVID W. GOODING** is Professor Emeritus of Old Testament Greek at Queen's University, Belfast and a member of the Royal Irish Academy. He has taught the Bible internationally and lectured on both its authenticity and its relevance to philosophy, world religions and daily life. He has published scholarly articles on the Septuagint and Old Testament narratives, as well as expositions of Luke, John, Acts, Hebrews, the New Testament's use of the Old Testament, and several books addressing arguments against the Bible and the Christian faith. His analysis of the Bible and our world continues to shape the thinking of scholars, teachers and students alike.