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Fearless Eagle Publishing, Toronto, Ontario

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Preface

An Exposition, With Practical Observations, of The First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians

Corinth was a principal city of Greece, in that particular division of it which was called *Achaia*. It was situated on the isthmus (or neck of land) that joined Peloponnesus to the rest of Greece, on the southern side, and had two ports adjoining, one at the bottom of the Corinthian Gulf, called *Lechaeum*, not far from the city, whence they traded to Italy and the west, the other at the bottom of the Sinus Saronicus, called *Cenchrea*, at a more remote distance, whence they traded to Asia. From this situation, it is no wonder that Corinth should be a place of great trade and wealth; and, as affluence is apt to produce luxury of all kinds, neither is it to be wondered at if a place so famous for wealth and arts should be infamous for vice. It was in a particular manner noted for fornication, insomuch that a *Corinthian woman* was a proverbial phrase for a strumpet, and *korinthiazein*, *korinthiasesthai*—*to play the Corinthian*, is to play the whore, or indulge whorish inclinations. Yet in this lewd city did Paul, by the blessing of God on his labours, plant and raise a Christian church, chiefly among the Gentiles, as seems very probable from the history of this matter, Acts 18:1–18, compared with some passages in this epistle, particularly 12:2, where the apostle tells them, *You know that you wee Gentiles, carried away to those dumb idols even as you were led*, though it is not improbable that many Jewish converts might be also among them, for we are told that *Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord, with all his house*, Acts 18:8. He continued in this city nearly two years, as is plain from Acts 18:11 and 18 compared, and laboured with great success, being encouraged by a divine vision assuring him God *had much people in that city*, Acts 18:9, 10. Nor did he use to stay long in a place where his ministry met not with acceptance and success.

Some time after he left them he wrote this epistle to them, to water what he had planted and rectify some gross disorders which during his absence had been introduced, partly from the interest some false teacher or teachers had obtained amongst them, and partly from the leaven of their old maxims and manners, that had not been thoroughly purged out by the Christian principles they had entertained. And it is but too visible how much their wealth had helped to corrupt their manners, from the several faults for which the apostle reprehends them. Pride, avarice, luxury, lust (the natural offspring of a carnal and corrupt mind), are all fed and prompted by outward affluence. And with all these either the body of this people or some particular persons among them are here charged by the apostle. Their pride discovered itself in their parties and factions, and the notorious disorders they committed in the exercise of their spiritual gifts. And this vice was not wholly fed by their wealth, but by the insight they had into the Greek learning and philosophy. Some of the ancients tell us that the city abounded with rhetoricians and philosophers. And these were men naturally vain, full of self-conceit, and apt to despise the plain doctrine of the gospel, because it did not feed the curiosity of an inquisitive and disputing temper, nor please the ear with artful speeches and a flow of fine words. Their avarice was manifest in their law-suits and litigations about *meum*—*mine*, and *tuum*—*thine*, before heathen judges. Their luxury appeared in more instances than one, in their dress, in their debauching themselves even at the Lord's table, when the rich, who were most faulty on this account, were guilty also of a very proud and criminal contempt of their

poor brethren. Their lust broke out in a most flagrant and infamous instance, such as had not been named among the Gentiles, not spoken of without detestation—that a man should have his father's wife, either as his wife, or so as to commit fornication with her. This indeed seems to be the fault of a particular person; but the whole church were to blame that they had his crime in no greater abhorrence, that they could endure one of such very corrupt morals and of so flagitious a behaviour among them. But their participation in his sin was yet greater, if, as some of the ancients tell us, they were puffed up on behalf of the great learning and eloquence of this incestuous person. And it is plain from other passages of the epistle that they were not so entirely free from their former lewd inclinations as not to need very strict cautions and strong arguments against fornication: see 6:9-20. The pride of their learning had also carried many of them so far as to disbelieve or dispute against the doctrine of the resurrection. It is not improbable that they treated this question problematically, as they did many questions in philosophy, and tried their skill by arguing it *pro* and *con*.

It is manifest from this state of things that there was much that deserved reprehension, and needed correction, in this church. And the apostle, under the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit, sets himself to do both with all wisdom and faithfulness, and with a due mixture of tenderness and authority, as became one in so elevated and important a station in the church. After a short introduction at the beginning of the epistle, he first blames them for their discord and factions, enters into the origin and source of them, shows them how much pride and vanity, and the affectation of science, and learning, and eloquence, flattered by false teachers, contributed to the scandalous schism; and prescribes humility, and submission to divine instruction, the teaching of God by his Spirit, both by external revelation and internal illumination, as a remedy for the evils that abounded amongst them. He shows them the vanity of their pretended science and eloquence on many accounts. This he does through the first four chapters. In the fifth he treats of the case of the incestuous person, and orders him to be put out from among them. Nor is what the ancients say improbable, that this incestuous person was a man in great esteem, and head of one party at least among them. The apostle seems to tax them with being puffed up on his account, 5:2. In the sixth chapter he blames them for their law-suits, carried on before heathen judges, when their disputes about property should have been amicably determined amongst themselves, and in the close of the chapter warns them against the sin of fornication, and urges his caution with a variety of arguments. In the seventh chapter he gives advice upon a case of conscience, which some of that church had proposed to him in an epistle, about marriage, and shows it to be appointed of God as a remedy against fornication, that the ties of it were not dissolved, though a husband or wife continued a heathen, when the other became a Christian; and, in short, that Christianity made no change in men's civil states and relations. He gives also some directions here about virgins, in answer, as is probable, to the Corinthians' enquiries. In the eighth he directs them about meats offered to idols, and cautions them against abusing their Christian liberty. From this he also takes occasion, in the ninth chapter, to expatiate a little on his own conduct upon this head of liberty. For, though he might have insisted on a maintenance from the churches where he ministered, he waived this demand, that *he might make the gospel of Christ without charge*, and did in other things comply with and suit himself to the tempers and circumstances of those among whom he laboured, for their good. In the tenth chapter he dissuades them, from the example of the Jews, against having communion with idolaters, by eating of their sacrifices, inasmuch as they

could not be at once partakers of the Lord's table and the table of devils, though they were not bound to enquire concerning meat sold in the shambles, or set before them at a feast made by unbelievers, whether it were a part of the idol-sacrifices or no, but were at liberty to eat without asking questions. In the eleventh chapter he gives direction about their habit in public worship, blames them for their gross irregularities and scandalous disorders in receiving the Lord's supper, and solemnly warns them against the abuse of so sacred an institution. In the twelfth chapter he enters on the consideration of spiritual gifts, which were poured forth in great abundance on this church, upon which they were not a little elated. He tells them, in this chapter, that all came from the same original, and were all directed to the same end. They issued from one Spirit, and were intended for the good of the church, and must be abused when they were not made to minister to this purpose. Towards the close he informs them that they were indeed valuable gifts, but he could recommend to them something far more excellent, upon which he breaks out, in the thirteenth chapter, into the commendation and characteristics of charity. And then, in the fourteenth, he directs them how to keep up decency and order in the churches in the use of their spiritual gifts, in which they seem to have been exceedingly irregular, through pride of their gifts and a vanity of showing them. The fifteenth chapter is taken up in confirming and explaining the great doctrine of the resurrection. The last chapter consists of some particular advices and salutations; and thus the epistle closes.

Chapter 1

In this chapter we have, I. The preface or introduction to the whole epistle (v. 1-9). II. One principal occasion of writing it hinted, namely, their divisions and the origin of them (v. 10-13). III. An account of Paul's ministry among them, which was principally preaching the gospel (v. 14-17). IV. The manner wherein he preached the gospel, and the different success of it, with an account how admirably it was fitted to bring glory to God and beat down the pride and vanity of men (v. 17 to the end).

Verses 1-9

We have here the apostle's preface to his whole epistle, in which we may take notice,

I. Of the inscription, in which, according to the custom of writing letters then, the name of the person by whom it was written and the persons to whom it was written are both inserted. 1. It is an epistle from Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, to the church of Corinth, which he himself had planted, though there were some among them that now questioned his apostleship (ch. 9:1, 2), and vilified his person and ministry, 2 Co. 10:10. The most faithful and useful ministers are not secure from this contempt. He begins with challenging this character: *Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, through the will of God*. He had not taken this honour to himself, but had a divine commission for it. It was proper at any time, but necessary at this time, to assert his character, and magnify his office, when false teachers made a merit of running him down, and their giddy and deluded followers were so apt to set them up in competition with him. It was not pride in Paul, but faithfulness to his trust, in this juncture, to maintain his apostolical character and authority. And, to make this more fully appear, he joins Sosthenes with him in writing, who was a minister of a lower rank. Paul, and Sosthenes his brother, not a fellow-apostle, but a fellow-minister, once a ruler of the Jewish synagogue, afterwards a convert to Christianity, a Corinthian by birth, as is most probable, and dear to this people, for which reason Paul, to ingratiate himself with them, joins them with himself in his first salutations. There is no reason to suppose he was made a partaker of the apostle's inspiration, for which reasons he speaks, through the rest of the epistle, in his own name, and in the singular number. Paul did not in any case lessen his apostolical authority, and yet he was ready upon all occasions to do a kind and condescending thing for their good to whom he ministered. The persons to whom this epistle was directed were *the church of God that was at Corinth, sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called to be saints*. All Christians are thus far sanctified in Christ Jesus, that they are by baptism dedicated and devoted to him, they are under strict obligations to be holy, and they make profession of real sanctity. If they be not truly holy, it is their own fault and reproach. Note, It is the design of Christianity to sanctify us in Christ. *He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*. In conjunction with the church at Corinth, he directs the epistle *to all that in every place call on the name of Christ Jesus our Lord, both theirs and ours*. Hereby Christians are distinguished from the profane and atheistical, that they dare not live without prayer; and hereby they are distinguished from Jews and Pagans, that they call on the name of Christ. He is their common head and Lord. Observe, In every place in the Christian world there are some that call on the name of Christ. God hath a remnant in all places; and we should have a common concern for and hold

communion with all that call on Christ's name.

II. Of the apostolical benediction. *Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* An apostle of the prince of peace must be a messenger and minister of peace. This blessing the gospel brings with it, and this blessing every preacher of the gospel should heartily wish and pray may be the lot of all among whom he ministers. Grace and peace—the favour of God, and reconciliation to him. It is indeed the summary of all blessings. *The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace,* was the form of benediction under the Old Testament (Num. 6:26), but this advantage we have by the gospel, 1. That we are directed how to obtain that peace from God: it is in and by Christ. Sinners can have no peace with God, nor any good from him, but through Christ. 2. We are told what must qualify us for this peace; namely, grace: first grace, then peace. God first reconciles sinners to himself, before he bestows his peace upon them.

III. Of the apostle's thanksgiving to God on their behalf. Paul begins most of his epistles with thanksgiving to God for his friends and prayer for them. Note, The best way of manifesting our affection to our friends is by praying and giving thanks for them. It is one branch of the communion of saints to give thanks to God mutually for our gifts, graces, and comforts. He gives thanks, 1. For their conversion to the faith of Christ: *For the grace which was given you through Jesus Christ,* v. 4. He is the great procurer and disposer of the favours of God. Those who are united to him by faith, and made to partake of his Spirit and merits, are the objects of divine favour. God loves them, bears them hearty good-will, and bestows on them his fatherly smiles and blessings. 2. For the abundance of their spiritual gifts. This the church of Corinth was famous for. They did not come behind any of the churches in any gift, v. 7. He specifies *utterance and knowledge,* v. 5. Where God has given these two gifts, he has given great capacity for usefulness. Many have the flower of utterance that have not the root of knowledge, and their converse is barren. Many have the treasure of knowledge, and want utterance to employ it for the good of others, and then it is in a manner wrapped up in a napkin. But, where God gives both, a man is qualified for eminent usefulness. When the church of Corinth was enriched with all utterance and all knowledge, it was fit that a large tribute of praise should be rendered to God, especially when these gifts were a testimony to the truth of the Christian doctrine, a confirmation of the testimony of Christ among them, v. 6. They were *signs and wonders and gifts of the Holy Ghost,* by which God did bear witness to the apostles, both to their mission and doctrine (Heb. 2:4), so that the more plentifully they were poured forth on any church the more full attestation was given to that doctrine which was delivered by the apostles, the more confirming evidence they had of their divine mission. And it is no wonder that when they had such a foundation for their faith they should live in expectation of the coming of their Lord Jesus Christ, v. 7. It is the character of Christians that they wait for Christ's second coming; all our religion has regard to this: we believe it, and hope for it, and it is the business of our lives to prepare for it, if we are Christians indeed. And the more confirmed we are in the Christian faith the more firm is our belief of our Lord's second coming, and the more earnest our expectation of it.

IV. Of the encouraging hopes the apostle had of them for the time to come, founded on the power and love of Christ, and the faithfulness of God, v. 8, 9. He who had begun a good work in them, and carried it on thus far, would not leave it unfinished. Those that wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ will be kept by him, and confirmed to the end; and those that are so

will be blameless in the day of Christ: not upon the principle of strict justice, but gracious absolution; not in rigour of law, but from rich and free grace. How desirable is it to be confirmed and kept of Christ for such a purpose as this! How glorious are the hopes of such a privilege, whether for ourselves or others! To be kept by the power of Christ from the power of our own corruption and Satan's temptation, that we may appear without blame in the great day! O glorious expectation, especially when the faithfulness of God comes in to support our hopes! He *who hath called us into the fellowship of his Son is faithful, and will do it*, 1 Th. 5:24. He who hath brought us into near and dear relation to Christ, into sweet and intimate communion with Christ, is faithful; he may be trusted with our dearest concerns. Those that come at his call shall never be disappointed in their hopes in him. If we approve ourselves faithful to God, we shall never find him unfaithful to us. *He will not suffer his faithfulness to fail*, Ps. 89:33.

Verses 10-13

Here the apostle enters on his subject.

I. He extorts them to unity and brotherly love, and reproves them for their divisions. He had received an account from some that wished them well of some unhappy differences among them. It was neither ill-will to the church, nor to their ministers, that prompted them to give this account; but a kind and prudent concern to have these heats qualified by Paul's interposition.

He writes to them in a very engaging way: *"I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; if you have any regard to that dear and worthy name by which you are called, be unanimous. Speak all the same thing; avoid divisions or schisms"* (as the original is), "that is, all alienation of affection from each other. *Be perfectly joined together in the same mind*, as far as you can. In the great things of religion be of a mind: but, when there is not a unity of sentiment, let there be a union of affections. The consideration of being agreed in greater things should extinguish all feuds and divisions about minor ones."

II. He hints at the origin of these contentions. Pride lay at the bottom, and this made them factious. *Only of pride cometh contention*, Prov. 13:10. They quarrelled about their ministers. Paul and Apollos were both faithful ministers of Jesus Christ, and helpers of their faith and joy: but those who were disposed to be contentious broke into parties, and set their ministers at the head of their several factions: some cried up Paul, perhaps as the most sublime and spiritual teacher; others cried up Apollos, perhaps as the most eloquent speaker; some Cephas, or Peter, perhaps for the authority of his age, or because he was the apostle of the circumcision; and some were for none of them, but Christ only. So liable are the best things in the world to be corrupted, and the gospel and its institutions, which are at perfect harmony with themselves and one another, to be made the engines of variance, discord, and contention. This is no reproach to our religion, but a very melancholy evidence of the corruption and depravity of human nature. Note, How far will pride carry Christians in opposition to one another! Even so far as to set Christ and his own apostles at variance, and make them rivals and competitors.

III. He expostulates with them upon their discord and quarrels: *"Is Christ divided?"* No, there is but one Christ, and therefore Christians should be on one heart. *Was Paul crucified for you?* Was he your sacrifice and atonement? Did I ever pretend to be your saviour, or any more than his minister? Or, *were you baptized in the name of Paul?* Were you devoted to my service, or engaged to be my disciples, by that sacred rite? Did I challenge that right in you, or dependence from you, which is the proper

claim of your God and Redeemer?" No; ministers, however instrumental they are of good to us, are not to be put in Christ's stead. They are not to usurp Christ's authority, nor encourage any thing in the people that looks like transferring his authority to them. He is our Saviour and sacrifice, he is our Lord and guide. And happy were it for the churches if there were no name of distinction among them, as Christ is not divided.

Verses 14-16

Here the apostle gives an account of his ministry among them. He thanks God he had baptized but a few among them, *Crispus*, who had been a ruler of a synagogue at Corinth (Acts 18:8), *Gaius*, and *the household of Stephanas*, besides whom, he says, he did not remember that he had baptized any. But how was this a proper matter for thankfulness? Was it not a part of the apostolical commission to baptize all nations? And could Paul give thanks to God for his own neglect of duty? He is not to be understood in such a sense as if he were thankful for not having baptized at all, but for not having done it in present circumstances, lest it should have had this very bad construction put upon it—that he had baptized in his own name, made disciples for himself, or set himself up as the head of a sect. He left it to other ministers to baptize, while he set himself to more useful work, and filled up his time with preaching the gospel. This, he thought, was more his business, because the more important business of the two. He had assistants that could baptize, when none could discharge the other part of his office so well as himself. In this sense he says, *Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel*—not so much to baptize as to preach. Note, Ministers should consider themselves sent and set apart more especially to that service in which Christ will be most honoured and the salvation of souls promoted, and for which they are best fitted, though no part of their duty is to be neglected. The principal business Paul did among them was to preach *the gospel* (v. 17), *the cross* (v. 18), *Christ crucified*, v. 23. Ministers are the soldiers of Christ, and are to erect and display the banner of the cross. He did not preach his own fancy, but the gospel—the glad tidings of peace, and reconciliation to God, through the mediation of a crucified Redeemer. This is the sum and substance of the gospel. Christ crucified is the foundation of all our joys. By his death we live. This is what Paul preached, what all ministers should preach, and what all the saints live upon.

Verses 17-31

We have here,

I. The manner in which Paul preached the gospel, and the cross of Christ: *Not with the wisdom of words* (v. 17), *the enticing words of man's wisdom* (ch. 2:4), the flourish of oratory, or the accuracies of philosophical language, upon which the Greeks so much prided themselves, and which seem to have been the peculiar recommendations of some of the heads of the faction in this church that most opposed this apostle. He did not preach the gospel in this manner, lest *the cross of Christ should be of no effect*, lest the success should be ascribed to the force of art, and not of truth; not to the plain doctrine of a crucified Jesus, but to the powerful oratory of those who spread it, and hereby the honour of the cross be diminished or eclipsed. Paul had been bred up himself in Jewish learning at the feet of Gamaliel, but in preaching the cross of Christ he laid his learning aside. He preached a crucified Jesus in plain language, and told the people that that Jesus who was crucified at Jerusalem was the Son of God and Saviour of men, and that all who would be saved must repent of their sins, and believe in him, and submit to his

government and laws. This truth needed no artificial dress; it shone out with the greatest majesty in its own light, and prevailed in the world by its divine authority, and the demonstration of the Spirit, without any human helps. The plain preaching of a crucified Jesus was more powerful than all the oratory and philosophy of the heathen world.

II. We have the different effects of this preaching: To those who perish it is foolishness, *but to those who are saved it is the power of God*, v. 18. *It is to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God*, v. 23, 24. 1. Christ crucified is a stumbling-block to the Jews. They could not get over it. They had a conceit that their expected Messiah was to be a great temporal prince, and therefore would never own one who made so mean an appearance in life, and died so accursed a death, for their deliverer and king. They despised him, and looked upon him as execrable, because he was hanged on a tree, and because he did not gratify them with a sign to their mind, though his divine power shone out in innumerable miracles. The Jews require a sign, v. 22. See Mt. 12:38. 2. He was to the Greeks foolishness. They laughed at the story of a crucified Saviour, and despised the apostles' way of telling it. They sought for wisdom. They were men of wit and reading, men that had cultivated arts and sciences, and had, for some ages, been in a manner the very mint of knowledge and learning. There was nothing in the plain doctrine of the cross to suit their taste, nor humour their vanity, nor gratify a curious and wrangling temper: they entertained it therefore with scorn and contempt. What, hope to be saved by one that could not save himself! And trust in one who was condemned and crucified as a malefactor, a man of mean birth and poor condition in life, and cut off by so vile and opprobrious a death! This was what the pride of human reason and learning could not relish. The Greeks thought it little better than stupidity to receive such a doctrine, and pay this high regard to such a person: and thus were they justly left to perish in their pride and obstinacy. Note, It is just with God to leave those to themselves who pour such proud contempt on divine wisdom and grace. 3. To those who are called and saved *he is the wisdom of God, and the power of God*. Those who are called and sanctified, who receive the gospel, and are enlightened by the Spirit of God, discern more glorious discoveries of God's wisdom and power in the doctrine of Christ crucified than in all his other works. Note, Those who are saved *are reconciled to the doctrine of the cross*, and led into an experimental acquaintance with the mysteries of Christ crucified.

III. We have here the triumphs of the cross over human wisdom, according to the ancient prophecy (Isa. 29:14): *I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?* v. 19, 20, All the valued learning of this world was confounded, baffled, and eclipsed, by the Christian revelation and the glorious triumphs of the cross. The heathen politicians and philosophers, the Jewish rabbis and doctors, the curious searchers into the secrets of nature, were all posed and put to a nonplus. This scheme lay out of the reach of the deepest statesmen and philosophers, and the greatest pretenders to learning both among the Jews and Greeks. When God would save the world, he took a way by himself; and good reason, for *the world by wisdom knew not God*, v. 21. All the boasted science of the heathen world did not, could not, effectually bring home the world to God. In spite of all their wisdom, ignorance still prevailed, iniquity still abounded. Men were puffed up by their imaginary knowledge, and rather further alienated from God; and therefore *it pleased him, by the foolishness of*

preaching, to save those that believe. By the foolishness of preaching—not such in truth, but in vulgar reckoning.

1. The thing preached was foolishness in the eyes of worldly-wise men. Our living through one who died, our being blessed by one who was made a curse, our being justified by one who was himself condemned, was all folly and inconsistency to men blinded with self-conceit and wedded to their own prejudices and the boasted discoveries of their reason and philosophy.

2. The manner of preaching the gospel was foolishness to them too. None of the famous men for wisdom or eloquence were employed to plant the church or propagate the gospel. A few fishermen were called out, and sent upon this errand. These were commissioned to disciple the nations: these vessels chosen to convey the treasure of saving knowledge to the world. There was nothing in them that at first view looked grand or august enough to come from God; and the proud pretenders to learning and wisdom despised the doctrine for the sake of those who dispensed it. And yet *the foolishness of God is wiser than men*, v. 25.

Those methods of divine conduct that vain men are apt to censure as unwise and weak have more true, solid, and successful wisdom in them, than all the learning and wisdom that are among men: "*You see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called*, v. 26, etc. You see the state of Christianity; not many men of learning, or authority, or honourable extraction, are called." There is a great deal of meanness and weakness in the outward appearance of our religion. For, (1.) Few of distinguished character in any of these respects were chosen for the work of the ministry. God did not choose philosophers, nor orators, nor statesmen, nor men of wealth and power and interest in the world, to publish the gospel of grace and peace. Not the wise men after the flesh, though men would apt to think that a reputation for wisdom and learning might have contributed much to the success of the gospel. Not the mighty and noble, however men might be apt to imagine that secular pomp and power would make way for its reception in the world. But God seeth not as man seeth. He hath chosen the foolish things of the world, the weak things of the world, the base and despicable things of the world, men of mean birth, of low rank, of no liberal education, to be the preachers of the gospel and planters of the church. *His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways*. He is a better judge than we what instruments and measures will best serve the purposes of his glory. (2.) Few of distinguished rank and character were called to be Christians. As the teachers were poor and mean, so generally were the converts. Few of the wise, and mighty, and noble, embraced the doctrine of the cross. The first Christians, both among Jews and Greeks, were weak, and foolish, and base; men of mean furniture as to their mental improvements, and very mean rank and condition as to their outward estate; and yet what glorious discoveries are there of divine wisdom in the whole scheme of the gospel, and in this particular circumstance of its success!

IV. We have an account how admirably all is fitted, 1. To beat down the pride and vanity of men. God hath chosen *the foolish things of the world to confound the wise*—men of no learning to confound the most learned; *the weak things of the world to confound the might*—men of mean rank and circumstances to confound and prevail against all the power and authority of earthly kings; *and base things, and things which are despised*—things which men have in the lowest esteem, or in the utmost contempt, to pour contempt and disgrace on all they value and have in veneration; *and things which are not, to bring to nought (to abolish) things that are*—the conversion of the Gentiles (of whom the Jews had the most contemptuous and vilifying thoughts) was to open a way to the abolishing of that constitution of which they were so fond, and upon which they valued

themselves so much as for the sake of it to despise the rest of the world. It is common for the Jews to speak of the Gentiles under this character, as *things that are not*. Thus, in the apocryphal book of Esther, she is brought in praying that God would not give his sceptre to those *who are not*, Esth. 14:11. Esdras, in one of the apocryphal books under his name, speaks to God *of the heathen as those who are reputed as nothing*, 2 Esdras 6:56, 57. And the apostle Paul seems to have this common language of the Jews in his view when he calls Abraham the *father of us all before him whom he believed, God, who calleth those things that are not as though they were*, Rom. 4:17. The gospel is fitted to bring down the pride of both Jews and Greeks, to shame the boasted science and learning of the Greeks, and to take down that constitution on which the Jews valued themselves and despised all the world besides, *that no flesh should glory in his presence* (v. 29), that there might be no pretence for boasting. Divine wisdom alone had the contrivance of the method of redemption; divine grace alone revealed it, and made it known. It lay, in both respects, out of human reach. And the doctrine and discovery prevailed, in spite of all the opposition it met with from human art or authority: so effectually did God veil the glory and disgrace the pride of man in all. The gospel dispensation is a contrivance to humble man. But, 2. It is as admirably fitted to glorify God. There is a great deal of power and glory in the substance and life of Christianity. Though the ministers were poor and unlearned, and the converts generally of the meanest rank, yet the hand of the Lord went along with the preachers, and was mighty in the hearts of the hearers; and Jesus Christ was made both to ministers and Christians what was truly great and honourable. All we have we have from God as the fountain, and in and through Christ as the channel of conveyance. He is made of God to us *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption* (v. 30): all we need, or can desire. We are foolishness, ignorant and blind in the things of God, with all our boasted knowledge; and he is made wisdom to us. We are guilty, obnoxious to justice; and he is made righteousness, our great atonement and sacrifice. We are depraved and corrupt; and he is made sanctification, the spring of our spiritual life; from him, the head, it is communicated to all the members of his mystical body by his Holy Spirit. We are in bonds, and he is made redemption to us, our Saviour and deliverer. Observe, Where Christ is made righteousness to any soul, he is also made sanctification. He never discharges from the guilt of sin, without delivering from the power of it; and he is made righteousness and sanctification, that he may in the end be made complete redemption, may free the soul from the very being of sin, and loose the body from the bonds of the grave: and what is designed in all is *that all flesh may glory in the Lord*, v. 31. Observe, It is the will of God that all our glorifying should be in the Lord: and, our salvation being only through Christ, it is thereby effectually provided that it should be so. Man is humbled, and God glorified and exalted, by the whole scheme.

Chapter 2

The apostle proceeds with his argument in this chapter, and, I. Reminds the Corinthians of the plain manner wherein he delivered the gospel to them (v. 1-5). But yet, II. Shows them that he had communicated to them a treasure of the truest and highest wisdom, such as exceeded all the attainments of learned men, such as could never have entered into the heart of man if it had not been revealed, nor can be received and improved to salvation but by the light and influence of that Spirit who revealed it (v. 6 to the end).

Verses 1-5

In this passage the apostle pursues his design, and reminds the Corinthians how he acted when he first preached the gospel among them.

I. As to the matter or subject he tell us (v. 2), *He determined to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ and him crucified*—to make a show of no other knowledge than this, to preach nothing, to discover the knowledge of nothing, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Note, Christ, in his person and offices, is the sum and substance of the gospel, and ought to be the great subject of a gospel minister's preaching. His business is to display the banner of the cross, and invite people under it. Any one that heard Paul preach found him to harp so continually on this string that he would say he knew nothing but Christ and him crucified. Whatever other knowledge he had, this was the only knowledge he discovered, and showed himself concerned to propagate among his hearers.

II. The manner wherein he preached Christ is here also observable. 1. Negatively. *He came not among them with excellency of speech or wisdom*, v. 1. *His speech and preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom*, v. 4. He did not affect to appear a fine orator or a deep philosopher; nor did he insinuate himself into their minds, by a flourish of words, or a pompous show of deep reason and extraordinary science and skill. He did not set himself to captivate the ear by fine turns and eloquent expressions, nor to please and entertain the fancy with lofty flights of sublime notions. Neither his speech, nor the wisdom he taught, savoured of human skill: he learnt both in another school. Divine wisdom needed not to be set off with such human ornaments. 2. Positively. He came among them *declaring the testimony of God*, v. 1. He published a divine revelation, and gave in sufficient vouchers for the authority of it, both by its consonancy to ancient predictions and by present miraculous operations; and there he left the matter. Ornaments of speech and philosophical skill and argument could add no weight to what came recommended by such authority. *He was also among them in weakness and fear, and in much trembling*; and yet *his speech and preaching were in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*, v. 3, 4. His enemies in the church of Corinth spoke very contemptuously of him: *His bodily presence, say they, is weak, and his speech contemptible*, 2 Co. 10:10. Possibly he had a little body, and a low voice; but, though he had not so good an elocution as some, it is plain that he was no mean speaker. The men of Lystra looked on him to be the heathen god Mercury, come down to them in the form of a man, because he was the chief speaker, Acts 14:12. Nor did he want courage nor resolution to go through his work; he was *in nothing terrified by his adversaries*. Yet he was no boaster. He did not proudly vaunt himself, like his opposers. He acted in his office with much

modesty, concern, and care. He behaved with great humility among them; not as one grown vain with the honour and authority conferred on him, but as one concerned to approve himself faithful, and fearful of himself, lest he should mismanage in his trust. Observe, None know the fear and trembling of faithful ministers, who are zealous over souls with a godly jealousy; and a deep sense of their own weakness is the occasion of this fear and trembling. They know how insufficient they are, and are therefore fearful for themselves. But, though Paul managed with this modesty and concern, yet he spoke with authority: *In the demonstration of the Spirit and of power*. He preached the truths of Christ in their native dress, with plainness of speech. He laid down the doctrine as the Spirit delivered it; and left the Spirit, by his external operation in signs and miracles, and his internal influences on the hearts of men, to demonstrate the truth of it, and procure its reception.

III. Here is the end mentioned for which he preached Christ crucified in this manner: *That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but the power of God* (v. 5)—that they might not be drawn by human motives, nor overcome by mere human arguments, lest it should be said that either rhetoric or logic had made them Christians. But, when nothing but Christ crucified was plainly preached, the success must be founded, not on human wisdom, but divine evidence and operation. The gospel was so preached that God might appear and be glorified in all.

Verses 6-16

In this part of the chapter the apostle shows them that though he had not come to them with the excellency of human wisdom, with any of the boasted knowledge and literature of the Jews or Greeks, yet he had communicated to them a treasure of the truest and the highest wisdom: *We speak wisdom among those who are perfect* (v. 6), among those who are well instructed in Christianity, and come to some maturity in the things of God. Those that receive the doctrine as divine, and, having been illuminated by the Holy Spirit, have looked well into it, discover true wisdom in it. They not only understand the plain history of Christ, and him crucified, but discern the deep and admirable designs of the divine wisdom therein. Though what we preach is foolishness to the world, it is wisdom to them. They are made wise by it, and can discern wisdom in it. Note, Those who are wise themselves are the only proper judges of what is wisdom; *not indeed the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, but the wisdom of God in a mystery* (v. 6, 7); not worldly wisdom, but divine; not such as the men of this world could have discovered, nor such as worldly men, under the direction of pride, and passion, and appetite, and worldly interest, and destitute of the Spirit of God, can receive. Note, How different is the judgment of God from that of the world! *He seeth not as man seeth*. The wisdom he teaches is of a quite different kind from what passes under that notion in the world. It is not the wisdom of politicians, nor philosophers, nor rabbis (see v. 6), not such as they teach nor such as they relish; *but the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom of God*—what he had a long time kept to himself, and concealed from the world, and the depth of which, now it is revealed, none but himself can fathom. *It is the mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations, though now made manifest to the saints* (Col. 1:26), hid in a manner entirely from the heathen world, and made mysterious to the Jews, by being wrapped up in dark types and distant prophecies, but revealed and made known to us by the Spirit of God. Note, See the privilege of those who enjoy the gospel revelation: to them types are unveiled, mysteries made plain, prophecies interpreted, and the secret counsels of God published and laid open. The wisdom of God in a mystery is now

made manifest to the saints. Now, concerning this wisdom, observe,

I. The rise and origin of it: *It was ordained of God, before the world, to our glory*, v. 7. It was ordained of God; he had determined long ago to reveal and make it known, from many ages past, from the beginning, nay, from eternity; and that to our glory, *the glory of us*, either us apostles or us Christians. It was a great honour put upon the apostles, to be entrusted with the revelation of this wisdom. It was a great and honourable privilege for Christians to have this glorious wisdom discovered to them. And the wisdom of God discovered to them. And the wisdom of God discovered in the gospel, the divine wisdom taught by the gospel, prepares for our everlasting glory and happiness in the world to come. The counsels of God concerning our redemption are dated from eternity, and designed for the glory and happiness of the saints. And what deep wisdom was in these counsels! Note, The wisdom of God is both employed and displayed for the honour of the saints-employed from eternity, and displayed in time, to make them glorious both here and hereafter, in time and to eternity. What honour does he put on his saints!

II. The ignorance of the great men of the world about it: *Which none of the princes of this world knew* (v. 8), the principal men in authority and power, or in wisdom and learning. The Roman governor, and the guides and rulers of the Jewish church and nation, seem to be the persons here chiefly meant. These were the princes of this world, or this age, who, had they known this true and heavenly wisdom, would not have crucified the Lord of glory. This Pilate and the Jewish rulers literally did when our Redeemer was crucified upon the sentence of the one and the clamorous demands of the other. Observe, Jesus Christ is the Lord of Glory, a title much too great for any creature to bear: and the reason why he was hated was because he was not known. Had his crucifiers known him, known who and what he was, they would have withheld their impious hands, and not have taken and slain him. This he pleaded with his Father for their pardon: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*, Lu. 23:34. Note, There are many things which people would not do if they knew the wisdom of God in the great work of redemption. They act as they do because they are blind or heedless. They know not the truth, or will not attend to it.

III. It is such wisdom as could not have been discovered without a revelation, according to what the prophet Isaiah says (Isa. 64:4), *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for those that love him—for him that waiteth for him*, that waiteth for his mercy, so the Septuagint. It was a testimony of love to God in the Jewish believers to live in expectation of the accomplishment of evangelical promises. Waiting upon God is an evidence of love to him. *Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him*, Isa. 25:9. Observe, There are things which God hath prepared for those that love him, and wait for him. There are such things prepared in a future life for them, things which sense cannot discover, no present information can convey to our ears, nor can yet enter our hearts. *Life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel*, 2 Tim. 1:10. But the apostle speaks here of the subject-matter of the divine revelation under the gospel. These are such as eye hath not seen nor ear heard. Observe, The great truths of the gospel are things lying out of the sphere of human discovery: *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard them, nor have they entered into the heart of man*. Were they objects of sense, could they be discovered by an eye of reason, and communicated by the ear to the mind, as matters of common human knowledge may, there had been no need of a revelation. But, lying out of the sphere of nature, we cannot discover them but by

the light of revelation. And therefore we must take them as they lie in the scriptures, and as God has been pleased to reveal them.

IV. We here see by whom this wisdom is discovered to us: *God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit*, v. 10. The scripture is given by inspiration of God. *Holy men spoke of old as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*, 2 Pt. 1:21. And the apostles spoke by inspiration of the same Spirit, as he taught them, and gave them utterance. Here is a proof of the divine authority of the holy scriptures. Paul wrote what he taught: and what he taught was revealed of God by his Spirit, *that Spirit that searches all things, yea, the deep things of God, and knows the things of God, as the spirit of a man that is in him knows the things of a man*, v. 11. A double argument is drawn from these words in proof of the divinity of the Holy Ghost:—1. Omniscience is attributed to him: *He searches all things, even the deep things of God*. He has exact knowledge of all things, and enters into the very depths of God, penetrates into his most secret counsels. Now who can have such a thorough knowledge of God but God? 2. This allusion seems to imply that the Holy Spirit is as much in God as a man's mind is in himself. Now the mind of the man is plainly essential to him. He cannot be without his mind. Now can God be without his Spirit. He is as much and as intimately one with God as the man's mind is with the man. The man knows his own mind because his mind is one with himself. The Spirit of God knows the things of God because he is one with God. And as no man can come at the knowledge of what is in another man's mind till he communicates and reveals it, so neither can we know the secret counsels and purposes of God till they are made known to us by his Holy Spirit. We cannot know them at all till he had proposed them objectively (as it is called) in the external revelation; we cannot know or believe them to salvation till he enlightens the faculty, opens the eye of the mind, and gives us such a knowledge and faith of them. And it was by this Spirit that the apostles had received the *wisdom of God in a mystery*, which they spoke. *"Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things freely given to us of God* (v. 12); not the spirit which is in the *wise men of the world* (v. 6), nor in the *rulers of the world* (v. 8), but the *Spirit which is of God*, or proceedeth from God. We have what we deliver in the name of God by inspiration from him; and it is by his gracious illumination and influence that *we know the things freely given to us of God* unto salvation"—that is, "the great privileges of the gospel, which are the free gift of God, distributions of mere and rich grace." Though these things are given to us, and the revelation of this gift is made to us, we cannot know them to any saving purpose till we have the Spirit. The apostles had the revelation of these things from the Spirit of God, and the saving impression of them from the same Spirit.

V. We see here in what manner this wisdom was taught or communicated: *Which things we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches*, v. 13. They had received the wisdom they taught, not from the wise men of the world, but from the Spirit of God. Nor did they put a human dress on it, but plainly declared the doctrine of Christ, in terms also taught them by the Holy Spirit. He not only gave them the knowledge of these things, but gave them utterance. Observe, The truths of God need no garnishing by human skill or eloquence, but look best in the words which the Holy Ghost teaches. The Spirit of God knows much better how to speak of the things of God than the best critics, orators, or philosophers. *Comparing spiritual things with spiritual*—one part of revelation with another, the revelation of the gospel with that of the

Jews, the discoveries of the New Testament with the types and prophecies of the Old. The comparing of matters of revelation with matters of science, things supernatural with things natural and common, is going by a wrong measure. Spiritual things, when brought together, will help to illustrate one another; but, if the principles of human art and science are to be made a test of revelation, we shall certainly judge amiss concerning it, and the things contained in it. Or, *adapting spiritual things to spiritual*—speaking of spiritual matters, matters of revelation, and the spiritual life, in language that is proper and plain. The language of the Spirit of God is the most proper to convey his meaning.

VI. We have an account how this wisdom is received.

1. *The natural man receiveth not the things of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*, v. 14. *The natural man, the animal man*. Either, (1.) The man under the power of corruption, and never yet illuminated by the Spirit of God, such as Jude calls *sensual, not having the Spirit*, v. 19. Men unsanctified receive not the things of God. The understanding, through the corruption of nature by the fall, and through the confirmation of this disorder by customary sin, is utterly unapt to receive the rays of divine light; it is prejudiced against them. The truths of God are foolishness to such a mind. The man looks on them as trifling and impertinent things, not worth his minding. *The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not*, Jn. 1:5. Not that the natural faculty of discerning is lost, but evil inclinations and wicked principles render the man unwilling to enter into the mind of God, in the spiritual matters of his kingdom, and yield to their force and power. It is the quickening beams of the Spirit of truth and holiness that must help the mind to discern their excellency, and to so thorough a conviction of their truth as heartily to receive and embrace them. Thus the natural man, the man destitute of the Spirit of God, cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned. Or, (2.) The natural man, that is, the wise man of the world (ch. 1:19, 20), the wise man after the flesh, or according to the flesh (v. 26), one who hath the wisdom of the world, man's wisdom (ch. 2:4-6), a man, as some of the ancients, that would learn all truth by his own ratiocinations, receive nothing by faith, nor own any need of supernatural assistance. This was very much the character of the pretenders to philosophy and the Grecian learning and wisdom in that day. Such a man receives not the things of the Spirit of God. Revelation is not with him a principle of science; he looks upon it as delirium and dotage, the extravagant thought of some deluded dreamer. It is no way to wisdom among the famous masters of the world; and for that reason he can have no knowledge of things revealed, because they are only spiritually discerned, or made known by the revelation of the Spirit, which is a principle of science or knowledge that he will not admit.

2. *But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged, or discerned, of no man*, v. 15. Either, (1.) He who is sanctified and made spiritually-minded (Rom. 8:6) judgeth all things, or discerneth all things—he is capable of judging about matters of human wisdom, and has also a relish and savour of divine truths; he sees divine wisdom, and experiences divine power, in gospel revelations and mysteries, which the carnal and unsanctified mind looks upon as weakness and folly, as things destitute of all power and not worthy any regard. It is the sanctified mind that must discern the real beauties of holiness; but, by the refinement of its facilities, they do not lose their power of discerning and judging about common and natural things. The spiritual man may judge of all things, natural and supernatural, human and divine, the deductions of reason and the discoveries

of revelation. But he himself is judged or discerned of NO MAN. God's saints are his hidden ones, Ps. 83:3. *Their life is hid with Christ in God*, Col. 3:3. The carnal man knows no more of a spiritual man than he does of other spiritual things. He is a stranger to the principles, pleasures, and actings, of the divine life. The spiritual man does not lie open to his observation. Or, (2.) *He that is spiritual* (who has had divine revelations made to him, receives them as such, and founds his faith and religion upon them) can judge both of common things and things divine; he can discern what is, and what is not, the doctrine of the gospel and of salvation, and whether a man preaches the truths of God or not. He does not lose the power of reasoning, nor renounce the principles of it, by founding his faith and religion on revelation. But *he himself is judged of no man*—can be judged, so as to be confuted, by no man; nor can any man who is not spiritual, not under a divine *afflatus* himself (see ch. 14:37), or not founding his faith on a divine revelation, discern or judge whether what he speaks be true or divine, or not. In short, he who founds all his knowledge upon principles of science, and the mere light of reason, can never be a judge of the truth or falsehood of what is received by revelation. *For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him* (v. 16), that is, the *spiritual man*? Who can enter so far into the mind of God as to instruct him who has the Spirit of God, and is under his inspiration? He only is the person to whom God immediately communicates the knowledge of his will. And who can inform or instruct him in the mind of God who is so immediately under the conduct of his own Spirit? Very few have known any thing of the mind of God by a natural power. *But*, adds the apostle, *we have the mind of Christ*; and the mind of Christ is the mind of God. He is God, and the principal messenger and prophet of God. And the apostles were empowered by his Spirit to make known his mind to us. And in the holy scriptures the mind of Christ, and the mind of God in Christ, are fully revealed to us. Observe, It is the great privilege of Christians that they have the mind of Christ revealed to them by his Spirit.

Chapter 3

In this chapter the apostle, I. Blames the Corinthians for their carnality and divisions (v. 1-4). II. He instructs them how what was amiss among them might be rectified, by remembering, 1. That their ministers were no more than ministers (v. 5). 2. That they were unanimous, and carried on the same design (v. 6–10). 3. That they built on one and the same foundation (v. 11–15). III. He exhorts them to give due honour to their bodies, by keeping them pure (v. 16, 17), and to humility and self-diffidence (v. 18–21). IV. And dehorts them from glorying in particular ministers, because of the equal interest they had in all (v. 22 to the end).

Verses 1-4

Here, I. Paul blames the Corinthians for their weakness and nonproficiency. Those who are sanctified are so only in part: there is still room for growth and increase both in grace and knowledge, 2 Pt. 3:18. Those who through divine grace are renewed to a spiritual life may yet in many things be defective. The apostle tells *them he could not speak to them as unto spiritual men, but as unto carnal men, as to babes in Christ*, v. 1. They were so far from forming their maxims and measures upon the ground of divine revelation, and entering into the spirit of the gospel, that it was but too evident they were much under the command of carnal and corrupt affections. They were still mere babes in Christ. They had received some of the first principles of Christianity, but had not grown up to maturity of understanding in them, or of faith and holiness; and yet it is plain, from several passages in this epistle, that the Corinthians were very proud of their wisdom and knowledge. Note, It is but too common for persons of very moderate knowledge and understanding to have a great measure of self-conceit. The apostle assigns their little proficiency in the knowledge of Christianity as a reason why he had communicated no more of the deep things of it to them. They could not bear such food, they needed to be fed with milk, not with meat, v. 2. Note, It is the duty of a faithful minister of Christ to consult the capacities of his hearers and teach them as they can bear. And yet it is natural for babes to grow up to men; and babes in Christ should endeavour to grow in Stature, and become men in Christ. It is expected that their advances in knowledge should be in proportion to their means and opportunities, and their time of professing religion, that they may be able to bear discourses on the mysteries of our religion, and not always rest in plain things. It was a reproach to the Corinthians that they had so long sat under the ministry of Paul and had made no more improvement in Christian knowledge. Note, Christians are utterly to blame who do not endeavour to grow in grace and knowledge.

II. He blames them for their carnality, and mentions their contention and discord about their ministers as evidence of it: *For you are yet carnal; for whereas there are among you envyings, and strifes, and divisions, are you not carnal, and walk as men?* v. 3. They had mutual emulations, and quarrels, and factions among them, upon the account of their ministers, *while one said, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos*, v. 4. These were proofs of their being carnal, that fleshly interests and affections too much swayed them. Note, Contentions and quarrels about religion are sad evidences of remaining carnality. True religion makes men peaceable and not contentious. Factious spirits act upon human principles, not upon principles of true religion; they are guided by their own pride and passions, and not by the rules of Christianity: *Do you not walk as men?* Note,

It is to be lamented that many who should walk as Christians, that is, above the common rate of men, do indeed walk as men, live and act too much like other men.

Verses 5-10

Here the apostle instructs them how to cure this humour, and rectify what was amiss among them upon this head,

I. By reminding them that the ministers about whom they contended were but ministers: *Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom you believed? Even as the Lord gave to every man*, v. 5. They are but ministers, mere instruments used by the God of all grace. Some of the factious people in Corinth seem to have made more of them, as if they were lords of their faith, authors of their religion. Note, We should take care not to deify ministers, nor put them into the place of God. Apostles were not the authors of our faith and religion, though they were authorized and qualified to reveal and propagate it. They acted in this office as God gave to every man. Observe, All the gifts and powers that even apostles discovered and exerted in the work of the ministry were from God. They were intended to manifest their mission and doctrine to be divine. It was perfectly wrong, upon their account, to transfer that regard to the apostles which was solely to be paid to the divine authority by which they acted, and to God, from whom they had their authority. *Paul had planted and Apollos had watered*, v. 6. Both were useful, one for one purpose, the other for another. Note, God makes use of variety of instruments, and fits them to their several uses and intentions. Paul was fitted for planting work, and Apollos for watering work, but God gave the increase. Note, The success of the ministry must be derived from the divine blessing: *Neither he that planteth is any thing, nor he that watereth, but God who giveth the increase*, v. 7. Even apostolical ministers are nothing of themselves, can do nothing with efficacy and success unless God give the increase. Note, The best qualified and most faithful ministers have a just sense of their own insufficiency, and are very desirous that God should have all the glory of their success. Paul and Apollos are nothing at all in their own account, but God is all in all.

II. By representing to them the unanimity of Christ's ministers: *He that planteth and he that watereth are one* (v. 8), employed by one Master, entrusted with the same revelation, busied in one work, and engaged in one design—in harmony with one another, however they may be set in opposition to each other by factious party-makers. They have their different gifts from one and the same Spirit, for the very same purposes; and they heartily carry on the same design. Planters and waterers are but fellow-labourers in the same work. Note, All the faithful ministers of Christ are one in the great business and intention of their ministry. They may have differences of sentiment in minor things; they may have their debates and contests; but they heartily concur in the great design of honouring God and saving souls, by promoting true Christianity in the world. All such may expect a glorious recompence of their fidelity, and in proportion to it: *Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour*. Their business is one, but some may mind it more than others: their end or design is one, but some may pursue it more closely than others: their Master also is one, and yet this good and gracious Master may make a difference in the rewards he gives, according to the different service they do: *Every one's own work shall have its own reward*. Those that work hardest shall fare best. Those that are most faithful shall have the greatest reward; and glorious work it is in which all faithful ministers are employed. *They are labourers with God, synergoi—co-workers, fellow-labourers* (v. 9), not indeed in the same

order and degree, but in subordination to him, as instruments in his hand. They are engaged in his business. They are working together with God, in promoting the purposes of his glory, and the salvation of precious souls; and he who knows their work will take care they do not labour in vain. Men may neglect and vilify one minister while they cry up another, and have no reason for either: they may condemn when they should commend, and applaud what they should neglect and avoid; but the judgment of God is according to truth. He never rewards but upon just reason, and he ever rewards in proportion to the diligence and faithfulness of his servants. Note, Faithful ministers, when they are ill used by men, should encourage themselves in God. And it is to God, the chief agent and director of the great work of the gospel, to whom those that labour with him should endeavour to approve themselves. They are always under his eye, employed in his husbandry and building; and therefore, to be sure, he will carefully look over them: *"You are God's husbandry, you are God's building;* and therefore are neither of Paul nor of Apollos; neither belong to one nor the other, but to God: they only plant and water you, but it is the divine blessing on his own husbandry that alone can make it yield fruit. You are not our husbandry, but God's. We work under him, and with him, and for him. It is all for God that we have been doing among you. You are God's husbandry and building." He had employed the former metaphor before, and now he goes on to the other of a building: *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon.* Paul here calls himself a wise master-builder, a character doubly reflecting honour on him. It was honourable to be a master-builder in the edifice of God; but it added to his character to be a wise one. Persons may be in an office for which they are not qualified, or not so thoroughly qualified as this expression implies Paul was. But, though he gives himself such a character, it is not to gratify his own pride, but to magnify divine grace. He was a wise master-builder, but the grace of God made him such. Note, It is no crime in a Christian, but much to his commendation, to take notice of the good that is in him, to the praise of divine grace. Spiritual pride is abominable: it is making use of the greatest favours of God to feed our own vanity, and make idols of ourselves. But to take notice of the favours of God to promote our gratitude to him, and to speak of them to his honour (be they of what sort they will), is but a proper expression of the duty and regard we owe him. Note, Ministers should not be proud of their gifts or graces; but the better qualified they are for their work, and the more success they have in it, the more thankful should they be to God for his distinguishing goodness: *I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon.* As before he had said, *I have planted, Apollos watered.* It was Paul that laid the foundation of a church among them. He had *begotten them through the gospel*, ch. 4:15. Whatever instructors they had besides, *they had not many fathers.* He would derogate from none that had done service among them, nor would he be robbed of his own honour and respect. Note, Faithful ministers may and ought to have a concern for their own reputation. Their usefulness depends much upon it. *But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon.* This is a proper caution; there may be very indifferent building on a good foundation. It is easy to err here; and great care should be used, not only to lay a sure and right foundation, but to erect a regular building upon it. Nothing must be laid upon it but what the foundation will bear, and what is of a piece with it. Gold and dirt must not be mingled together. Note, Ministers of Christ should take great care that they do not build their own fancies or false reasonings on the foundation of divine revelation. What they preach should be the plain doctrine of their Master, or what is perfectly agreeable with it.

Verses 11-15

Here the apostle informs us what foundation he had laid at the bottom of all his labours among them—even *Jesus Christ, the chief corner-stone*, Eph. 2:20. Upon this foundation all the faithful ministers of Christ build. Upon this rock all the Christians found their hopes. Those that build their hopes of heaven on any other foundation build upon the sand. *Other foundation can no man lay besides what is laid—even Jesus Christ*. Note, The doctrine of our Saviour and his mediation is the principal doctrine of Christianity. It lies at the bottom, and is the foundation, of all the rest. Leave out this, and you lay waste all our comforts, and leave no foundation for our hopes as sinners. It is in Christ *only that God is reconciling a sinful world to himself*, 2 Co. 5:19. But of those that hold the foundation, and embrace the general doctrine of Christ's being the mediator between God and man, there are two sorts:—

I. Some build upon this foundation *gold, silver, and precious stones* (v. 12), namely, those who receive and propagate the pure truths of the gospel, who hold nothing but the *truth as it is in Jesus*, and preach nothing else. This is building well upon a good foundation, making all of a piece, when ministers not only depend upon Christ as the great prophet of the church, and take him for their guide and infallible teacher, but receive and spread the doctrines he taught, in their purity, without any corrupt mixtures, without adding or diminishing.

II. Others *build wood, hay, and stubble*, on this foundation; that is, though they adhere to the foundation, they depart from the mind of Christ in many particulars, substitute their own fancies and inventions in the room of his doctrines and institutions, and build upon the good foundation what will not abide the test when the day of trial shall come, and the fire must make it manifest, as wood, hay, and stubble, will not bear the trial by fire, but must be consumed in it. There is a time coming when a discovery will be made of what men have built on this foundation: *Every man's work shall be made manifest*, shall be laid open to view, to his own view and that of others. Some may, in the simplicity of their hearts, build wood and stubble on the good foundation, and know not, all the while, what they have been doing; but in the day of the Lord their own conduct shall appear to them in its proper light. Every man's work shall be made manifest to himself, and made manifest to others, both those that have been misled by him and those that have escaped his errors. Now we may be mistaken in ourselves and others; but there is a day coming that will cure all our mistakes, and show us ourselves, and show us our actions in the true light, without covering or disguise: *For the day shall declare it* (that is, every man's work), *because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is*, v. 13. The day shall declare and make it manifest, the last day, the great day of trial; see ch. 4:5. Though some understand it of the time when the Jewish nation was destroyed and their constitution thereby abolished, when the superstructure which judaizing teachers would have raised on the Christian foundation was manifested to be no better than hay and stubble, that would not bear the trial. The expression carries in it a plain allusion to the refiner's art, in which the fire separates and distinguishes the dross from the gold and silver; as it also will silver and gold and precious stones, that will endure the fire, from wood and hay and stubble, that will be consumed in it. Note, There is a day coming that will as nicely distinguish one man from another, and one man's work from another's, as the fire distinguishes gold from dross, or metal that will bear the fire from other materials that will be consumed in it. In that day, 1. Some men's works will *abide the trial*—will

be found standard. It will appear that they not only held the foundation, but that they built regularly and well upon it—that they laid on proper materials, and in due form and order. The foundation and the superstructure were all of a piece. The foundation-truths, and those that had a manifest connection with them, were taught together. It may not be so easy to discern this connection now, nor know what works will abide the trial then; but that day will make a full discovery. And such a builder shall not, cannot fail of a reward. He will have praise and honour in that day, and eternal recompence after it. Note, Fidelity in the ministers of Christ will meet with a full and ample reward in a future life. Those who spread true and pure religion in all the branches of it, and whose work will abide in the great day, shall receive a reward. And, Lord, how great! how much exceeding their deserts! 2. There are others *whose works shall be burnt* (v. 15), whose corrupt opinions and doctrines, or vain inventions and usages in the worship of God, shall be discovered, disowned, and rejected, in that day—shall be first manifested to be corrupt, and then disapproved of God and rejected. Note, The great day will pluck off all disguises, and make things appear as they are: *He whose work shall be burnt will suffer loss*. If he have built upon the right foundation wood and hay and stubble, he will suffer loss. His weakness and corruption will be the lessening of his glory, though he may in the general have been an honest and an upright Christian. This part of his work will be lost, turning no way to his advantage, though he himself may be saved. Observe, Those who hold the foundation of Christianity, though they build hay, wood, and stubble, upon it, may be saved. This may help to enlarge our charity. We should not reprobate men for their weakness: for nothing will damn men but wickedness. He shall be saved, *yet so as by fire*, saved out of the fire. He himself shall be snatched out of that flame which will consume his work. This intimates that it will be difficult for those that corrupt and deprave Christianity to be saved. God will have no mercy on their works, though he may pluck them as brands out of the burning. On this passage of scripture the papists found their doctrine of purgatory, which is certainly hay and stubble: a doctrine never originally fetched from scripture, but invented in barbarous ages, to feed the avarice and ambition of the clergy, at the cost of those who would rather part with their money than their lusts, for the salvation of their souls. It can have no countenance from this text, (1.) Because this is plainly meant of a figurative fire, not of a real one: for what real fire can consume religious rites or doctrines? (2.) Because this fire is to *try men's works, of what sort they are*; but purgatory-fire is not for trial, not to bring men's actions to the test, but to punish for them. They are supposed to be venial sins, not satisfied for in this life, for which satisfaction must be made by suffering the fire of purgatory. (3.) Because this fire is to *try every man's works*, those of Paul and Apollos, as well as those of others. Now, no papists will have the front to say apostles must have passed through purgatory fires.

Verses 16-17

Here the apostle resumes his argument and exhortation, founding it on his former allusion, *You are God's building*, v. 9, and here, *Know you not that you are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile* (corrupt and destroy) *the temple of God, him shall God destroy* (the same word is in the original in both clauses); *for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are*. It looks from other parts of the epistle, where the apostle argues to the very same purport (see ch. 6:13–20), as if the false teachers among the Corinthians were not only loose livers, but taught licentious doctrines, and what was particularly fitted to the taste of this lewd city, on the head of fornication. Such doctrine was not to be reckoned among

hay and stubble, which would be consumed while the person who laid them on the foundation escaped the burning; for it tended to corrupt, to pollute, and destroy the church, which was a building erected for God, and consecrated to him, and therefore should be kept pure and holy. Those who spread principles of this sort would provoke God to destroy them. Note, Those who spread loose principles, that have a direct tendency to pollute the church of God, and render it unholy and unclean, are likely to bring destruction on themselves. It may be understood also as an argument against their discord and factious strifes, division being the way to destruction. But what I have been mentioning seems to be the proper meaning of the passage: *Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?* It may be understood of the church of Corinth collectively, or of every single believer among them; Christian churches are temples of God. He dwells among them by his Holy Spirit. *They are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit*, Eph. 2:22. Every Christian is a living temple of the living God. God dwelt in the Jewish temple, took possession of it, and resided in it, by that glorious cloud that was the token of his presence with that people. So Christ by his Spirit dwells in all true believers. The temple was devoted and consecrated to God, and set apart from every common to a holy use, to the immediate service of God. So all Christians are separated from common uses, and set apart for God and his service. They are sacred to him—a very good argument this against all fleshly lusts, and all doctrines that give countenance to them. If we are the temples of God, we must do nothing that shall alienate ourselves from him, or corrupt and pollute ourselves, and thereby unfit ourselves for his use; and we must hearken to no doctrine nor doctor that would seduce us to any such practices. Note, Christians are holy by profession, and should be pure and clean both in heart and conversation. We should heartily abhor, and carefully avoid, what will defile God's temple, and prostitute what ought to be sacred to him.

Verses 18-20

Here he prescribes humility, and a modest opinion of themselves, for the remedy of the irregularities in the church of Corinth, the divisions and contests among them: *"Let no man deceive himself*, v. 18. Do not be led away from the truth and simplicity of the gospel by pretenders to science and eloquence, by a show of deep learning, or a flourish of words, by rabbis, orators, or philosophers." Note, We are in great danger of deceiving ourselves when we have too high an opinion of human wisdom and arts; plain and pure Christianity will be likely to be despised by those who can suit their doctrines to the corrupt taste of their hearers, and set them off with fine language, or support them with a show of deep and strong reasoning. But *he who seems to be wise must become a fool that he may be wise*. He must be sensible of his own ignorance, and lament it; he must distrust his own understanding, and not lean on it. To have a high opinion of our wisdom is but to flatter ourselves, and self-flattery is the very next step to self-deceit. The way to true wisdom is to sink our opinion of our own to a due level, and be willing to be taught of God. He must become a fool who would be truly and thoroughly wise. The person who resigns his own understanding, that he may follow the instruction of God, is in the way to true and everlasting wisdom. *The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way*, Ps. 25:9. He that has a low opinion of his own knowledge and powers will submit to better information; such a person may be informed and improved by revelation: but the proud man, conceited of his own wisdom and understanding, will undertake to correct even divine wisdom itself, and prefer his own shallow reasonings to the

revelations of infallible truth and wisdom. Note, We must abase ourselves before God if we would be either truly wise or good: *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*, v. 19. The wisdom which worldly men esteem (policy, philosophy, oratory) *is foolishness with God*. It is so in a way of comparison with his wisdom. *He chargeth his angels with folly* (Job 4:18), and much more the wisest among the children of men. *His understanding is infinite*, Ps. 147:5. There can be no more comparison between his wisdom and ours than between his power and being and ours. There is no common measure by which to compare finite and infinite. And much more is the wisdom of man foolishness with God when set in competition with his. How justly does he despise, how easily can he baffle and confound it! *He taketh the wise in their own craftiness* (Job 5:13), he catches them in their own nets, and entangles them in their own snares: he turns their most studies, plausible, and promising schemes against themselves, and ruins them by their own contrivance. Nay, *He knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain* (v. 20), that they are vanity, Ps. 94:11. Note, God has a perfect knowledge of the thoughts of men, the deepest thoughts of the wisest men, their most secret counsels and purposes: nothing is hidden from him, but *all things are naked and bare* before him, Heb. 4:13. And he knows them to be vanity. The thoughts of the wisest men in the world have a great mixture of vanity, of weakness and folly, in them; and before God their wisest and best thoughts are very vanity, compared, I mean, with his thoughts of things. And should not all this teach us modesty, diffidence in ourselves, and a deference to the wisdom of God, make us thankful for his revelations, and willing to be taught of God, and not be led away by specious pretences to human wisdom and skill, from the simplicity of Christ, or a regard to his heavenly doctrine? Note, He who would be wise indeed must learn of God, and not set his own wisdom up in competition with God's.

Verses 21-23

Here the apostle finds an exhortation against over-valuing their teachers on what he had just said, and on the consideration that they had an equal interest in all their ministers: *Therefore let no man glory in men* (v. 21)—forget that their ministers are men, or pay that deference to them that is due only to God, set them at the head of parties, have them in immoderate esteem and admiration, and servilely and implicitly follow their directions and submit to their dictates, and especially in contradiction to God and the truths taught by his Holy Spirit. Mankind are very apt to make the mercies of God cross their intentions. The ministry is a very useful and very gracious institution, and faithful ministers are a great blessing to any people; yet the folly and weakness of people may do much mischief by what is in itself a blessing. They may fall into factions, side with particular ministers, and set them at their head, glory in their leaders, and be carried by them they know not whither. The only way to avoid this mischief is to have a modest opinion of ourselves, a due sense of the common weakness of human understanding, and an entire deference to the wisdom of God speaking in his word. Ministers are not to be set up in competition with one another. All faithful ministers are serving one Lord and pursuing one purpose. They were appointed of Christ, for the common benefit of the church: *"Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas, are all yours*. One is not to be set up against another, but all are to be valued and used for your own spiritual benefit." Upon this occasion also he gives in an inventory of the church's possessions, the spiritual riches of a true believer: *"All is yours—ministers of all ranks, ordinary and extraordinary*. Nay the world itself is yours." Not that saints are proprietors of the world, but it stands for their sake, they have as much of it as Infinite Wisdom sees

to be fit for them, and they have all they have with the divine blessing. "*Life is yours*, that you may have season and opportunity to prepare for the life of heaven; and *death is yours*, that you may go to the possession of it. It is the kind messenger that will fetch you to your Father's house. *Things present* are yours, for your support on the road; *things to come* are yours, to enrich and regale you for ever at your journey's end." Note, If we belong to Christ, and are true to him, all good belongs to us, and is sure to us. All is ours, time and eternity, earth and heaven, life and death. *We shall want no good thing*, Ps. 84:11. But it must be remembered, at the same time, *that we are Christ's*, the subjects of his kingdom, his property. He is Lord over us, and we must own his dominion, and cheerfully submit to his command and yield themselves to his pleasure, if we would have all things minister to our advantage. All things are ours, upon no other ground than our being Christ's. Out of him we are without just title or claim to any thing that is good. Note, Those that would be safe for time, and happy to eternity, must be Christ's. *And Christ is God's*. He is the Christ of God, anointed of God, and commissioned by him, to bear the office of a Mediator, and to act therein for the purposes of his glory. Note, All things are the believer's, that Christ might have honour in his great undertaking, and God in all might have the glory. God in Christ reconciling a sinful world to himself, and shedding abroad the riches of his grace on a reconciled world, is the sum and substance of the gospel.

Chapter 4

In this chapter the apostle, I. Directs them how to account of him and his fellow-ministers, and therein, tacitly at least, reproveth them for their unworthy carriage towards him (v. 1-6). II. He cautions them against pride and self-elation, and hints at the many temptations they had to conceive too highly of themselves, and despise him and other apostles, because of the great diversity in their circumstances and condition (v. 7-13). III. He challenges their regard to him as their father in Christ (v. 14-16). IV. He tells them of his having sent Timothy to them, and of his own purpose to come to them shortly, however some among them had pleased themselves, and grown vain, upon the quite contrary expectation (v. 17 to the end).

Verses 1-6

Here, I. The apostle challenges the respect due to him on account of his character and office, in which many among them had at least very much failed: *Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God* (v. 1), though possibly others might have valued them too highly, by setting him up as the head of a party, and professing to be his disciples. In our opinion of ministers, as well as all other things, we should be careful to avoid extremes. Apostles themselves were, 1. Not to be overvalued, for they were ministers, not masters; stewards, not lords. They were servants of Christ, and no more, though they were servants of the highest rank, that had the care of his household, that were to provide food for the rest, and appoint and direct their work. Note, It is a very great abuse of their power, and highly criminal in common ministers, to lord it over their fellow-servants, and challenge authority over their faith or practice. For even apostles were but servants of Christ, employed in his work, and sent on his errand, and dispensers of the mysteries of God, or those truths which had been hidden from the world in ages and generations past. They had no authority to propagate their own fancies, but to spread Christian faith. 2. Apostles were not to be undervalued; for, though they were ministers, they were ministers of Christ. The character and dignity of their master put an honour on them. Though they are but stewards, they are not stewards of the common things of the world, but of divine mysteries. They had a great trust, and for that reason had an honourable office. They were stewards of God's household, high-stewards in his kingdom of grace. They did not set up for masters, but they deserved respect and esteem in this honourable service. Especially,

II. When they did their duty in it, and approved themselves faithful: *It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful* (v. 2), trustworthy. The stewards in Christ's family must appoint what he hath appointed. They must not set their fellow-servants to work for themselves. They must not require any thing from them without their Master's warrant. They must not feed them with the chaff of their own inventions, instead of the wholesome food of Christian doctrine and truth. They must teach what he hath commanded, and not the doctrines and commandments of men. They must be true to the interest of their Lord, and consult his honour. Note, The ministers of Christ should make it their hearty and continual endeavour to approve themselves trustworthy; and when they have the testimony of a good conscience, and the approbation of their Master, they must slight the opinions and censures of their fellow-servants: *But with me, saith the apostle, it is a small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment*, v. 3. Indeed, reputation and esteem among men are a good step towards usefulness in the ministry; and

Paul's whole argument upon this head shows he had a just concern for his own reputation. But he that would make it his chief endeavour to please men would hardly approve himself a faithful servant of Christ, Gal. 1:10. He that would be faithful to Christ must despise the censures of men for his sake. He must look upon it as a very little thing (if his Lord approves him) what judgment men form of him. They may think very meanly or very hardly of him, while he is doing his duty; but it is not by their judgment that he must stand or fall. And happy is it for faithful ministers that they have a more just and candid judge than their fellow-servants; one who knows and pities their imperfections, though he has none of his own. It is better to *fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men*, 2 Sa. 24:14. The best of men are too apt to judge rashly, and harshly, and unjustly; but his judgment is always according to truth. It is a comfort that men are not to be our final judges. Nay, we are not thus to judge ourselves: "*Yea, I judge not myself. For though I know nothing by myself, cannot charge myself with unfaithfulness, yet I am not thereby justified*, this will not clear me of the charge; *but he that judgeth me is the Lord*. It is his judgment that must determine me. By his sentence I must abide. Such I am as he shall find and judge me to be." Note, It is not judging well of ourselves, justifying ourselves, that will prove us safe and happy. Nothing will do this but the acceptance and approbation of our sovereign Judge. *Not he that commendeth himself is approved, but he whom the Lord commendeth*, 2 Co. 10:18.

III. The apostle takes occasion hence to caution the Corinthians against censoriousness—the forward and severe judging of others: *Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come*, v. 5. It is judging out of season, and judging at an adventure. He is not to be understood of judging by persons in authority, within the verge of their office, nor of private judging concerning facts that are notorious; but of judging persons' future state, or the secret springs and principles of their actions, or about facts doubtful in themselves. To judge in these cases, and give decisive sentence, is to assume the seat of God and challenge his prerogative. Note, How bold a sinner is the forward and severe censorer! How ill-timed and arrogant are his censures! But there is one who will judge the censorer, and those he censures, without prejudice, passion, or partiality. And there is a time coming when men cannot fail judging aright concerning themselves and others, by following his judgment. This should make them now cautious of judging others, and careful in judging themselves. There is a time coming when *the Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts*—deeds of darkness that are now done in secret, and all the secret inclinations, purposes, and intentions, of the hidden man of the heart. Note, There is a day coming that will dispel the darkness and lay open the face of the deep, will fetch men's secret sins into open day and discover the secrets of their hearts: *The day shall declare it*. The judge will bring these things to light. The Lord Jesus Christ will manifest the counsels of the heart, of all hearts. Note, The Lord Jesus Christ must have the knowledge of the counsels of the heart, else he could not make them manifest. This is a divine prerogative (Jer. 17:10), and yet it is what our Saviour challenges to himself in a very peculiar manner (Rev. 2:23): *All the churches shall know that I am HE who searcheth the reins and hearts, and I will give to every one of you according to your works*. Note, We should be very careful how we censure others, when we have to do with a Judge from whom we cannot conceal ourselves. Others do not lie open to our notice, but we lie all open to his: and, when he shall come to judge, *every man shall have praise of God*. *Every man*, that is, every one qualified for it, every one who has done well. Though none of God's servants can deserve any thing from him, though there be much that is blamable

even in their best services, yet shall their fidelity be commended and crowned by him; and should they be condemned, reproached, or vilified, by their fellow-servants, he will roll away all such unjust censures and reproaches, and show them in their own amiable light. Note, Christians may well be patient under unjust censures, when they know such a day as this is coming, especially when they have their consciences testifying to their integrity. But how fearful should they be of loading any with reproaches now whom their common Judge shall hereafter commend.

IV. The apostle here lets us into the reason why he had used his own name and that of Apollos in this discourse of his. He had done *it in a figure*, and *he had done it for their sakes*. He chose rather to mention his own name, and the name of a faithful fellow-labourer, than the names of any heads of factions among them, that hereby he might avoid what would provoke, and so procure for his advice the greater regard. Note, Ministers should use prudence in their advices and admonitions, but especially in their reproofs, lest they lose their end. The advice the apostle would by this means inculcate was *that they might learn not to think of men above what is written* (above what he had been writing), *nor be puffed up for one against another* (v. 6). Apostles were not to be esteemed other than planters or waterers in God's husbandry, master-builders in his building, stewards of his mysteries, and servants of Christ. And common ministers cannot bear these characters in the same sense that apostles did. Note, We must be very careful not to transfer the honour and authority of the Master to his servant. *We must call no man Master on earth; one is our Master, even Christ*, Mt. 23:8, 10. We must not think of them above what is written. Note, The word of God is the best rule by which to judge concerning men. And again, judging rightly concerning men, and not judging more highly of them than is fit, is one way to prevent quarrels and contentions in the churches. Pride commonly lies at the bottom of these quarrels. Self-conceit contributes very much to our immoderate esteem of our teachers, as well as ourselves. Our commendation of our own taste and judgment commonly goes along with our unreasonable applause, and always with a factious adherence to one teacher, in opposition to others that may be equally faithful and well qualified. But to think modestly of ourselves, and not above what is written of our teachers, is the most effectual means to prevent quarrels and contests, sidings and parties, in the church. We shall not be puffed up for one against another if we remember that they are all instruments employed by God in his husbandry and building, and endowed by him with their various talents and qualifications.

Verses 7-13

Here the apostle improves the foregoing hint to a caution against pride and self-conceit, and sets forth the temptations the Corinthians had to despise him, from the difference of their circumstances.

I. He cautions them against pride and self-conceit by this consideration, that all the distinction made among them was owing to God: *Who maketh thee to differ? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?* v. 7. Here the apostle turns his discourse to the ministers who set themselves at the head of these factions, and did but too much encourage and abet the people in those feuds. What had they to glory in, when all their peculiar gifts were from God? They had received them, and could not glory in them as their own, without wronging God. At the time when they reflected on them to feed their vanity, they should have considered them as so many debts and obligations to divine bounty and grace. But it may be taken as a general maxim: We have no reason to be proud of our attainments, enjoyments, or performances; all that we have, or are, or do, that is good, is

owing to the free and rich grace of God. Boasting is for ever excluded. There is nothing we have that we can properly call our own: all is received from God. It is foolish in us therefore, and injurious to him, to boast of it; those who receive all should be proud of nothing, Ps. 115:1. Beggars and dependents may glory in their supports; but to glory in themselves is to be proud at once of meanness, impotence, and want. Note, Due attention to our obligations to divine grace would cure us of arrogance and self-conceit.

II. He presses the duty of humility upon them by a very smart irony, or at least reproves them for their pride and self-conceit: "*You are full, you are rich, you have reigned as kings without us.* You have not only a sufficiency, but an affluence, of spiritual gifts; nay, you can make them the matter of your glory *without us*, that is, in my absence, and without having any need of me." There is a very elegant gradation from sufficiency to wealth, and thence to royalty, to intimate how much the Corinthians were elated by the abundance of their wisdom and spiritual gifts, which was a humour that prevailed among them while the apostle was away from them, and made them forget what an interest he had in all. See how apt pride is to overrate benefits and overlook the benefactor, to swell upon its possessions and forget from whom they come; nay, it is apt to behold them in a magnifying-glass: "*You have reigned as kings,*" says the apostle, "that is, in your own conceit; and *I would to God you did reign, that we also might reign with you.* I wish you had as much of the true glory of a Christian church upon you as you arrogate to yourselves. I should come in then for a share of the honour: *I should reign with you.* I should not be overlooked by you as now I am, but valued and regarded as a minister of Christ, and a very useful instrument among you." Note, Those do not commonly know themselves best who think best of themselves, who have the highest opinion of themselves. The Corinthians might have reigned, and the apostle with them, if they had not been blown up with an imaginary royalty. Note, Pride is a great prejudice to our improvement. He is stopped from growing wiser or better who thinks himself at the height; not only full, but rich, nay, a king.

III. He comes to set forth his own circumstances and those of the other apostles, and compares them with theirs. 1. To set forth the case of the apostles: *For I think it hath pleased God to set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death. For we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men.* Paul and his fellow-apostles were exposed to great hardships. Never were any men in this world so hunted and worried. They carried their lives in their hands: *God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death,* v. 9. An allusion is made to some of the bloody spectacles in the Roman amphitheatres, where men were exposed to fight with wild beasts, or to cut one another to pieces, to make diversion for the populace, where the victor did not escape with his life, though he should destroy his adversary, but was only reserved for another combat, and must be devoured or cut in pieces at last; so that such wretched criminals (for they were ordinarily condemned persons that were thus exposed) might very properly be called *epithanatioi*—*persons devoted or appointed to death.* They are said to be set forth last, because the meridian gladiators, those who combated one another in the after-part of the day, were most exposed, being obliged to fight naked; so that (as Seneca says, *epist.* 7) this was perfect butchery, and those exposed to beasts in the morning were treated mercifully in comparison with these. The general meaning is that the apostles were exposed to continual danger of death, and that of the worst kinds, in the faithful discharge of their office. God had set

them forth, brought them into view, as the Roman emperors brought their combatants into the arena, the place of show, though not for the same purposes. They did it to please the populace, and humour their own vanity, and sometimes a much worse principle. The apostles were shown to manifest the power of divine grace, to confirm the truth of their mission and doctrine, and to propagate religion in the world. These were ends worthy of God-noble views, fit to animate them to the combat. But they had like difficulties to encounter, and were in a manner as much exposed as these miserable Roman criminals. Note, The office of an apostle was, as an honourable, so a hard and hazardous one: "*For we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men*, v. 9. A *show*. We are brought into the theatre, brought out to the public view of the world. Angels and men are witnesses to our persecutions, sufferings, patience, and magnanimity. They all see that we suffer for our fidelity to Christ, and how we suffer; how great and imminent are our dangers, and how bravely we encounter them; how sharp our sufferings, and how patiently we endure them, by the power of divine grace and our Christian principles. Ours is hard work, but honourable; it is hazardous, but glorious. God will have honour from us, religion will be credited by us. The world cannot but see and wonder at our undaunted resolution, our invincible patience and constancy." And how contentedly could they be exposed, both to sufferings and scorn, for the honour of their Master! Note, The faithful ministers and disciples of Christ should contentedly undergo any thing for his sake and honour. 2. He compares his own case with that of the Corinthians: "*We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are honourable, but we are despised*, v. 10. *We are fools for Christ's sake*; such in common account, and we are well content to be so accounted. We can pass for fools in the world, and be despised as such, so that the wisdom of God and the honour of the gospel may by this means be secured and displayed." Note, Faithful ministers can bear being despised, so that the wisdom of God and the power of his grace be thereby displayed. "*But you are wise in Christ*. You have the fame of being wise and learned Christians, and you do not a little value yourselves upon it. We are under disgrace for delivering the plain truths of the gospel, and in as plain a manner: you are in reputation for your eloquence and human wisdom, which among many make you pass for wise men in Christ. *We are weak, but you are strong*. We are suffering for Christ's sake" (so being weak plainly signifies, 2 Co. 12:10), "when you are in easy and flourishing circumstances." Note, All Christians are not alike exposed. Some suffer greater hardships than others who are yet engaged in the same warfare. The standard-bearers in an army are most struck at. So ministers in a time of persecution are commonly the first and greatest sufferers. Or else, "We pass upon the world for persons of but mean endowments, mere striplings in Christianity; but you look upon yourselves, and are looked upon by others, as men, as those of a much more advanced growth and confirmed strength." Note, Those are not always the greatest proficient in Christianity who think thus of themselves, or pass for such upon others. It is but too easy and common for self-love to commit such a mistake. The Corinthians may think themselves, and be esteemed by others, as wiser and stronger men in Christ than the apostles themselves. But O! how gross is the mistake!

IV. He enters into some particularities of their sufferings: *Even to this present hour; that is, after all the service we have been doing among you and other churches, we hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place, and labour, working with our own hands*, v. 11, 12. Nay, they were *made as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring*

of all things, v. 13. They were forced to labour with their own hands to get subsistence, and had so much, and so much greater, business to mind, that they could not attend enough to this, to get a comfortable livelihood, but were exposed to hunger, thirst, and nakedness—many times wanted meat, and drink, and clothes. They were driven about the world, without having any fixed abode, any stated habitation. Poor circumstances indeed, for the prime ministers of our Saviour's kingdom to have no house nor home, and to be destitute of food and raiment! But yet no poorer than his who had not *where to lay his head*, Lu. 9:58. But O glorious charity and devotion, that would carry them through all these hardships! How ardently did they love God, how vehemently did they thirst for the salvation of souls! Theirs was voluntary, it was pleasing poverty. They thought they had a rich amends for all the outward good things they wanted, if they might but serve Christ and save souls. Nay, though they *were made the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things*. They were treated as men not fit to live, *perikatharmata*. It is reasonably thought by the critics that an allusion is here made to a common custom of many heathen nations, to offer men in sacrifice in a time of pestilence, or other like grievous calamity. These were ordinarily the vilest of men, persons of the lowest rank and worst character. Thus, in the first ages, Christians were counted the source of all public calamities, and were sacrificed to the people's rage, if not to appease their angry deities. And apostles could not meet with better usage. They suffered in their persons and characters as the very worst and vilest men, as the most proper to make such a sacrifice: or else as the very dirt of the world, that was to be swept away: nay, as the *off-scouring of all things*, the dross, the filings of all things. They were the common-sewer into which all the reproaches of the world were to be poured. To be the off-scouring of any thing is bad, but what is it to be the off-scouring of all things! How much did the apostles resemble their Master, *and fill up that which was behind of his afflictions, for his body's sake, which is the church!* Col. 1:24. They suffered for him, and they suffered after his example. Thus poor and despised was he in his life and ministry. And every one who would be faithful in Christ Jesus must prepare for the same poverty and contempt. Note, Those may be very dear to God, and honourable in his esteem, whom men may think unworthy to live, and use and scorn as the very dirt and refuse of the world. *God seeth not as man seeth*, 1 Sa. 16:7.

V. We have here the apostles' behaviour under all; and the return they made for this mal-treatment: *Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat*, v. 12, 13. They returned blessings for reproaches, and entreaties and kind exhortations for the rudest slanders and defamation, and were patient under the sharpest persecutions. Note, The disciples of Christ, and especially his ministers, should hold fast their integrity, and keep a good conscience, whatever opposition of hardships they meet with from the world. Whatever they suffer from men, they must follow the example, and fulfil the will and precepts, of their Lord. They must be content, with him and for him, to be despised and abused.

Verses 14-16

Here Paul challenges their regard to him as their father. He tells them, 1. That what he had written was not for their reproach, but admonition; not with the gall of an enemy, but the bowels of a father (v. 14): *I write not to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you*. Note, In reproving for sin, we should have a tender regard to the reputation, as well as the reformation, of the sinner. We should aim to distinguish between them and their sins, and take care not to discover any spite against them

ourselves, nor expose them to contempt and reproach in the world. Reproofs that expose commonly do but exasperate, when those that kindly and affectionately warn are likely to reform. When the affections of a father mingle with the admonitions of a minister, it is to be hoped that they may at once melt and mend; but to lash like an enemy or executioner will provoke and render obstinate. To expose to open shame is but the way to render shameless. 2. He shows them upon what foundation he claimed paternal relation to them, and called them his sons. They might have other pedagogues or instructors, but he was their father; *for in Christ Jesus he had begotten them by the gospel*, v. 15. They were made Christians by his ministry. He had laid the foundation of a church among them. Others could only build upon it. Whatever other teachers they had, he was their spiritual father. He first brought them off from pagan idolatry to the faith of the gospel and the worship of the true and living God. He was the instrument of their new birth, and therefore claimed the relation of a father to them, and felt the bowels of a father towards them. Note, There commonly is, and always ought to be, an endeared affection between faithful ministers and those they beget in Christ Jesus through the gospel. They should love like parents and children. 3. We have here the special advice he urges on them: *Wherefore I beseech you be you followers of me*, v. 16. This he elsewhere explains and limits (ch. 11:1): *"Be you followers of me, as I also am of Christ*. Follow me as far as I follow Christ. Come up as close as you can to my example in those instances wherein I endeavour to copy after his pattern. Be my disciples, as far as I manifest myself to be a faithful minister and disciple of Christ, and no further. I would not have you be my disciples, but his. But I hope I have approved myself a faithful steward of the mysteries of Christ, and a faithful servant of my master Christ; so far follow me, and tread in my steps." Note, Ministers should so live that their people may take pattern from them, and live after their copy. They should guide them by their lives as well as their lips, go before them in the way to heaven, and not content themselves with pointing it out. Note, As ministers are to set a pattern, others must take it. They should follow them as far as they are satisfied that they follow Christ in faith and practice.

Verses 17-21

Here, I. He tells them of his having sent Timothy to them, *to bring them into remembrance of his ways in Christ, as he taught every where in every church* (v. 17)—to remind them of his ways in Christ, to refresh their memory as to his preaching and practice, what he taught, and how he lived among them. Note, Those who have had ever so good teaching are apt to forget, and need to have their memories refreshed. The same truth, taught over again, if it give no new light, may make new and quicker impression. He also lets them know that *his teaching was the same every where, and in every church*. He had not one doctrine for one place and people, and another for another. He kept close to his instructions. What *he received of the Lord, that he delivered*, ch. 11:23. This was the gospel revelation, which was the equal concern of all men, and did not vary from itself. He therefore taught the same things in every church, and lived after the same manner in all times and places. Note, The truth of Christ is one and invariable. What one apostle taught every one taught. What one apostle taught at one time and in one place, he taught at all times and in all places. Christians may mistake and differ in their apprehensions, but Christ and Christian truth *are the same yesterday, today, and for ever*, Heb. 13:8. To render their regard to Timothy the greater, he gives them his character. He was *his beloved son*, a spiritual child of his, as well as themselves. Note, Spiritual brotherhood should engage

affection as well as what is common and natural. The children of one father should have one heart. But he adds, "*He is faithful in the Lord*—trustworthy, as one that feared the Lord. He will be faithful in the particular office he has now received of the Lord, the particular errand on which he comes; not only from me, but from Christ. He knows what I have taught, and what my conversation has been in all places, and, you may depend upon it, he will make a faithful report." Note, It is a great commendation of any minister that he is faithful in the Lord, faithful to his soul, to his light, to his trust from God; this must go a great way in procuring regard to his message with those that fear God.

II. He rebukes the vanity of those who imagined he would not come to them, by letting them know this was his purpose, though he had sent Timothy: "*I will come to you shortly*, though some of you are so vain as to think I will not." But he adds, *if the Lord will*. It seems, as to the common events of life, apostles knew no more than other men, nor were they in these points under inspiration. For, had the apostle certainly known the mind of God in this matter, he would not have expressed himself with this certainty. But he sets a good example to us in it. Note, All our purposes must be formed with a dependence on Providence, and a reserve for the overruling purposes of God. *If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this and that*, Jam. 4:15.

III. He lets them know what would follow upon his coming to them: *I will know, not the speech of those that are puffed up, but the power*, v. 19. He would bring the great pretenders among them to a trial, would know what they were, not by their rhetoric or philosophy, but by the authority and efficacy of what they taught, whether they could confirm it by miraculous operations, and whether it was accompanied with divine influences and saving effects on the minds of men. For, adds he, *the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power*. It is not set up, nor propagated, nor established, in the hearts of men, by plausible reasonings nor florid discourses, but by the external power of the Holy Spirit in miraculous operations at first, and the powerful influence of divine truth on the minds and manners of men. Note, It is a good way in the general to judge of a preacher's doctrine, to see whether the effects of it upon men's hearts to be truly divine. That is most likely to come from God which in its own nature is most fit, and in event is found to produce most likeness to God, to spread piety and virtue, to change men's hearts and mend their manners.

IV. He puts it to their choice how he should come among them, *whether with a rod or in love and the spirit of meekness* (v. 21); that is, according as they were they would find him. If they continued perverse among themselves and with him, it would be necessary to come with a rod; that is, to exert his apostolical power in chastising them, by making some examples, and inflicting some diseases and corporal punishments, or by other censures for their faults. Note, Stubborn offenders must be used with severity. In families, in Christian communities, paternal pity and tenderness, Christian love and compassion, will sometimes force the use of the rod. But this is far from being desirable, if it may be prevented. And therefore the apostle adds that it was in their own option whether he should come with a rod or in a quite different disposition and manner: *Or in love and the spirit of meekness*. As much as if he had said, "Take warning, cease your unchristian feuds, rectify the abuses among you, and return to your duty, and you shall find me as gentle and benign as you can with. It will be a force upon my inclination to proceed with severity. I had rather come and display the tenderness of a father among you than assert his authority. Do but your duty, and you have no reason to avoid my presence." Note, It is a happy temper in a minister to have the spirit of love and

meekness predominant, and yet to maintain his just authority.

Chapter 5

In this chapter the apostle, I. Blames them for their indulgence in the case of the incestuous person, and orders him to be excommunicated, and delivered to Satan (v. 1-6). II. He exhorts them to Christian purity, by purging out the old leaven (v. 7, 8). And, III. Directs them to shun even the common conversation of Christians who were guilty of any notorious and flagitious wickedness (v. 9 to the end).

Verses 1-6

Here the apostle states the case; and,

I. Lets them know what was the common or general report concerning them, that one of their community was guilty of fornication, v. 1. It was told in all places, to their dishonour, and the reproach of Christians. And it was the more reproachful because it could not be denied. Note, The heinous sins of professed Christians are quickly noted and noised abroad. We should walk circumspectly, for many eyes are upon us, and many mouths will be opened against us if we fall into any scandalous practice. This was not a common instance of fornication, but *such as was not so much as named among the Gentiles, that a man should have his father's wife*—either marry her while his father was alive, or keep her as his concubine, either when he was dead or while he was alive. In either of these cases, his criminal conversation with her might be called *fornication*; but had his father been dead, and he, after his decease, married to her, it had been incest still, but neither fornication nor adultery in the strictest sense. But to marry her, or keep her as a concubine, while his father was alive, though he had repudiated her, or she had deserted him, whether she were his own mother or not, was incestuous fornication: *Scelus incredibile* (as Cicero calls it), *et prater unum in omni vitâ inauditum* (Orat. pro Cluent.), when a woman had caused her daughter to be put away, and was married to her husband. *Incredible wickedness!* says the orator; *such I never heard of in all my life besides*. Not that there were no such instances of incestuous marriages among the heathens; but, whenever they happened, they gave a shock to every man of virtue and probity among them. They could not think of them without horror, nor mention them without dislike and detestation. Yet such a horrible wickedness was committed by one in the church of Corinth, and, as is probable, a leader of one of the factions among them, a principal man. Note, The best churches are, in this state of imperfection, liable to very great corruptions. Is it any wonder when so horrible a practice was tolerated in an apostolical church, a church planted by the great apostle of the Gentiles?

II. He greatly blames them for their own conduct hereupon: *They were puffed up* (v. 2), *they gloried*, 1. Perhaps on account of this very scandalous person. He might be a man of great eloquence, of deep science, and for this reason very greatly esteemed, and followed, and cried up, by many among them. They were proud that they had such a leader. Instead of mourning for his fall, and their own reproach upon his account, and renouncing him and removing him from the society, they continued to applaud him and pride themselves in him. Note, Pride or self-esteem often lies at the bottom of our immoderate esteem of others, and this makes us as blind to their faults as to our own. It is true humility that will bring a man to a sight and acknowledgement of his errors. The proud man either wholly overlooks or artfully disguises his faults, or endeavours to

transform his blemishes into beauties. Those of the Corinthians that were admirers of the incestuous person's gifts could overlook or extenuate his horrid practices. Or else, 2. It may intimate to us that some of the opposite party were puffed up. They were proud of their own standing, and trampled upon him that fell. Note, It is a very wicked thing to glory over the miscarriages and sins of others. We should lay them to heart, and mourn for them, not be puffed up with them. Probably this was one effect of the divisions among them. The opposite party made their advantage of this scandalous lapse, and were glad of the opportunity. Note, It is a sad consequence of divisions among Christians that it makes them apt to rejoice in iniquity. The sins of others should be our sorrow. Nay, churches should mourn for the scandalous behaviour of particular members, and, if they be incorrigible, should remove them. He that had done this wicked deed should have been taken away from among them.

III. We have the apostle's direction to them how they should now proceed with this scandalous sinner. He would have him excommunicated and delivered to Satan (v. 3-5); *as absent in body, yet present in spirit, he had judged already as if he had been present*; that is, he had, by revelation and the miraculous gift of discerning vouchsafed him by the Spirit, as perfect a knowledge of the case, and had hereupon come to the following determination, not without special authority from the Holy Spirit. He says this to let them know that, though he was at a distance, he did not pass an unrighteous sentence, nor judge without having as full cognizance of the case as if he had been on the spot. Note, Those who would appear righteous judges to the world will take care to inform them that they do not pass sentence without full proof and evidence. The apostle adds, *him who hath so done this deed*. The fact was not only heinously evil in itself, and horrible to the heathens, but there were some particular circumstances that greatly aggravated the offence. He had so committed the evil as to heighten the guilt by the manner of doing it. Perhaps he was a minister, a teacher, or a principal man among them. By this means the church and their profession were more reproached. Note, In dealing with scandalous sinners, not only are they to be charged with the fact, but the aggravating circumstances of it. Paul had judged that *he should be delivered to Satan* (v. 5), and this was to be done *in the name of Christ*, with the power of Christ, and in a full assembly, where the apostle would be also present in spirit, or by his spiritual gift of discerning at a distance. Some think that this is to be understood of a mere ordinary excommunication, and that delivering him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh is only meant of disowning him, and casting him out of the church, that by this means he might be brought to repentance, and his flesh might be mortified. Christ and Satan divide the world: and those that live in sin, when they profess relation to Christ, belong to another master, and by excommunication should be delivered up to him; and this in the name of Christ. Note, Church-censures are Christ's ordinances, and should be dispensed in his name. It was to be done also *when they were gathered together*, in full assembly. The more public the more solemn, and the more solemn the more likely to have a good effect on the offender. Note, Church-censures on notorious and incorrigible sinners should be passed with great solemnity. Those who sin in this manner *are to be rebuked before all, that all may fear*, 1 Tim. 5:20. Others think the apostle is not to be understood of mere excommunication, but of a miraculous power or authority they had of delivering a scandalous sinner into the power of Satan, to have bodily diseases inflicted, and to be tormented by him with bodily pains, which is the meaning of the *destruction of the flesh*. In this sense the destruction of the flesh has been a

happy occasion of the salvation of the spirit. It is probable that this was a mixed case. It was an extraordinary instance: and the church was to proceed against him by just censure; the apostle, when they did so, put forth an act of extraordinary power, and gave him up to Satan, nor for his destruction, but for his deliverance, at least for the destruction of the flesh, that the soul might be saved. Note, The great end of church-censures is the good of those who fall under them, their spiritual and eternal good. It is that their spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, v. 5. Yet it is not merely a regard to their benefit that is to be had in proceeding against them. For,

IV. He hints the danger of contagion from this example: *Your glorying is not good. Know you not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?* The bad example of a man in rank and reputation is very mischievous, spreads the contagion far and wide. It did so, probably, in this very church and case: see 2 Co. 12:21. They could not be ignorant of this. The experience of the whole world was for it; *one scabbed sheep infects a whole flock*. A little leaven will quickly spread the ferment through a great lump. Note, Concern for their purity and preservation should engage Christian churches to remove gross and scandalous sinners.

Verses 7-8

Here the apostle exhorts them to purity, by purging out the old leaven. In this observe,

I. The advice itself, addressed either, 1. To the church in general; and so purging out the old leaven, that they might be a new lump, refers to the *putting away from themselves that wicked person*, v. 13. Note, Christian churches should be pure and holy, and not bear such corrupt and scandalous members. They are to be unleavened, and should endure no such heterogeneous mixture to sour and corrupt them. Or, 2. To each particular member of the church. And so it implies that they should purge themselves from all impurity of heart and life, especially from this kind of wickedness, to which the Corinthians were addicted to a proverb. See the *argument* at the beginning. This old leaven was in a particular manner to be purged out, that they might become a new lump. Note, Christians should be careful to keep themselves clean, as well as purge polluted members out of their society. And they should especially avoid the sins to which they themselves were once most addicted, and the reigning vices of the places and the people where they live. They were also to purge themselves from malice and wickedness—all ill-will and mischievous subtlety. This is leaven that sours the mind to a great degree. It is not improbable that this was intended as a check to some who gloried in the scandalous behaviour of the offender, both out of pride and pique. Note, Christians should be careful to keep free from malice and mischief. Love is the very essence and life of the Christian religion. It is the fairest image of God, *for God is love* (1 Jn. 4:16), and therefore it is no wonder if it be the greatest beauty and ornament of a Christian. But malice is murder in its principles: He that hates his brother is a murderer (1 Jn. 3:15), he bears the image and proclaims him the offspring of him *who was a murderer from the beginning*, Jn. 8:44. How hateful should every thing be to a Christian that looks like malice and mischief.

II. The reason with which this advice is enforced: *For Christ our passover is sacrificed for us*, v. 7. This is the great doctrine of the gospel. The Jews, after they had killed the passover, kept the feast of unleavened bread. So must we; not for seven days only, but all our days. We should die with our Saviour to sin, be planted into the likeness of his death by mortifying sin, and into the likeness of his resurrection by rising again to newness of life, and that internal and external. We must have new hearts

and new lives. Note, The whole life of a Christian must be a feast of unleavened bread. His common conversation and his religious performances must be holy. *He must purge out the old leaven, and keep the feast of unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.* He must be without guilt in his conduct towards God and man. And the more there is of sincerity in our own profession, the less shall we censure that of others. Note, On the whole, The sacrifice of our Redeemer is the strongest argument with a gracious heart for purity and sincerity. How sincere a regard did he show to our welfare, in dying for us! and how terrible a proof was his death of the detestable nature of sin, and God's displeasure against it! Heinous evil, that could not be expiated but with the blood of the Son of God! And shall a Christian love the murderer of his Lord? God forbid.

Verses 9-13

Here the apostle advises them to shun the company and converse of scandalous professors. Consider,

I. The advice itself: *I wrote to you in a letter not to company with fornicators*, v. 9. Some think this was an epistle written to them before, which is lost. Yet we have lost nothing by it, the Christian revelation being entire in those books of scripture which have come down to us, which are all that were intended by God for the general use of Christians, or he could and would in his providence have preserved more of the writings of inspired men. Some think it is to be understood of this very epistle, that he had written this advice before he had full information of their whole case, but thought it needful now to be more particular. And therefore on this occasion he tells them that if any man called a brother, any one professing Christianity, and being a member of a Christian church, were *a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer*, that they should not *keep company with him, nor so much as eat with such a one.* They were to avoid all familiarity with him; they were to have no commerce with him; they were to have no commerce with him: but, that they might shame him, and bring him to repentance, must disclaim and shun him. Note, Christians are to avoid the familiar conversation of fellow-Christians that are notoriously wicked, and under just censure for their flagitious practices. Such disgrace the Christian name. They may call themselves *brethren in Christ*, but they are not Christian brethren. They are only fit companions for the brethren in iniquity; and to such company they should be left, till they *mend their ways and doings.*

II. How he limits this advice. He does not forbid the Christians the like commerce with scandalously wicked heathens. He does not forbid their eating nor conversing with the *fornicators of this world*, etc. They know no better. They profess no better. The gods they serve, and the worship they render to many of them, countenance such wickedness. *"You must needs go out of the world if you will have no conversation with such men.* Your Gentile neighbours are generally vicious and profane; and it is impossible, as long as you are in the world, and have any worldly business to do, but you must fall into their company. This cannot be wholly avoided." Note, Christians may and ought to testify more respect to loose worldlings than to loose Christians. This seems a paradox. Why should we shun the company of a profane or loose Christian, rather than that of a profane or loose heathen?

III. The reason of this limitation is here assigned. It is impossible the one should be avoided. Christians must have gone out of the world to avoid the company of loose heathens. But this was impossible, as long as they had business in the world. While they are minding their duty, and doing their proper business, God can and will preserve them from contagion. Besides, they

carry an antidote against the infection of their bad example, and are naturally upon their guard. They are apt to have a horror at their wicked practices. But the dread of sin wears off by familiar converse with wicked Christians. Our own safety and preservation are a reason of this difference. But, besides, heathens were such as Christians had nothing to do to judge and censure, and avoid upon a censure passed; for *they are without* (v. 12), and must be left to *God's judgment*, v. 13. But, as to members of the church, they are within, are professedly bound by the laws and rules of Christianity, and not only liable to the judgment of God, but to the censures of those who are set over them, and the fellow-members of the same body, when they transgress those rules. Every Christian is bound to judge them unfit for communion and familiar converse. They are to be punished, by having this mark of disgrace put upon them, that they may be shamed, and, if possible, reclaimed thereby: and the more because the sins of such much more dishonour God than the sins of the openly wicked and profane can do. The church therefore is obliged to clear herself from all confederacy with them, or connivance at them, and to bear testimony against their wicked practices. Note, Though the church has nothing to do with those without, it must endeavour to keep clear of the guilt and reproach of those within.

IV. How he applies the argument to the case before him: "*Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person*, v. 13. Cast him out of your fellowship, and avoid his conversation."

Chapter 6

In this chapter the apostle, I. Reproves them for going to law with one another about small matters, and bringing the cause before heathen judges (v. 1-8). II. He takes occasion hence to warn them against many gross sins, to which they had been formerly addicted (v. 9-11). III. And, having cautioned them against the abuse of their liberty, he vehemently dehorts them from fornication, by various arguments (v. 12 to the end).

Verses 1-8

Here the apostle reproves them for going to law with one another before heathen judges for little matters; and therein blames all *vexatious law-suits*. In the previous chapter he had directed them to punish heinous sins among themselves by church-censures. Here he directs them to determine controversies with one another by church-counsel and advice, concerning which observe,

I. The fault he blames them for: it was going to law. Not but that *the law is good, if a man use it lawfully*. But, 1. *Brother went to law with brother* (v. 6), one member of the church with another. The near relation could not preserve peace and good understanding. The bonds of fraternal love were broken through. *And a brother offended, as Solomon says, is harder to be won than a strong city*; their contentions are like the bars of a castle, Prov. 18:19. Note, Christians should not contend with one another, for they are brethren. This, duly attended to, would prevent law-suits, and put an end to quarrels and litigations. 2. They brought the matter before the heathen magistrates: *they went to law before the unjust, not before the saints* (v. 1), brought the controversy before unbelievers (v. 6), and did not compose it among themselves, Christians and saints, at least in profession. This tended much to the reproach of Christianity. It published at once their folly and unpeaceableness; whereas they pretended to be the children of wisdom, and the followers of the Lamb, the meek and lowly Jesus, the *prince of peace*. And therefore, says the apostle, "*Dare any of you, having a controversy with another, go to law, implead him, bring the matter to a hearing before the unjust?*" Note, Christians should not dare to do any thing that tends to the reproach of their Christian name and profession. 3. Here is at least an intimation that they went to law for trivial matters, things of little value; for the apostle blames them that they did not suffer wrong rather than go to law (v. 7), which must be understood of matters not very important. In matters of great damage to ourselves or families, we may use lawful means to right ourselves. We are not bound to sit down and suffer the injury tamely, without stirring for our own relief; but, in matters of small consequence, it is better to put up with the wrong. Christians should be of a forgiving temper. And it is more for their ease and honour to suffer small injuries and inconveniences than seem to be contentious.

II. He lays before them the aggravations of their fault: *Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world* (v. 2), *shall judge angels?* v. 3. And are they unworthy *to judge the smallest matters, the things of this life?* It was a dishonour to their Christian character, a forgetting of their real dignity, as saints, for them to carry little matters, about the things of life, before heathen magistrates. When they were to judge the world, nay, to judge, it is unaccountable that they could not determine little controversies among one another. By judging the world and angels, some think, is to be understood, their being assessors to

Christ in the great judgment-day; it being said of our Saviour's disciples that they should at that day *sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*, Mt. 19:28. And elsewhere we read of our *Lord's coming with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment on all*, etc., Jude 14, 15. *He will come to judgment with all his saints*, 1 Th. 3:13. They themselves are indeed to be judged (see Mt. 25:31–41), but they may first be acquitted, and then advanced to the bench, to approve and applaud the righteous judgment of Christ both on men and angels. In no other sense can they be judges. They are not partners in their Lord's commission, but they have the honour to sit by, and see his proceeding against the wicked world, and approve it. Others understand this judging of the world to be meant when the empire should become Christian. But it does not appear that the Corinthians had knowledge of the empire's becoming Christian; and, if they had, in what sense could Christian emperors be said to judge angels? Others understand it of their condemning the world by their faith and practice, and casting out evil angels by miraculous power, which was not confined to the first ages, nor to the apostles. The first sense seems to be most natural; and at the same time it gives the utmost force to the argument. "Shall Christians have the honour to sit with the sovereign Judge at the last day, whilst he passes judgment on sinful men and evil angels, and are they not worthy to judge of the trifles about which you contend before heathen magistrates? Cannot they make up your mutual differences? Why must you bring them before heathen judges? When you are to judge them, as it fit to appeal to their judicature? Must you, about *the affairs of this life, set those to judge who are of no esteem in the church?*" (so some read, and perhaps most properly, v. 4), *heathen magistrates, exoutheneumenous*, the *things that are not*, ch. 1:28. "Must those be called in to judge in your controversies of whom you ought to entertain so low an opinion? Is this not shameful?" v. 5. Some who read it as our translators make it an ironical speech: "If you have such controversies depending, set those to judge who are of least esteem among yourselves. The meanest of your own members are able surely to determine these disputes. Refer the matters in variance to any, rather than go to law about them before heathen judges. They are trifles not worth contending about, and may easily be decided, if you have first conquered your own spirits, and brought them into a truly Christian temper. *Bear and forbear*, and the men of meanest skill among you may end your quarrels. *I speak it to your shame*," v. 5. Note, It is a shame that little quarrels should grow to such a head among Christians, that they cannot be determined by arbitration of the brethren.

III. He puts them on a method to remedy this fault. And this twofold:—1. By referring it to some to make it up: "*Is it so that there is no wise man among you, no one able to judge between his brethren?*" v. 5. You who value yourselves so much upon your wisdom and knowledge, who are so puffed up upon your extraordinary gifts and endowments, is there none among you fit for this office, none that has wisdom enough to judge in these differences? Must brethren quarrel, and the heathen magistrate judge, in a church so famous as yours for knowledge and wisdom? It is a reproach to you that quarrels should run so high, and none of your wise men interpose to prevent them." Note, Christians should never engage in law-suits till all other remedies have been tried in vain. Prudent Christians should prevent, if possible, their disputes, and not courts of judicature decide them, especially in matters of no great importance. 2. By suffering wrong rather than taking this method to right themselves: *It is utterly a fault among you to go to law in this matter*: it is always a fault of one side to go to law, except in a case where the title is indeed dubious, and there is a friendly agreement of both parties to refer it to the judgment of those learned in the law to

decide it. And this is referring it, rather than contending about it, which is the thing the apostle here seems chiefly to condemn: *Should you not rather take wrong, rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?* Note, A Christian should rather put up with a little injury than tease himself, and provoke others, by a litigious contest. The peace of his own mind, and the calm of his neighbourhood, are more worth than victory in such a contest, or reclaiming his own right, especially when the quarrel must be decided by those who are enemies to religion. But the apostle tells them they were so far from bearing injuries *that they actually did wrong, and defrauded, and that their brethren*. Note, It is utterly a fault to wrong and defraud any; but it is an aggravation of this fault to defraud our Christian brethren. The ties of mutual love ought to be stronger between them than between others. And *love worketh no ill to his neighbour*, Rom. 13:10. Those who love the brotherhood can never, under the influence of this principle, hurt or injure them.

Verses 9-11

Here he takes occasion to warn them against many heinous evils, to which they had been formerly addicted.

I. He puts it to them as a plain truth, of which they could not be ignorant, that such sinners should not inherit the kingdom of God. The meanest among them must know thus much, that *the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God* (v. 9), shall not be owned as true members of his church on earth, nor admitted as glorious members of the church in heaven. All unrighteousness is sin; and all reigning sin, nay, every actual sin committed deliberately, and not repented of, shuts out of the kingdom of heaven. He specifies several sorts of sins: against the first and second commandments, as *idolaters*; against the seventh, as *adulterers, fornicators, effeminate, and Sodomites*; against the eighth, as *thieves and extortioners*, that by force or fraud wrong their neighbours; against the ninth, as *revilers*; and against the tenth, as *covetous and drunkards*, as those who are in a fair way to break all the rest. Those who knew any thing of religion must know that heaven could never be intended for these. The scum of the earth are no ways fit to fill the heavenly mansions. Those who do the devil's work can never receive God's wages, at least no other than *death, the just wages of sin*, Rom. 6:23.

II. Yet he warns them against deceiving themselves: *Be not deceived*. Those who cannot but know the fore-mentioned truth are but too apt not to attend to it. Men are very much inclined to flatter themselves that *God is such a one as themselves*, and that they may live in sin and yet die in Christ, may lead the life of the devil's children and yet go to heaven with the children of God. But this is all a gross cheat. Note, It is very much the concern of mankind that they do not cheat themselves in the matters of their souls. We cannot hope to sow to the flesh and yet reap everlasting life.

III. He puts them in mind what a change the gospel and grace of God had made in them: *Such were some of you* (v. 11), such notorious sinners as he had been reckoning up. The Greek word is *tauta*—*such things* were some of you, very monsters rather than men. Note, Some that are eminently good after their conversion have been as remarkably wicked before. *Quantum mutatus ab illo! How glorious a change does grace make!* It changes the vilest of men into saints and the children of God. *Such were some of you, but you are not what you were. You are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified in the name of Christ, and by the Spirit of our God*. Note, The wickedness of men before conversion is no bar to their regeneration and reconciliation to God. The blood of Christ, and *the washing of regeneration*, can purge away all guilt and defilement. Here is a

rhetorical change of the natural order: *You are sanctified, you are justified*. Sanctification is mentioned before justification: and yet the name of Christ, by which we are justified, is placed before the Spirit of God, by whom we are sanctified. Our justification is owing to the merit of Christ; our sanctification to the operation of the Spirit: but both go together. Note, None are cleansed from the guilt of sin, and reconciled to God through Christ, but those who are also sanctified by his Spirit. All who are made righteous in the sight of God are made holy by the grace of God.

Verses 12-20

The twelfth verse and former part of the thirteenth seem to relate to that early dispute among Christians about the distinction of meats, and yet to be prefatory to the caution that follows against fornication. The connection seems plain enough if we attend to the famous determination of the apostles, Acts 15, where the prohibition of certain foods was joined with that of fornication. Now some among the Corinthians seem to have imagined that they were as much at liberty in the point of fornication as of meats, especially because it was not a sin condemned by the laws of their country. They were ready to say, even in the case of fornication, *All things are lawful for me*. This pernicious conceit Paul here sets himself to oppose: he tells them that many things lawful in themselves were not expedient at certain times, and under particular circumstances; and Christians should not barely consider what is in itself lawful to be done, but what is fit for them to do, considering their profession, character, relations, and hopes: they should be very careful that by carrying this maxim too far they be not brought into bondage, either to a crafty deceiver or a carnal inclination. *All things are lawful for me*, says he, *but I will not be brought under the power of any*, v. 12. Even in lawful things, he would not be subject to the impositions of a usurped authority: so far was he from apprehending that in the things of God it was lawful for any power on earth to impose its own sentiments. Note, There is a liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, in which we must stand fast. But surely he would never carry this liberty so far as to put himself into the power of any bodily appetite. Though all meats were supposed lawful, he would not become a glutton nor a drunkard. And much less would he abuse the maxim of lawful liberty to countenance the sin of fornication, which, though it might be allowed by the Corinthian laws, was a trespass upon the law of nature, and utterly unbecoming a Christian. He would not abuse this maxim about eating and drinking to encourage any intemperance, nor indulge a carnal appetite: "*Though meats are for the belly and the belly for meats* (v. 13), though the belly was made to receive food, and food was originally ordained to fill the belly, yet if it be not convenient for me, and much more if it be inconvenient, and likely to enslave me, if I am in danger of being subjected to my belly and appetite, I will abstain. *But God shall destroy both it and them*, at least as to their mutual relation. There is a time coming when the human body will need no further recruits of food." Some of the ancients suppose that this is to be understood of abolishing the belly as well as the food; and that though the same body will be raised at the great day, yet not with all the same members, some being utterly unnecessary in a future state, as the belly for instance, when the man is never to hunger, nor thirst, nor eat, nor drink more. But, whether this be true or no, there is a time coming when the need and use of food shall be abolished. Note, The expectation we have of being without bodily appetites in a future life is a very good argument against being under their power in the present life. This seems to me the sense of the apostle's argument; and that this passage is plainly to be connected with his caution against fornication, though some make it a part of the former

argument against litigious law-suits, especially before heathen magistrates and the enemies of true religion. These suppose that the apostle argues that though it may be lawful to claim our rights yet it is not always expedient, and it is utterly unfit for Christians to put themselves into the power of infidel judges, lawyers, and solicitors, on these accounts. But this connection seems not so natural. The transition to his arguments against fornication, as I have laid it, seems very natural: *But the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body*, v. 13. Meats and the belly are for one another; not so fornication and the body.

I. The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord. This is the first argument he uses against this sin, for which the heathen inhabitants of Corinth were infamous, and the converts to Christianity retained too favourable an opinion of it. It is making things to cross their intention and use. The *body is not for fornication*; it was never formed for any such purpose, *but for the Lord*, for the service and honour of God. It is to be an instrument of *righteousness to holiness* (Rom. 6:19), and therefore is never to be made an instrument of uncleanness. It is to be a member of Christ, and therefore must not be made the member of a harlot, v. 15. And *the Lord is for the body*, that is, as some think, Christ is to be Lord of the body, to have property in it and dominion over it, having assumed a body and been made to partake of our nature, that he might be head of his church, and head over all things, Heb. 2:5, 18. Note, We must take care that we do not use what belongs to Christ as if it were our own, and much less to his dishonour.

II. Some understand this last passage, *The Lord is for the body*, thus: He is for its resurrection and glorification, according to what follows, v. 14, which is a second argument against this sin, the honour intended to be put on our bodies: *God hath both raised up our Lord, and will raise us up by his power* (v. 14), by the power of him who *shall change our vile body, and make it like to his glorious body by that power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself*, Phil. 3:21. It is an honour done to the body that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead: and it will be an honour to our bodies that they will be raised. Let us not abuse those bodies by sin, and make them vile, which, if they be kept pure, shall, notwithstanding their present vileness, be made like to *Christ's glorious body*. Note, The hopes of a resurrection to glory should restrain Christians from dishonouring their bodies by fleshly lusts.

III. A third argument is the honour already put on them: *Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ?* v. 15. If the soul be united to Christ by faith, the whole man is become a member of his mystical body. The body is in union with Christ as well as the soul. How honourable is this to the Christian! His very flesh is a part of the mystical body of Christ. Note, It is good to know in what honourable relations we stand, that we may endeavour to become them. *But now*, says the apostle, *shall I take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid. Or, take away the members of Christ? Would not this be a gross abuse, and the most notorious injury? Would it not be dishonouring Christ, and dishonouring ourselves to the very last degree? What, make a Christ's members the members of a harlot, prostitute them to so vile a purpose! The thought is to be abhorred. God forbid. Know you not that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with hers? For two*, says he, *shall be one flesh. But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit*, v. 16, 17. Nothing can stand in greater opposition to the honourable relations and alliances of a Christian man than this sin. He is joined to the Lord in union with Christ, and made partaker by

faith of his Spirit. One spirit lives and breathes and moves in the head and members. Christ and his faithful disciples are one, Jn. 17:21, 22. *But he that is joined to a harlot is one body, for two shall be one flesh*, by carnal conjunction, which was ordained of God only to be in a married state. Now shall one in so close a union with Christ as to be one spirit with him yet be so united to a harlot as to become one flesh with her? Were not this a vile attempt to make a union between Christ and harlots? And can a greater indignity be offered to him or ourselves? Can any thing be more inconsistent with our profession or relation? Note, The sin of fornication is a great injury in a Christian to his head and lord, and a great reproach and blot on his profession. It is no wonder therefore that the apostle should say, "*Flee fornication* (v. 18), avoid it, keep out of the reach of temptations to it, of provoking objects. Direct the eyes and mind to other things and thoughts." *Alia vitia pugnando, sola libido fugiendo vincitur—Other vices may be conquered in fight, this only by flight*; so speak many of the fathers.

IV. A fourth argument is that it is a sin against our own bodies. *Every sin that a man does is without the body; he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body* (v. 18); every sin, that is, every other sin, every external act of sin besides, is without the body. It is not so much an abuse of the body as of somewhat else, as of wine by the drunkard, food by the glutton, etc. Nor does it give the power of the body to another person. Nor does it so much tend to the reproach of the body and render it vile. This sin is in a peculiar manner styled uncleanness, pollution, because no sin has so much external turpitude in it, especially in a Christian. He sins against his own body; he defiles it, he degrades it, making it one with the body of that vile creature with whom he sins. He casts vile reproach on what he Redeemer has dignified to the last degree by taking it into union with himself. Note, We should not make our present vile bodies more vile by sinning against them.

V. The fifth argument against this sin is that the bodies of Christians are *the temples of the Holy Ghost which is in them, and which they have of God*, v. 19. He that is joined to Christ is one spirit. He is yielded up to him, is consecrated thereby, and set apart for his use, and is hereupon possessed, and occupied, and inhabited, by his Holy Spirit. This is the proper notion of a temple—a place where God dwells, and sacred to his use, by his own claim and his creature's surrender. Such temples real Christians are of the Holy Ghost. Must he not therefore be God? But the inference is plain that hence we are not our own. We are yielded up to God, and possessed by and for God; nay, and this is virtue of a purchase made of us: *You are bought with a price*. In short, our bodies were made for God, they were purchased for him. If we are Christians indeed they are yielded to him, and he inhabits and occupies them by his Spirit: so that our bodies are not our own, but his. And shall we desecrate his temple, defile it, prostitute it, and offer it up to the use and service of a harlot? Horrid sacrilege! This is robbing God in the worst sense. Note, The temple of the Holy Ghost must be kept holy. Our bodies must be kept as his whose they are, and fit for his use and residence.

VI. The apostle argues from the obligation we are under *to glorify God both with our body and spirit, which are his*, v. 20. He made both, he bought both, and therefore both belong to him and should be used and employed for him, and therefore should not be defiled, alienated from him, and prostituted by us. No, they must be kept as vessels fitted for our Master's use. We must look upon our whole selves as holy to the Lord, and must use our bodies as property which belongs to him and is sacred to his use and service. We are to honour *him with our bodies and spirits, which are his*; and therefore, surely, must abstain from

fornication; and not only from the outward act, but from the *adultery of the heart*, as our Lord calls it, Mt. 5:28. Body and spirit are to be kept clean, that God may be honoured by both. But God is dishonoured when either is defiled by so beastly a sin. Therefore flee fornication, nay, and every sin. Use your bodies for the glory and service of their Lord and Maker. Note, We are not proprietors of ourselves, nor have power over ourselves, and therefore should not use ourselves according to our own pleasure, but according to his will, and for his glory, *whose we are, and whom we should serve*, Acts 27:23.

Chapter 7

In this chapter the apostle answers some cases proposed to him by the Corinthians about marriage. He, I. Shows them that marriage was appointed as a remedy against fornication, and therefore that persons had better marry than burn (v. 1-9). II. He gives direction to those who are married to continue together, though they might have an unbelieving relative, unless the unbeliever would part, in which case a Christian would not be in bondage (v. 10-16). III. He shows them that becoming Christians does not change their external state; and therefore advises every one to continue, in the general, in that state in which he was called (v. 17-24). IV. He advises them, by reason of the present distress, to keep themselves unmarried; hints the shortness of time, and how they should improve it, so as to grow dead and indifferent to the comforts of the world; and shows them how worldly cares hinder their devotions, and distract them in the service of God (v. 25-35). V. He directs them in the disposal of their virgins (v. 36-38). VI. And closes the chapter with advice to widows how to dispose of themselves in that state (v. 39, 40).

Verses 1-9

The apostle comes now, as a faithful and skilful casuist, to answer some cases of conscience which the Corinthians had proposed to him. Those were *things whereof they wrote to him*, v. 1. As the lips of ministers should *keep knowledge*, so the people should *ask the law at their mouths*. The apostle was as ready to resolve as they were to propose their doubts. In the former chapter, he warns them to avoid fornication; here he gives some directions about marriage, the remedy God had appointed for it. He tells them in general,

I. That it was good, in that juncture of time at least, to abstain from marriage altogether: *It is good for a man not to touch a woman* (not to take her to wife), by good here not understanding what is so conformable to the mind and will of God as if to do otherwise were sin, an extreme into which many of the ancients have run in favour of celibacy and virginity. Should the apostle be understood in this sense, he would contradict much of the rest of his discourse. But it is good, that is, either abstracting from circumstances there are many things in which the state of celibacy has the advantage above the marriage state; or else *at this juncture*, by reason of the distress of the Christian church, it would be a convenience for Christians to keep themselves single, provided they have the gift of continency, and at the same time can keep themselves chaste. The expression also may carry in it an intimation that Christians must avoid all occasions of this sin, and flee all fleshly lusts, and incentives to them; must neither look on nor touch a woman, so as to provoke lustful inclinations. Yet,

II. He informs them that marriage, and the comforts and satisfactions of that state, are by divine wisdom prescribed for preventing fornication (v. 2), *Porneias*—*Fornications*, all sorts of lawless lust. To avoid these, *Let every man*, says he, *have his own wife, and every woman her own husband*; that is, marry, and confine themselves to their own mates. And, when they are married, let each render the other *due benevolence* (v. 3), consider the disposition and exigency of each other, and render conjugal duty, which is owing to each other. For, as the apostle argues (v. 4), in the married state neither person has power over his own body, but has delivered it into the power of the other, the wife hers into the power of the husband, the husband his

into the power of the wife. Note, Polygamy, or the marriage of more persons than one, as well as adultery, must be a breach of marriage-covenants, and a violation of the partner's rights. And therefore they should not defraud one another of the use of their bodies, nor any other of the comforts of the conjugal state, appointed of God for keeping *the vessel in sanctification and honour*, and preventing the lusts of uncleanness, except it be *with mutual consent* (v. 5) and *for a time* only, while they employ themselves in some extraordinary duties of religion, *or give themselves to fasting and prayer*. Note, Seasons of deep humiliation require abstinence from lawful pleasures. But this separation between husband and wife must not be for a continuance, lest they expose themselves to Satan's temptations, by reason of their incontinence, or inability to contain. Note, Persons expose themselves to great danger by attempting to perform what is above their strength, and at the same time not bound upon them by any law of God. If they abstain from lawful enjoyments, they may be ensnared into unlawful ones. The remedies God hath provided against sinful inclinations are certainly best.

III. The apostle limits what he had said about *every man's having his own wife*, etc. (v. 2): *I speak this by permission, not of command*. He did not lay it as an injunction upon every man to marry without exception. Any man might marry. No law of God prohibited the thing. But, on the other hand, no law bound a man to marry so that he sinned if he did not; I mean, unless his circumstances required it for preventing the lust of uncleanness. It was a thing in which men, by the laws of God, were in a great measure left at liberty. And therefore Paul did not bind every man to marry, though every man had an allowance. No, he *could wish all men were as himself* (v. 7), that is, single, and capable of living continently in that state. There were several conveniences in it, which at that season, if not at others, made it more eligible in itself. Note, It is a mark of true goodness to wish all men as happy as ourselves. But it did not answer the intentions of divine Providence as well for all men to have as much command of this appetite as Paul had. It was a gift vouchsafed to such persons as Infinite Wisdom thought proper: *Every one hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner and another after that*. Natural constitutions vary; and, where there may not be much difference in the constitution, different degrees of grace are vouchsafed, which may give some a greater victory over natural inclination than others. Note, The gifts of God, both in nature and grace, are variously distributed. Some have them after this manner and some after that. Paul could wish all men were as himself, but *all men cannot receive such a saying, save those to whom it is given*, Mt. 19:11.

IV. He sums up his sense on this head (v. 9, 10): *I say therefore to the unmarried and widows*, to those in a state of virginity or widowhood, *It is good for them if they abide even as I*. There are many conveniences, and especially at this juncture, in a single state, to render it preferable to a married one. It is convenient therefore *that the unmarried abide as I*, which plainly implies that Paul was at that time unmarried. *But, if they cannot contain, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn*. This is God's remedy for lust. The fire may be quenched by the means he has appointed. And marriage, with all its inconveniences, is much better than to burn with impure and lustful desires. *Marriage is honourable in all*; but it is a duty in those who cannot contain nor conquer those inclinations.

Verses 10-16

In this paragraph the apostle gives them direction in a case which must be very frequent in that age of the world, especially

among the Jewish converts; I mean whether they were to live with heathen relatives in a married state. Moses's law permitted divorce; and there was a famous instance in the Jewish state, when the people were obliged to put away their idolatrous wives, Ezra 10:3. This might move a scruple in many minds, whether converts to Christianity were not bound to put away or desert their mates, continuing infidels. Concerning this matter the apostle here gives direction. And,

I. In general, he tells them that marriage, by Christ's command, is for life; and therefore those who are married must not think of separation. The wife *must not depart from the husband* (v. 10), nor the *husband put away his wife*, v. 11. This *I command*, says the apostle; *yet not I, but the Lord*. Not that he commanded any thing of his own head, or upon his own authority.

Whatever he commanded was the Lord's command, dictated by his Spirit and enjoined by his authority. But his meaning is that the Lord himself, with his own mouth, had forbidden such separations, Mt. 5:32; 19:9; Mk. 10:11; Lu. 16:18. Note, Man and wife cannot separate at pleasure, nor dissolve, when they will, their matrimonial bonds and relation. They must not separate for any other cause than what Christ allows. And therefore the apostle advises that if any woman had been separated, either by a voluntary act of her own or by an act of her husband, she should continue unmarried, and seek reconciliation with her husband, that they might cohabit again. Note, Husbands and wives should not quarrel at all, or should be quickly reconciled. They are bound to each other for life. The divine law allows of no separation. They cannot throw off the burden, and therefore should set their shoulders to it, and endeavour to make it as light to each other as they can.

II. He brings the general advice home to the case of such as had an unbelieving mate (v. 12): *But to the rest speak I, not the Lord*; that is, the Lord had not so expressly spoken to this case as to the former divorce. It does not mean that the apostle spoke without authority from the Lord, or decided this case by his own wisdom, without the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. He closes this subject with a declaration to the contrary (v. 40), I think *also that I have the Spirit of God*. But, having thus prefaced his advice, we may attend,

1. To the advice itself, which is that if an unbelieving husband or wife were pleased to dwell with a Christian relative, the other should not separate. The husband should not put away an unbelieving wife, nor the wife leave an unbelieving husband, v. 12, 13. The Christian calling did not dissolve the marriage covenant, but bind it the faster, by bringing it back to the original institution, limiting it to two persons, and binding them together for life. The believer is not by faith in Christ loosed from matrimonial bonds to an unbeliever, but is at once bound and made apt to be a better relative. But, though a believing wife or husband should not separate from an unbelieving mate, yet if the unbelieving relative desert the believer, and no means can reconcile to a cohabitation, in such *a case a brother or sister is not in bondage* (v. 15), not tied up to the unreasonable humour, and bound servilely to follow or cleave to the malicious deserter, or not bound to live unmarried after all proper means for reconciliation have been tried, at least of the deserter contract another marriage or be guilty of adultery, which was a very easy supposition, because a very common instance among the heathen inhabitants of Corinth. In such a case the deserted person must be free to marry again, and it is granted on all hands. And some think that such a malicious desertion is as much a dissolution of the marriage-covenant as death itself. For how is it possible that *the two shall be one flesh* when the one is maliciously bent to part from or put away the other? Indeed, the deserter seems still bound by the matrimonial contract; and

therefore the apostle says (v. 11), *If the woman depart from her husband upon the account of his infidelity, let her remain unmarried*. But the deserted party seems to be left more at liberty (I mean supposing all the proper means have been used to reclaim the deserter, and other circumstances make it necessary) to marry another person. It does not seem reasonable that they should be still bound, when it is rendered impossible to perform conjugal duties or enjoy conjugal comforts, through the mere fault of their mate: in such a case marriage would be a state of servitude indeed. But, whatever liberty be indulged Christians in such a case as this, they are not allowed, for the mere infidelity of a husband or wife, to separate; but, if the unbeliever be willing, they should continue in the relation, and cohabit as those who are thus related. This is the apostle's general direction.

2. We have here the reasons of this advice. (1.) Because the relation or state is sanctified by the holiness of either party: *For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife by the husband* (v. 14), or *hath been sanctified*. The relation itself, and the conjugal use of each other, are sanctified to the believer. *To the pure all things are pure*, Tit. 1:15. Marriage is a divine institution; it is a compact for life, by God's appointment. Had converse and congress with unbelievers in that relation defiled the believer, or rendered him or her offensive to God, the ends of marriage would have been defeated, and the comforts of it in a manner destroyed, in the circumstances in which Christians then were. But the apostle tells them that, though they were yoked with unbelievers, yet, if they themselves were holy, marriage was to them a holy state, and marriage comforts, even with an unbelieving relative, were sanctified enjoyments. It was no more displeasing to God for them to continue to live as they did before, with their unbelieving or heathen relation, than if they had become converts together. If one of the relatives had become holy, nothing of the duties or lawful comforts of the married state could defile them, and render them displeasing to God, though the other were a heathen. He is sanctified for the wife's sake. She is sanctified for the husband's sake. Both are one flesh. He is to be reputed clean who is one flesh with her that is holy, and *vice versâ*: *Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy* (v. 14), that is, they would be heathen, out of the pale of the church and covenant of God. They would not be of the holy seed (as the Jews are called, Isa. 6:13), but common and unclean, in the same sense as heathens in general were styled in the apostle's vision, Acts 10:28. This way of speaking is according to the dialect of the Jews, among whom a child begotten by parents yet heathens, was said to be begotten *out of holiness*; and a child begotten by parents made proselytes was said to be begotten *intra sanctitatem*—*within the holy enclosure*. Thus Christians are called commonly *saints*; such they are by profession, separated to be a peculiar people of God, and as such distinguished from the world; and therefore the children born to Christians, though married to unbelievers, are not to be reckoned as part of the world, but of the church, a holy, not a common and unclean seed. "Continue therefore to live even with unbelieving relatives; for, if you are holy, the relation is so, the state is so, you may make a holy use even of an unbelieving relative, in conjugal duties, and your seed will be holy too." What a comfort is this, where both relatives are believers! (2.) Another reason is that *God hath called Christians to peace*, v. 15. The Christian religion obliges us to act peaceably in all relations, natural and civil. We are bound, *as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men* (Rom. 12:18), and therefore surely to promote the peace and comfort of our nearest relatives, those with whom we are one flesh, nay, though they should be infidels. Note, It should be the labour and study of those who are married to make each other as easy and happy as possible. (3.) A third reason is that it is possible for

the believing relative to be an instrument of the other's salvation (v. 16): *What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband?* Note, It is the plain duty of those in so near a relation to seek the salvation of those to whom they are related. "Do not separate. There is other duty now called for. The conjugal relation calls for the most close and endeared affection; it is a contract for life. And should a Christian desert a mate, when an opportunity offers to give the most glorious proof of love? Stay, and labour heartily for the conversion of thy relative. Endeavour to save a soul. Who knows but this may be the event? It is not impossible. And, though there be no great probability, saving a soul is so good and glorious a service that the bare possibility should put one on exerting one's self." Note, Mere possibility of success should be a sufficient motive with us to use our diligent endeavours for saving the souls of our relations. "*What know I but I may save his soul?*" should move me to attempt it."

Verses 17-24

Here the apostle takes occasion to advise them to continue in the state and condition in which Christianity found them, and in which they became converts to it. And here,

I. He lays down this rule in general—*as God hath distributed to every one*. Note, Our states and circumstances in this world are distributions of divine Providence. *This fixes the bounds of men's habitations*, and orders their steps. God setteth up and pulleth down. And again, *As the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk*. Whatever his circumstances or condition was when he was converted to Christianity, let him abide therein, and suit his conversation to it. The rules of Christianity reach every condition. And in every state a man may live so as to be a credit to it. Note, It is the duty of every Christian to suit his behaviour to his condition and the rules of religion, to be content with his lot, and conduct himself in his rank and place as becomes a Christian. The apostle adds that this was a general rule, to be observed at all times and in all places; *So ordain I in all churches*.

II. He specifies particular cases; as, 1. That of circumcision. *Is any man called being circumcised? Let him not be uncircumcised. Is any man called being uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised*. It matters not whether a man be a Jew or Gentile, within the covenant of peculiarity made with Abraham or without it. He who is converted, being a Jew, has no need to give himself uneasiness upon that head, and wish himself uncircumcised. Nor, is he who is converted from Gentilism under an obligation to be circumcised: nor should he be concerned because he wants that mark of distinction which did heretofore belong to the people of God. For, as the apostle goes on, *circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God*, v. 19. In point of acceptance with God, it is neither here nor there whether men be circumcised or not. Note, It is practical religion, sincere obedience to the commands of God, on which the gospel lays stress. External observances without internal piety are as nothing. Therefore let every man abide *in the calling* (the state) *wherein he was called*, v. 20. 2. That of servitude and freedom. It was common in that age of the world for many to be in a state of slavery, bought and sold for money, and so the property of those who purchased them. "Now," says the apostle, *"art thou called being a servant? Care not for it*. Be not over-solicitous about it. It is not inconsistent with thy duty, profession, or hopes, as a Christian. *Yet, if thou mayest be made free, use it rather,"* v. 21. There are many conveniences in a state of freedom above that of

servitude: a man has more power over himself, and more command of his time, and is not under the control of another lord; and therefore liberty is the more eligible state. But men's outward condition does neither hinder nor promote their acceptance with God. For he that is called *being a servant is the Lord's freed-man—apeleutheros, as he that is called being free is the Lord's servant*. Though he be not discharged from his master's service, he is freed from the dominion and vassalage of sin. Though he be not enslaved to Christ, yet he is bound to yield himself up wholly to his pleasure and service; and yet that service is perfect freedom. Note, Our comfort and happiness depend on what we are to Christ, not what we are in the world. The goodness of our outward condition does not discharge us from the duties of Christianity, nor the badness of it debar us from Christian privileges. He who is a slave may yet be a Christian freeman; he who is a freeman may yet be Christ's servant. He is bought with a price, and should not therefore be the servant of man. Not that he must quit the service of his master, or not take all proper measures to please him (this were to contradict the whole scope of the apostle's discourse); but he must not be so the servant of men but that Christ's will must be obeyed, and regarded, more than his master's. He has paid a much dearer price for him, and has a much fuller property in him. He is to be served and obeyed without limitation or reserve. Note, The servants of Christ should be at the absolute command of no other master besides himself, should serve no man, any further than is consistent with their duty to him. *No man can serve two masters*. Though some understand this passage of persons being bought out of slavery by the bounty and charity of fellow-Christians; and read the passage thus, *Have you been redeemed out of slavery with a price? Do not again become enslaved*; just as before he had advised that, if in slavery they had any prospect of being made free, they should choose it rather. This meaning the words will bear, but the other seems the more natural. See ch. 6:20.

III. He sums up his advice: *Let every man wherein he is called abide therein with God*, v. 24. This is to be understood of the state wherein a man is converted to Christianity. No man should make his faith or religion an argument to break through any natural or civil obligations. He should quietly and comfortably abide in the condition in which he is; and this he may well do, when he may abide therein with God. Note, The special presence and favour of God are not limited to any outward condition or performance. He may enjoy it who is circumcised; and so may he who is uncircumcised. He who is bound may have it as well as he who is free. In this respect *there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free*, Col. 3:11. The favour of God is not bound.

Verses 25-35

The apostle here resumes his discourse, and gives directions to virgins how to act, concerning which we may take notice, I. Of the manner wherein he introduces them: *Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord*, v. 25. I have no express and universal law delivered by the Lord himself concerning celibacy; but *I give my judgment, as one who hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful*, namely, in the apostleship. He acted faithfully, and therefore his direction was to be regarded as a rule of Christ: for he gave judgment as one who was a faithful apostle of Christ. Though Christ had before delivered no universal law about that matter, he now gives direction by an inspired apostle, one who had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. Note, Faithfulness in the ministry is owing to the grace and mercy of Christ. It is what Paul was ready to

acknowledge upon all occasions: *I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me*, ch. 15:10. And it is a great mercy which those obtain from God who prove faithful in the ministry of his word, either ordinary or extraordinary.

II. The determination he gives, which, considering the present distress, was that a state of celibacy was preferable: *It is good for a man so to be*, that is, *to be single*. *I suppose*, says the apostle, or it is my opinion. It is worded with modesty, but delivered, notwithstanding, with apostolic authority. It is not the mere opinion of a private man, but the very determination of the Spirit of God in an apostle, though it be thus spoken. And it was thus delivered to give it the more weight. Those that were prejudiced against the apostle might have rejected this advice had it been given with a mere authoritative air. Note, Ministers do not lose their authority by prudent condescensions. They must become all things to all men, that they may do them the more good. *This is good*, says he, *for the present distress*. Christians, at the first planting of their religion, were grievously persecuted. Their enemies were very bitter against them, and treated them very cruelly. They were continually liable to be tossed and hurried by persecution. This being the then state of things, he did not think it so advisable for Christians that were single to change conditions. The married state would bring more care and cumber along with it (v. 33, 34), and would therefore make persecution more terrible, and render them less able to bear it. Note, Christians, in regulating their conduct, should not barely consider what is lawful in itself, but what may be expedient for them.

III. Notwithstanding he thus determines, he is very careful to satisfy them that he does not condemn marriage in the gross, nor declare it unlawful. And therefore, though he says, "If thou *art loosed from a wife* (in a single state, whether bachelor or widower, virgin or widow) *do not seek a wife*, do not hastily change conditions;" yet he adds, "*If thou art bound to a wife, do not seek to be loosed*. It is thy duty to continue in the married relation, and do the duties of it." And though such, if they were called to suffer persecution, would find peculiar difficulties in it; yet, to avoid these difficulties, they must not cast off nor break through the bonds of duty. Duty must be done, and God trusted with events. But to neglect duty is the way to put ourselves out of the divine protection. He adds therefore, *I thou marry thou hast not sinned; or if a virgin marry she hath not sinned: but such shall have trouble in the flesh*. Marrying is not in itself a sin, but marrying at that time was likely to bring inconvenience upon them, and add to the calamities of the times; and therefore he thought it advisable and expedient that such as could contain should refrain from it; but adds that he would not lay celibacy on them as a yoke, nor, by seeming to urge it too far, draw them into any snare; and therefore says, *But I spare you*. Note, How opposite in this are the papist casuists to the apostle Paul! They forbid many to marry, and entangle them with vows of celibacy, whether they can bear the yoke or no.

IV. He takes this occasion to give general rules to all Christians to carry themselves with a holy indifferency towards the world, and every thing in it. 1. *As to relations*: Those *that had wives must be as though they had none*; that is, they must not set their hearts too much on the comforts of the relation; they must be as though they had none. They know not how soon they shall have none. This advice must be carried into every other relation. Those that have children should be as though they had none. Those that are their comfort now may prove their greatest cross. And soon may the flower of all comforts be cut down. 2. *As to afflictions*: Those *that weep must be as though they wept not*; that is, we must not be dejected too much with any of

our afflictions, nor indulge ourselves in the sorrow of the world, but keep up a holy joy in God in the midst of all our troubles, so that even in sorrow the heart may be joyful, and the end of our grief may be gladness. *Weeping may endure for a night, but joy will come in the morning.* If we can but get to heaven at last, *all tears shall be wiped from our eyes;* and the prospect of it now should make us moderate our sorrows and refrain our tears. 3. As to worldly enjoyments: *Those that rejoice should be as though they rejoiced not;* that is, they should not take too great a complacency in any of their comforts. They must be moderate in their mirth, and sit loose to the enjoyments they most value. Here is not their rest, nor are these things their portion; and therefore their hearts should not be set on them, nor should they place their solace or satisfaction in them. 4. As to worldly traffic and employment: *Those that buy must be as though they possessed not.* Those that prosper in trade, increase in wealth, and purchase estates, should hold these possessions as though they held them not. It is but setting their hearts on that which is not (Prov. 23:5) to do otherwise. Buying and possessing should not too much engage our minds. They hinder many people altogether from minding the better part. Purchasing land and trying oxen kept the guests invited from the wedding-supper, Lu. 14:18, 19. And, when they do not altogether hinder men from minding their chief business, they do very much divert them from a close pursuit. Those are most likely to run so as to obtain the prize who ease their minds of all foreign cares and cumbrances. 5. As to all worldly concerns: *Those that use this world as not abusing it,* v. 31. The world may be used, but must not be abused. It is abused when it is not used to those purposes for which it is given, to honour God and do good to men—when, instead of being oil to the wheels of our obedience, it is made fuel to lust—when, instead of being a servant, it is made our master, our idol, and has that room in our affections which should be reserved for God. And there is great danger of abusing it in all these respects, if our hearts are too much set upon it. We must keep the world as much as may be out of our hearts, that we may not abuse it when we have it in our hands.

V. He enforces these advices with two reasons:—1. *The time is short,* v. 29. We have but little time to continue in this world; but a short season for possessing and enjoying worldly things; *kairos synestalmenos.* It is contracted, reduced to a narrow compass. It will soon be gone. It is just ready to be wrapped up in eternity. Therefore do not set your hearts on worldly enjoyments. Do not be overwhelmed with worldly cares and troubles. Possess what you must shortly leave without suffering yourselves to be possessed by it. Why should your hearts be much set on what you must quickly resign? 2. *The fashion of this world passeth away* (v. 31), *scheḡma*—*the habit, figure, appearance,* of the world, passeth away. It is daily changing countenance. It is in a continual flux. It is not so much a world as the appearance of one. All is show, nothing solid in it; and it is transient show too, and will quickly be gone. How proper and powerful an argument is this to enforce the former advice! How irrational is it to be affected with the images, the fading and transient images, of a dream! *Surely man walketh in a vain show* (Ps. 39:6), in an image, amidst the faint and vanishing appearances of things. And should he be deeply affected, or grievously afflicted, with such a scene?

VI. He presses his general advice by warning them against the embarrassment of worldly cares: *But I would have you without carefulness,* v. 32. Indeed to be careless is a fault; a wise concern about worldly interests is a duty; but to be careful, full of care, to have an anxious and perplexing care about them, is a sin. All that care which disquiets the mind, and distracts it in the

worship of God, is evil; for God must *be attended upon without distraction*, v. 35. The whole mind should be engaged when God is worshipped. The work ceases while it diverts to any thing else, or is hurried and drawn hither and thither by foreign affairs and concerns. Those who are engaged in divine worship should attend to this very thing, should make it their whole business. But how is this possible when the mind is swallowed up of the cares of this life? Note, It is the wisdom of a Christian so to order his outward affairs, and choose such a condition in life, as to be without distracting cares, that he may attend upon the Lord with a mind at leisure and disengaged. This is the general maxim by which the apostle would have Christians govern themselves. In the application of it Christian prudence must direct. That condition of life is best for every man which is best for his soul, and keeps him most clear of the cares and snares of the world. By this maxim the apostle solves the case put to him by the Corinthians, whether it were advisable to marry? To this he says, That, by reason of the present distress, and it may be in general, at that time, when Christians were married to infidels, and perhaps under a necessity of being so, if married at all: I say, in these circumstances, to continue unmarried would be the way to free themselves from any cares and incumbrances, and allow them more vacation for the service of God. Ordinarily, the less care we have about the world the more freedom we have for the service of God. Now the married state at that time (if not at all times) did bring most worldly care along with it. *He that is married careth for the things of the world, that he may please his wife*, v. 33. *And she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband*. But the unmarried man and woman mind the things of the Lord, that they may please the Lord, and be holy both in body and spirit, v. 32, 34. Not but the married person may be holy both in body and spirit too. Celibacy is not in itself a state of greater purity and sanctity than marriage; but the unmarried would be able to make religion more their business at that juncture, because they would have less distraction from worldly cares. Marriage is that condition of life that brings care along with it, though sometimes it brings more than at others. It is the constant care of those in that relation to please each other; though this is more difficult to do at some seasons, and in some cases, than in others. At that season, therefore, the apostle advises that those who were single should abstain from marriage, if they were under no necessity to change conditions. And, where the same reason is plain at other times, the rule is as fit to be observed. And the very same rule must determine persons for marriage where there is the same reason, that is, if in the unmarried state persons are likely to be more distracted in the service of God than if they were married, which is a case supposable in many respects. This is the general rule, which every one's discretion must apply to his own particular case; and by it should he endeavour to determine, whether it be for marriage or against. That condition of life should be chosen by the Christian in which it is most likely he will have the best helps, and the fewest hindrances, in the service of God and the affairs of his own salvation.

Verses 36-38

In this passage the apostle is commonly supposed to give advice about the disposal of children in marriage, upon the principle of his former determination. In this view the general meaning is plain. It was in that age, and those parts of the world, and especially among the Jews, reckoned a disgrace for a woman to remain unmarried past a certain number of years: it gave a suspicion of somewhat that was not for her reputation. "Now," says the apostle, "if any man thinks he behaves unhandsomely towards his daughter, and that it is not for her credit to remain unmarried, when she is of full age, and that upon this principle it

is needful to dispose of her in marriage, he may use his pleasure. It is no sin in him to dispose of her to a suitable mate. But if a man has determined in himself to keep her a virgin, and stands to this determination, and is under no necessity to dispose of her in marriage, but is at liberty, with her consent, to pursue his purpose, he does well in keeping her a virgin. In short, he that gives her in marriage does well; but he that keeps her single, if she can be easy and innocent in such a state, does what is better; that is, more convenient for her in the present state of things, if not at all times and seasons." Note, 1. Children should be at the disposal of their parents, and not dispose of themselves in marriage. Yet, 2. Parents should consult their children's inclinations, both to marriage in general and to the person in particular, and not reckon they have uncontrollable power to do with them, and dictate to them, as they please. 3. It is our duty not only to consider what is lawful, but in many cases, at least, what is fit to be done, before we do it.

But I think the apostle is here continuing his former discourse, and advising unmarried persons, who are at their own disposal, what to do, the man's virgin being meant of his virginity. *Τεπειν τεμν heautou parthenon* seems to be rather meant of preserving his own virginity than keeping his daughter a virgin, though it be altogether uncommon to use the word in this sense. Several other reasons may be seen in Locke and Whitby, by those who will consult them. And it was a common matter of reproach among Jews and civilized heathens, for a man to continue single beyond such a term of years, though all did not agree in limiting the single life to the same term. The general meaning of the apostle is the same, that it was no sin to marry, if a man thought there was a necessity upon, to avoid popular reproach, much less to avoid the hurrying fervours of lust. But he that was in his own power, stood firm in his purpose, and found himself under no necessity to marry, would, at that season, and in the circumstances of Christians at that time, at least, make a choice every way most for his own conveniency, ease, and advantage, as to his spiritual concerns. And it is highly expedient, if not a duty, for Christians to be guided by such a consideration.

Verses 39-40

The whole is here closed up with advice to widows: *As long as the husband liveth the wife is bound by the law*, confined to one husband, and bound to continue and cohabit with him. Note, The marriage—contract is for life; death only can annul the bond. *But, the husband being dead, she is at liberty to marry whom she will*. There is no limitation by God's law to be married only for such a number of times. It is certain, from this passage, that second marriages are not unlawful; for then the widow could not be at liberty to marry whom she pleased, nor to marry a second time at all. But the apostle asserts she has such a liberty, when her husband is dead, only with a limitation that *she marry in the Lord*. In our choice of relations, and change of conditions, we should always have an eye to God. Note, Marriages are likely to have God's blessing only when they are made in the Lord, when persons are guided by the fear of God, and the laws of God, and act in dependence on the providence of God, in the change and choice of a mate—when they can look up to God, and sincerely seek his direction, and humbly hope for his blessing upon their conduct. *But she is happier*, says the apostle, *if she so abide* (that is, continue a widow) *in my judgment; and I think I have the Spirit of God*, v. 40. At this juncture, at least, if not ordinarily, it will be much more for the peace and quiet of such, and give them less hindrance in the service of God, to continue unmarried. And this, he tells them,

was by inspiration of the Spirit. "Whatever your false apostles may think of me, I think, and have reason to know, that I have the Spirit of God." Note, Change of condition in marriage is so important a matter that it ought not to be made but upon due deliberation, after careful consideration of circumstances, and upon very probable grounds, at least, that it will be a change to advantage in our spiritual concerns.

Chapter 8

The apostle, in this chapter, answers another case proposed to him by some of the Corinthians, about eating those things that had been sacrificed to idols. I. He hints at the occasion of this case, and gives a caution against too high an esteem of their knowledge (v. 1-3). II. He asserts the vanity of idols, the unity of the Godhead, and the sole mediation of Christ between God and man (v. 4-6). III. He tells them that upon supposition that it were lawful in itself to eat of things offered to idols (for that they themselves are nothing), yet regard must be had to the weakness of Christian brethren, and nothing done that would lay a stumbling block before them, and occasion their sin and destruction (v. 7 to the end).

Verses 1-3

The apostle comes here to the case of things that had been offered to idols, concerning which some of them sought satisfaction: a case that frequently occurred in that age of Christianity, when the church of Christ was among the heathen, and the Israel of God must live among the Canaanites. For the better understanding of it, it must be observed that it was a custom among the heathens to make feasts on their sacrifices, and not only to eat themselves, but invite their friends to partake with them. These were usually kept in the temple, where the sacrifice was offered (v. 10), and, if any thing was left when the feast ended, it was usual to carry away a portion to their friends; what remained, after all, belonged to the priests, who sometimes sold it in the markets. See ch. 10:25. Nay, feasts, as Athenaeus informs us, were always accounted, among the heathen, sacred and religious things, so that they were wont to sacrifice before all their feasts; and it was accounted a very profane thing among them, *athyta esthlein*, to eat at their private tables any meat whereof they had not first sacrificed on such occasions. In this circumstance of things, while Christians lived among idolaters, had many relations and friends that were such, with whom they must keep up acquaintance and maintain good neighbourhood, and therefore have occasion to eat at their tables, what should they do if any thing that had been sacrificed should be set before them? What, if they should be invited to feast with them in their temples? It seems as if some of the Corinthians had imbibed an opinion that even this might be done, because they knew an idol was nothing in the world, v. 4. The apostle seems to answer more directly to the case (ch. 10), and here to argue, upon supposition of their being right in this thought, against their abuse of their liberty to the prejudice of others; but he plainly condemns such liberty in ch. 10. The apostle introduces his discourse with some remarks about knowledge that seem to carry in them a censure of such pretences to knowledge as I have mentioned: *We know*, says the apostle, *that we all have knowledge* (v. 1); as if he had said, "You who take such liberty are not the only knowing persons; we who abstain know as much as you of the vanity of idols, and that they are nothing; but we know too that the liberty you take is very culpable, and that even lawful liberty must be used with charity and not to the prejudice of weaker brethren." *Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth*, v. 1. Note, 1. The preference of charity to conceited knowledge. That is best which is fitted to do the greatest good. Knowledge, or at least a high conceit of it, is very apt to swell the mind, to fill it with wind, and so puff it up. This tends to no good to ourselves, but in many instances is much to the hurt of others. But true love, and tender regard to our brethren, will put us upon consulting their interest, and acting as may be for their edification. Observe, 2. That there is no evidence of ignorance more common than a

conceit of knowledge: *If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.* He that knows most best understands his own ignorance, and the imperfection of human knowledge. He that imagines himself a knowing man, and is vain and conceited on this imagination, has reason to suspect that he knows nothing aright, *nothing as he ought to know it.* Note, It is one thing to know truth, and another to know it as we ought, so as duly to improve our knowledge. Much may be known when nothing is known to any good purpose, when neither ourselves nor others are the better for our knowledge. And those who think they know any thing, and grow fain hereupon, are of all men most likely to make no good use of their knowledge; neither themselves nor others are likely to be benefited by it. *But,* adds the apostle, *if any man love God, the same is known* of God. If any man love God, and is thereby influenced to love his neighbour, the same is known of God; that is, as some understand it, is made by him to know, is taught of God. Note, Those that love God are most likely to be taught of God, and be made by him to know as they ought. Some understand it thus: He shall be approved of God; he will accept him and have pleasure in him. Note, The charitable person is most likely to have God's favour. Those who love God, and for his sake love their brethren and seek their welfare, are likely to be beloved of God; and how much better is it to be approved of God than to have a vain opinion of ourselves!

Verses 4-6

In this passage he shows the vanity of idols: *As to the eating of things that have been sacrificed to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world;* or, there is no idol in the world; or, an idol can do nothing in the world: for the form of expression in the original is elliptical. The meaning in the general is, that heathen idols have no divinity in them; and therefore the Old Testament they are commonly called *lies* and *vanities*, or *lying vanities*. They are merely imaginary gods, and many of them no better than imaginary beings; they have no power to pollute the creatures of God, and thereby render them unfit to be eaten by a child or servant of God. *Every creature of God is good, if it be received with thanksgiving,* 1 Tim. 4:4. It is not in the power of the vanities of the heathens to change its nature.—*And there is no other God but one.* Heathen idols are not gods, nor to be owned and respected as gods, for there is no other God but one. Note, the unity of the Godhead is a fundamental principle in Christianity, and in all right religion. The gods of the heathens must be nothing in the world, must have no divinity in them, nothing of real godhead belonging to them; for there is no other God but one. Others may be called gods: *There are that are called gods, in heaven and earth, gods many, and lords many;* but they are falsely thus called. The heathens had many such, some in heaven and some on earth, celestial deities, that were of highest rank and repute among them, and terrestrial ones, men made into gods, that were to mediate for men with the former, and were deputed by them to preside over earthly affairs. These are in scripture commonly called *Baalim*. They had gods of higher and lower degree; nay, many in each order: *gods many, and lords many;* but all titular deities and mediators: so called, but not such in truth. All their divinity and mediation were imagery. For, 1. *To us there is but one God,* says the apostle, *the Father, of whom are all things, and we in or for him.* We Christians are better informed; we well know there is but one God, the fountain of being, the author of all things, maker, preserver, and governor of the whole world, of whom and for whom are all things. Not one God to govern one part of mankind, or one rank and order of men, and another to govern another. One God made all, and therefore has power over all. All things are of him,

and we, and all things else, are for him. Called the *Father* here, not in contradistinction to the other persons of the sacred Trinity, and to exclude them from the Godhead, but in contradistinction to all creatures that were made by God, and whose formation is attributed to each of these three in other places of scripture, and not appropriated to the Father alone. God the Father, as *Fons et fundamentum Trinitatis—as the first person in the Godhead, and the original of the other two*, stands here for the Deity, which yet comprehends all three, the name God being sometimes in scripture ascribed to the Father, *katō exocheun*, or *by way of eminency*, because he is *fons et principium Deitatis* (as Calvin observes), *the fountain of the Deity* in the other two, they having it by communication from him: so that there is but one God the Father, and yet the Son is God too, but is not another God, the Father, with his Son and Spirit, being the one God, but not without them, or so as to exclude them from the Godhead. 2. There is to us but one Lord, one Mediator between God and men, even Jesus Christ. Not many mediators, as the heathen imagined, but one only, by whom all things were created and do consist, and to whom all our hope and happiness are owing—the man Christ Jesus; but a man in personal union with the divine Word, or God the Son. This very man hath God made both Lord and Christ, Acts 2:36. Jesus Christ, in his human nature and mediatorial state, has a delegated power, a name given him, though above every name, that at his name every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord. And thus he is the only Lord, the only Mediator, that Christians acknowledge, the only person who comes between God and sinners, administers the world's affairs under God, and mediates for men with God. All the lords of this sort among heathens are merely imaginary ones. Note, It is the great privilege of us Christians that we know the true God, and true Mediator between God and man: *the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*, Jn. 17:3.

Verses 7-13

The apostle, having granted, and indeed confirmed, the opinion of some among the Corinthians, that idols were nothing, proceeds now to show them that their inference from this assumption was not just, namely, that therefore they might go into the idol-temple, and eat of the sacrifices, and feast there with their heathen neighbours. He does not indeed here so much insist upon the unlawfulness of the thing in itself as the mischief such freedom might do to weaker Christians, persons that had not the same measure of knowledge with these pretenders. And here,

I. He informs them that every Christian man, at that time, was not so fully convinced and persuaded that an idol was nothing. *Howbeit, there is not in every man this knowledge; for some, with conscience of the idol, unto this hour, eat it as a thing offered unto an idol;* with conscience of the idol; that is, some confused veneration for it. Though they were converts to Christianity, and professed the true religion, they were not perfectly cured of the old leaven, but retained an unaccountable respect for the idols they had worshipped before. Note, Weak Christians may be ignorant, or have but a confused knowledge of the greatest and plainest truths. Such were those of the one God and one Mediator. And yet some of those who were turned from heathenism to Christianity among the Corinthians seem to have retained a veneration for their idols, utterly irreconcilable with those great principles; so that when an opportunity offered to eat things offered to idols they did not abstain, to testify their abhorrence of idolatry, nor eat with a professed contempt of the idol, by declaring they looked upon it to be nothing; and *so their conscience, being weak, was defiled;* that is, they contracted guilt; they ate out of respect to the idol, with an

imagination that it had something divine in it, and so committed idolatry: whereas the design of the gospel was to turn men from dumb idols to the living God. They were weak in their understanding, not thoroughly apprized of the vanity of idols; and, while they ate what was sacrificed to them out of veneration for them, contracted the guilt of idolatry, and so greatly polluted themselves. This seems to be the sense of the place; though some understand it of weak Christians defiling themselves by eating what was offered to an idol with an apprehension that thereby it became unclean, and made those so in a moral sense who should eat it, every one not having a knowledge that the idol was nothing, and therefore that it could not render what was offered to it in this sense unclean. Note, We should be careful to do nothing that may occasion weak Christians to defile their consciences.

II. He tells them that mere eating and drinking had nothing in them virtuous nor criminal, nothing that could make them better nor worse, pleasing nor displeasing to God: *Meat commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we eat not are we the worse*, v. 8. It looks as if some of the Corinthians made a merit of their eating what had been offered to idols, and that in their very temples too (v. 10), because it plainly showed that they thought the idols nothing. But eating and drinking are in themselves actions indifferent. It matters little what we eat. What goes into the man of this sort neither purifies nor defiles. Flesh offered to idols may in itself be as proper for food as any other; and the bare eating, or forbearing to eat, has no virtue in it. Note, It is a gross mistake to think that distinction of food will make any distinction between men in God's account. Eating this food, and forbearing that, having nothing in them to recommend a person to God.

III. He cautions them against abusing their liberty, the liberty they thought they had in this matter. For that they mistook this matter, and had no allowance to sit at meat in the idol's temple, seems plain from ch. 10:20, etc. But the apostle argues here that, even upon the supposition that they had such power, they must be cautious how they use it; it might be a *stumbling-block to the weak* (v. 9), it might occasion their falling into idolatrous actions, perhaps their falling off from Christianity and revolting again to heathenism. "If a man see thee, who hast knowledge (hast superior understanding to his, and hereupon condescendest that thou hast a liberty to sit at meat, or feast, in an idol's temple, because an idol, thou sayest, is nothing), shall not one who is less thoroughly informed in this matter, and thinks an idol something, be emboldened to eat what was offered to the idol, not as common food, but sacrifice, and thereby be guilty of idolatry?" Such an occasion of falling they should be careful of laying before their weak brethren, whatever liberty or power they themselves had. The apostle backs this caution with two considerations:—1. The danger that might accrue to weak brethren, even those weak brethren for whom Christ died. We must deny ourselves even what is lawful rather than occasion their stumbling, and endanger their souls (v. 11): *Through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?* Note, Those whom Christ hath redeemed with his most precious blood should be very precious and dear to us. If he had such compassion as to die for them, that they might not perish, we should have so much compassion for them as to deny ourselves, for their sakes, in various instances, and not use our liberty to their hurt, to occasion their stumbling, or hazard their ruin. That man has very little of the spirit of the Redeemer who had rather his brother should perish than himself be abridged, in any respect, of his liberty. He who hath the Spirit of Christ in him will love those whom Christ loved, so as to die for them, and will study to promote their spiritual and eternal warfare, and shun

every thing that would unnecessarily grieve them, and much more every thing that would be likely to occasion their stumbling, or falling into sin. 2. The hurt done to them Christ takes as done to himself: *When you sin so against the weak brethren and wound their consciences, you sin against Christ*, v. 12. Note, Injuries done to Christians are injuries to Christ, especially to babes in Christ, to weak Christians; and most of all, involving them in guilt: wounding their consciences is wounding him. He has a particular care of the lambs of the flock: *He gathers them in his arm and carries them in his bosom*, Isa. 60:11. Strong Christians should be very careful to avoid what will offend weak ones, or lay a stumbling-block in their way. Shall we be void of compassion for those to whom Christ has shown so much? Shall we sin against Christ who suffered for us? Shall we set ourselves to defeat his gracious designs, and help to ruin those whom he died to save?

IV. He enforces all with his own example (v. 13): *Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend*. He does not say that he will never eat more. This were to destroy himself, and to commit a heinous sin, to prevent the sin and fall of a brother. Such evil must not be done that good may come of it. But, though it was necessary to eat, it was not necessary to eat flesh. And therefore, rather than occasion sin in a brother, he would abstain from it as long as he lived. He had such a value for the soul of his brother that he would willingly deny himself in a matter of liberty, and forbear any particular food, which he might have lawfully eaten and might like to eat, rather than lay a stumbling-block in a weak brother's way, and occasion him to sin, by following his example, without being clear in his mind whether it were lawful or no. Note, We should be very tender of doing any thing that may be an occasion of stumbling to others, though it may be innocent in itself. Liberty is valuable, but the weakness of a brother should induce, and sometimes bind, us to waive it. We must not rigorously claim nor use our own rights, to the hurt and ruin of a brother's soul, and so to the injury of our Redeemer, who died for him. When it is certainly foreseen that my doing what I may forbear will occasion a fellow-christian to do what he ought to forbear, I shall offend, scandalize, or lay a stumbling-block in his way, which to do is a sin, however lawful the thing itself be which is done. And, if we must be so careful not to occasion other men's sins, how careful should we be to avoid sin ourselves! If we must not endanger other men's souls, how much should we be concerned not to destroy our own!

Chapter 9

In this chapter the apostle seems to answer some cavils against himself. I. He asserts his apostolical mission and authority, and gives in his success among them as a testimony to it (v. 1, 2). II. He claims a right to subsist by his ministry, and defends it by several arguments from natural reason and the Mosaical law, and asserts it also to be a constitution of Christ (v. 3–14). III. He shows that he had willingly waived this privilege and power for their benefit (v. 15–18). IV. He specifies several other things, in which he had denied himself for the sake of other men's spiritual interest and salvation (v. 19–23). And, V. Concludes his argument by showing what animated him to this course, even the prospect of an incorruptible crown (v. 24 to the end.)

Verses 1-2

Blessed Paul, in the work of his ministry, not only met with opposition from those without, but discouragement from those within. He was under reproach; false brethren questioned his apostleship, and were very industrious to lessen his character and sink his reputation; particularly here at Corinth, a place to which he had been instrumental in doing much good, and from which he had deserved well; and yet there were those among them who upon these heads created him great uneasiness. Note, It is no strange nor new thing for a minister to meet with very unkind returns for great good-will to a people, and diligent and successful services among them. Some among the Corinthians questioned, if they did not disown, his apostolical character. To their cavils he here answers, and in such a manner as to set forth himself as a remarkable example of that self-denial, for the good of others, which he had been recommending in the former chapter. And, 1. He asserts his apostolical mission and character: *Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?* To be a witness of his resurrection was one great branch of the apostolical charge. "Now," says Paul, "have not I seen the Lord, though not immediately after his resurrection, yet since his ascent?" See ch. 4:8. *Am I not free? Have I not the same commission, and charge, and powers, with the other apostles? What respect, or honour, or subsistence, can they challenge, which I am not at liberty to demand as well as they?"* It was not because he had no right to live of the gospel that he maintained himself with his own hands, but for other reasons. 2. He offers the success of his ministry among them, and the good he had done to them, as a proof of his apostleship: *Are not you my work in the Lord? Through the blessing of Christ on my labours, have not I raised a church among you? The seal of my apostleship are you in the Lord.* Your conversion by my means is a confirmation from God of my mission." Note, The ministers of Christ should not think it strange to be put upon the proof of their ministry by some who have had experimental evidence of the power of it and the presence of God with it. 3. He justly upbraids the Corinthians with their disrespect: *"Doubtless, if I am not an apostle to others, I am so to you,* v. 2. I have laboured so long, and with so much success, among you, that you, above all others, should own and honour my character, and not call it in question." Note, It is no new thing for faithful ministers to meet with the worst treatment where they might expect the best. This church at Corinth had as much reason to believe, and as little reason to question, his apostolical mission, as any; they had as much reason, perhaps more than any church, to pay him respect. He had been instrumental in bringing them to the knowledge and faith of Christ; he laboured long among them, nearly two years, and he laboured to good purpose, *God having much people among them.* See Acts 18:10,

11. It was aggravated ingratitude for this people to call in question his authority.

Verses 3-14

Having asserted his apostolical authority, he proceeds to claim the rights belonging to his office, especially that of being maintained by it.

I. These he states, v. 3-6. *"My answer to those that do examine me* (that is, enquire into my authority, or the reasons of my conduct, if I am an apostle) *is this: Have we not power to eat and drink* (v. 4), *or a right to maintenance? Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas; and, not only to be maintained ourselves, but have them maintained also?"* Though Paul was at that time single, he had a right to take a wife when he pleased, and to lead her about with him, and expect a maintenance for her, as well as himself, from the churches. Perhaps Barnabas had a wife, as the other apostles certainly had, and led them about with them. For that a wife is here to be understood by the *sister—woman—adelpheun gynaike*, is plain from this, that it would have been utterly unfit for the apostles to have carried about women with them unless they were wives. The word implies that they had power over them, and could require their attendance on them, which none could have over any but wives or servants. Now the apostles, who worked for their bread, do not seem to have been in a capacity to buy or have servants to carry with them. Not to observe that it would have raised suspicion to have carried about even women-servants, and much more other women to whom they were not married, for which the apostles would never give any occasion. The apostle therefore plainly asserts he had a right to marry as well as other apostles, and claim a maintenance for his wife, nay, and his children too, if he had any, from the churches, without labouring with his own hands to procure it. *Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to for bear working?* v. 6. In short, the apostle here claims a maintenance from the churches, both for him and his. This was due from them, and what he might claim.

II. He proceeds, by several arguments, to prove his claim. 1. From the common practice and expectations of mankind. Those who addict and give themselves up to any way of business in the world expect to live out of it. Soldiers expect to be paid for their service. Husbandmen and shepherds expect to get a livelihood out of their labours. If they plant vineyards, and dress and cultivate them, it is with expectation of fruit; if they feed a flock, it is with the expectation of being fed and clothed by it! *Who goeth a warfare at any time at his own charge? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not the fruit thereof? Who feedeth a flock, and eateth not the milk thereof?* v. 7-9. Note, It is very natural, and very reasonable, for ministers to expect a livelihood out of their labours. 2. He argues it out of the Jewish law: *Say I these things as a man? Or saith not the law the same also?* v. 8. Is this merely a dictate of common reason and according to common usage only? No, it is also consonant to the old law. God had therein ordered that the ox should not be muzzled while he was treading out the corn, nor hindered from eating while he was preparing the corn for man's use, and treading it out of the ear. But this law was not chiefly given out of God's regard to oxen, or concern for them, but to teach mankind that all due encouragement should be given to those who are employed by us, or labouring for our good—that the labourers should taste of the fruit of their labours. *Those who plough should plough in hope; and those who thresh in hope should be partakers of their hope,* v. 10. The law saith this about oxen for our sakes. Note, Those that lay themselves out to do our souls good should not have their mouths muzzled, but have food provided for them. 3. He

argues from common equity: *If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?* What they had sown was much better than they expected to reap. They had taught them the way to eternal life, and laboured heartily to put them in possession of it. It was no great matter, surely, while they were giving themselves up to this work, to expect a support of their own temporal life. They had been instruments of conveying to them the greater spiritual blessings; and had they no claim to as great a share in their carnal things as was necessary to subsist them? Note, Those who enjoy spiritual benefits by the ministry of the word should not grudge a maintenance to such as are employed in this work. If they have received a real benefit, one would think they could not grudge them this. What, get so much good by them, and yet grudge to do so little good to them! Is this grateful or equitable? 4. He argues from the maintenance they afforded others: *"If others are partakers of this power over you, are not we rather?"* You allow others this maintenance, and confess their claim just; but who has so just a claim as I from the church of Corinth? Who has given greater evidence of the apostolic mission? Who had laboured so much for your good, or done like service among you?" Note, Ministers should be valued and provided for according to their worth. *"Nevertheless,"* says the apostle, *"we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.* We have not insisted on our right, but have rather been in straits to serve the interests of the gospel, and promote the salvation of souls." He renounced his right, rather than by claiming it he would hinder his success. He denied himself, for fear of giving offence; but asserted his right lest his self-denial should prove prejudicial to the ministry. Note, He is likely to plead most effectually for the rights of others who shows a generous disregard to his own. It is plain, in this case, that justice, and not self-love, is the principle by which he is actuated. 5. He argues from the old Jewish establishment: *"Do you not know that those who minister about holy things live of the things of the temple, and those who wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?"* v. 13. And, if the Jewish priesthood was maintained out of the holy things that were then offered, shall not Christ's ministers have a maintenance out of their ministry? Is there not as much reason that we should be maintained as they?" He asserts it to be the institution of Christ: *"Even so hath the Lord ordained that those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel* (v. 14), should have a right to a maintenance, though not bound to demand it, and insist upon it." It is the people's duty to maintain their minister, by Christ's appointment, though it be not a duty bound on every minister to call for or accept it. He may waive his right, as Paul did, without being a sinner; but those transgress an appointment of Christ who deny or withhold it. Those who preach the gospel have a right to live by it; and those who attend on their ministry, and yet take no thought about their subsistence, fail very much in their duty to Christ, and respect owing to them.

Verses 15-18

Here he tells them that he had, notwithstanding, waived his privilege, and lays down his reason for doing it.

I. He tells them that he had neglected to claim his right in times past: *I have used none of these things*, v. 15. He neither ate nor drank himself at their cost, nor led about a wife to be maintained by them, nor forbore working to maintain himself. From others he received a maintenance, but not from them, for some special reasons. Nor did he write this to make his claim now.

Though he here asserts his right, yet he does not claim his due; but denies himself for their sakes, and the gospel.

II. We have the reason assigned of his exercising this self-denial. He would not have his glorying made void: *It were better for*

his to die than that any man should make his glorying void, v. 15. This glorying did imply nothing in it of boasting, or self-conceit, or catching at applause, but a high degree of satisfaction and comfort. It was a singular pleasure to him to preach the gospel without making it burdensome; and he was resolved that among them he would not lose this satisfaction. His advantages for promoting the gospel were his glory, and he valued them above his rights, or his very life: *Better were it for him to die than to have his glorying made void*, than to have it justly said that he preferred his wages to his work. No, he was ready to deny himself for the sake of the gospel. Note, It is the glory of a minister to prefer the success of his ministry to his interest, and deny himself, that he may serve Christ, and save souls. Not that in so doing he does more than he ought; he is still acting within the bounds of the law of charity. But he acts upon truly noble principles, he brings much honour to God in so doing; and those that honour him he will honour. It is what God will approve and commend, what a man may value himself for and take comfort in, though he cannot make a merit of it before God.

III. He shows that this self-denial was more honourable in itself, and yielded him much more content and comfort, than his preaching did: *"Though I preach the gospel, I have nothing whereof to glory; for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel*, v. 16. It is my charge, my business; it is the work for which I am constituted an apostle, ch. 1:17. This is a duty expressly bound upon me. It is not in any degree a matter of liberty. *Necessity is upon me*. I am false and unfaithful to my trust, I break a plain and express command, and *woe be to me, if I do not preach the gospel*." Those who are set apart to the office of the ministry have it in charge to preach the gospel. Woe be to them if they do not. From this none is excepted. But it is not given in charge to all, nor any preacher of the gospel, to do his work gratis, to preach and have no maintenance out of it. It is not said, "Woe be to him if he do not preach the gospel, and yet maintain himself." In this point he is more at liberty. It may be his duty to preach at some seasons, and under some circumstances, without receiving a maintenance for it; but he has, in the general, a right to it, and may expect it from those among whom he labours. When he renounces this right for the sake of the gospel and the souls of men, though he does not supererogate, yet he denies himself, waives his privilege and right; he does more than his charge and office in general, and at all times, obliges him to. Woe be to him if he do not preach the gospel; but it may sometimes be his duty to insist on his maintenance for so doing, and whenever he forbears to claim it he parts with his right, though a man may sometimes be bound to do so by the general duties of love to God and charity to men. Note, It is a high attainment in religion to renounce our own rights for the good of others; this will entitle to a peculiar reward from God. For,

IV. The apostle here informs us that doing our duty with a willing mind will meet with a gracious recompence from God: *If I do this thing*, that is, either preach the gospel or take no maintenance, *willingly, I have a reward*. Indeed, it is willing service only that is capable of reward from God. It is not the bare doing of any duty, but the doing of it heartily (that is, willingly and cheerfully) that God has promised to reward. Leave the heart out of our duties, and God abhors them: they are but the carcasses, without the life and spirit, of religion. Those must preach willingly who would be accepted of God in this duty. They must make their business a pleasure, and not esteem it a drudgery. And those who, out of regard to the honour of God or good of souls, give up their claim to a maintenance, should do this duty willingly, if they would be accepted in it or rewarded for it.

But whether the duty of the office be done willingly or with reluctance, whether the heart be in it or averse from it, all in office have a trust and charge from God, for which they must be accountable. Ministers have a dispensation of the gospel, or *stewardship*—*oikonomia* (Lu. 16:2), committed to them. Note, Christ's willing servants shall not fail of a recompence, and that proportioned to their fidelity, zeal, and diligence; and his slothful and unwilling servants shall all be called to an account. Taking his name, and professing to do his business, will make men accountable at his bar. And how sad an account have slothful servants to give!

V. The apostle sums up the argument, by laying before them the encouraging hope he had of a large recompence for his remarkable self-denial: *What is my reward then?* v. 18. What is it I expect a recompence from God for? *That when I preach the gospel I may make it without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.* Or, "not so to claim my rights as to make them destroy the great intentions and ends of my office, but renounce them for the sake of these." It is an abuse of power to employ it against the very ends for which it is given. And the apostle would never use his power, or privilege of being maintained by his ministry, so as to frustrate the ends of it, but would willingly and cheerfully deny himself for the honour of Christ and the interest of souls. That ministers who follows his example may have cheerful expectations of a full recompence.

Verses 19-23

The apostle takes occasion from what he had before discoursed to mention some other instances of his self-denial and parting with his liberty for the benefit of others.

I. He asserts his liberty (v. 19): *Though I be free from all men.* He was free-born, a citizen of Rome. He was in bondage to none, nor depended upon any for his subsistence; *yet he made himself a servant to all, that he might gain the more.* He behaved as a servant; he laboured for their good as a servant; he was careful to please, as a servant to his master; he acted in many cases as if he had no privileges; and this that he might gain the more, or make the more converts to Christianity. He made himself a servant, that they might be made free.

II. He specifies some particulars wherein he made himself a servant to all. He accommodated himself to all sorts of people. 1. *To the Jews, and those under the law, he became a Jew,* and as under the law, to gain them. Though he looked on the ceremonial law as a yoke taken off by Christ, yet in many instances he submitted to it, that he might work upon the Jews, remove their prejudices, prevail with them to hear the gospel, and win them over to Christ. 2. *To those that are without the law as without law* that is, to the Gentiles, whether converted to the Christian faith or not. In innocent things he could comply with people's usages or humours for their advantage. He would reason with the philosophers in their own way. And, as to converted Gentiles, he behaved among them as one that was not under the bondage of the Jewish laws, as he had asserted and maintained concerning them, though he did not act as a lawless person, but as one who was bound by the laws of Christ. He would transgress no laws of Christ to please or humour any man; but he would accommodate himself to all men, where he might do it lawfully, to gain some. Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, and so, one would have thought, might have excused himself from complying with the Jews; and yet, to do them good, and win them over to Christ, he did, in innocent things, neglect the power he had to do otherwise, and conformed to some of their usages and laws. And though he might, by virtue of that character,

have challenged authority over the Gentiles, yet he accommodated himself, as much as he innocently might, to their prejudices and ways of thinking. Doing good was the study and business of his life; and, so that he might reach this end, he did not stand on privileges and punctilios. 3. *To the weak he became as weak, that he might gain the weak*, v. 22. He was willing to make the best of them. He did not despise nor judge them, but became as one of them, forbore to use his liberty for their sake, and was careful to lay no stumbling-block in their way. Where any, through the weakness of their understanding, or the strength of their prejudices, were likely to fall into sin, or fall off from the gospel into heathen idolatry, through his use of his liberty, he refrained himself. He denied himself for their sakes, that he might insinuate into their affections, and gain their souls. In short, *he became all things to all men, that he might by all means (all lawful means) gain some*. He would not sin against God to save the soul of his neighbour, but he would very cheerfully and readily deny himself. The rights of God he could not give up, but he might resign his own, and he very often did so for the good of others.

III. He assigns his reason for acting in this manner (v. 23): *This I do for the gospel's sake, and that I may be partaker thereof with you*; that is, for the honour of Christ, whose the gospel is, and for the salvation of souls, for which it was designed, and that he and they might communicate in the privileges of it, or partake together of them. For these ends did he thus condescend, deny himself as to his liberty, and accommodate himself to the capacities and usages of those with whom he had to do, where he lawfully might. Note, A heart warmed with zeal for God, and breathing after the salvation of men, will not plead and insist upon rights and privileges in bar to this design. Those manifestly abuse their power in the gospel who employ it not to edification but destruction, and therefore breathe nothing of its spirit.

Verses 24-27

In these verses the apostle hints at the great encouragement he had to act in this manner. He had a glorious prize, an incorruptible crown, in view. Upon this head he compares himself to the racers and combatants in the Isthmian games, an allusion well known to the Corinthians, because they were celebrated in their neighbourhood: *"Know you not that those who run in a race run all, but one obtaineth the prize?"* v. 24. All run at your games, but only one gets the race and wins the crown." And here,

I. He excites them to their duty: *"So run that you may obtain*. It is quite otherwise in the Christian race than in your races; only one wins the prize in them. You may all run so as to obtain. You have great encouragement, therefore, to persist constantly, and diligently, and vigorously, in your course. There is room for all to get the prize. You cannot fail if you run well. Yet there should be a noble emulation; you should endeavour to outdo one another. And it is a glorious contest who shall get first to heaven, or have the best rewards in that blessed world. I make it my endeavour to run; so do you, as you see me go before you." Note, It is the duty of Christians to follow their ministers closely in the chase of eternal glory, and the honour and duty of ministers to lead them in the way.

II. He directs them in their course, by setting more fully to view his own example, still carrying on the allusion. 1. Those that ran in their games were kept to a set diet: *"Every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things*, v. 23. The fighters and wrestlers in your exercises are kept to strict diet and discipline; nay, they keep themselves to it. They do not indulge

themselves, but restrain themselves from the food they eat and so from the liberties they use on other occasions. And should not Christians much more abridge themselves of their liberty, for so glorious an end as winning the race, and obtaining the prize set before them? They used a very spare diet, and course food, and denied themselves much, to prepare for their race and combat; so do I; so should you, after my example. It is hard if, for the heavenly crown, you cannot abstain from heathen sacrifices." 2. They were not only temperate, but inured themselves to hardships. Those who fought with one another in these exercises prepared themselves by beating the air, as the apostle calls it, or by throwing out their arms, and thereby inuring themselves, beforehand, to deal about their blows in close combat, or brandish them by way of flourish. There is no room for any such exercise in the Christian warfare. Christians are ever in close combat. Their enemies make fierce and hearty opposition, and are ever at hand; and for this reason they must lay about them in earnest, and never drop the contest, nor flag and faint in it. They must fight, not as those that beat the air, but must strive against their enemies with all their might. One enemy the apostle here mentions, namely, the body; this must be kept under, beaten black and blue, as the combatants were in these Grecian games, and thereby brought into subjection. By the body we are to understand fleshly appetites and inclinations. These the apostle set himself to curb and conquer, and in this the Corinthians were bound to imitate him. Note, Those who would aright pursue the interests of their souls must beat down their bodies, and keep them under. They must combat hard with fleshly lusts, and not indulge a wanton appetite, and long for heathenish sacrifices, nor eat them, to please their flesh, at the hazard of their brethren's souls. The body must be made to serve the mind, not suffered to lord over it.

III. The apostle presses this advice on the Corinthians by proper arguments drawn from the same contenders. 1. They take pains, and undergo all those hardships, *to obtain a corruptible crown* (v. 25), *but we an incorruptible*. Those who conquered in these games were crowned only with the withering leaves or boughs of trees, of olive, bays, or laurel. But Christians have an incorruptible crown in view, a crown of glory that never fadeth away, an inheritance incorruptible, reserved in heaven for them. And would they yet suffer themselves to be outdone by these racers or wrestlers? Can they use abstinence in diet, exert themselves in racing, expose their bodies to so much hardship in a combat, who have no more in view than the trifling huzzas of a giddy multitude, or a crown of leaves? And shall not Christians, who hope for the approbation of the sovereign Judge, and a crown of glory from his hands, stretch forward in the heavenly race, and exert themselves in beating down their fleshly inclinations, and the strong-holds of sin? 2. The racers in these games run at uncertainty. All run, but one receives the prize, v. 24. Every racer, therefore, is at a great uncertainty whether he shall win it or no. But the Christian racer is at no such uncertainty. Every one may run here so as to obtain; but then he must run within the lines, he must keep to the path of duty prescribed, which, some think, is the meaning of *running not as uncertainly*, v. 26. He who keeps within the limits prescribed, and keeps on in his race, will never miss his crown, though others may get theirs before him. And would the Grecian racers keep within their bounds, and exert themselves to the very last, when one only could win, and all must be uncertain which that one would be? And shall not Christians be much more exact and vigorous when all are sure of a crown when they come to the end of their race? 3. He sets before himself and them the danger of yielding to fleshly inclinations, and pampering the body and its lusts and appetites: *I keep my body under, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-*

away (v. 27), *rejected*, *disapproved*, ***adokimos***, one to whom the ***brabeuteus***—*the judge* or *umpire* of the race, will not decree the crown. The allusion to the games runs through the whole sentence. Note, A preacher of salvation may yet miss it. He may show others the way to heaven, and never get thither himself. To prevent this, Paul took so much pains in subduing and keeping under bodily inclinations, lest by any means he himself, who had preached to others, should yet miss the crown, be disapproved and rejected by his sovereign Judge. A holy fear of himself was necessary to preserve the fidelity of an apostle; and how much more necessary is it to our preservation? Note, Holy fear of ourselves, and not presumptuous confidence, is the best security against apostasy from God, and final rejection by him.

Chapter 10

In this chapter the apostle prosecutes the argument at the close of the last, and, I. Warns the Corinthians against security, by the example of the Jews, who, notwithstanding their profession and privileges, were terribly punished of God for their many sins, their history being left upon record for the admonition of Christians (v. 1–14). II. He resumes his former argument (ch. 8), about eating things offered to idols; and shows that it was utterly inconsistent with true Christianity, that it was downright gross idolatry, to eat them as things offered to idols; it is having fellowship with devils, which cannot consist with having fellowship with God (v. 15–22). III. He lets them yet know that though they must not eat of things sacrificed to idols as such, and out of any regard to the idol, yet they might buy such flesh in the markets, or eat it at the table of heathen acquaintances, without asking any questions; for that the heathens' abuse of them did not render the creatures of God unfit to be the food of his servants. Yet liberty of this kind must be used with a due regard to weak consciences, and no offence given by it to Jew nor Gentile, nor to the church of God (v. 23 to the end).

Verses 1-5

In order to dissuade the Corinthians from communion with idolaters, and security in any sinful course, he sets before them the example of the Jews, the church under the Old Testament. They enjoyed great privileges, but, having been guilty of heinous provocations, they fell under very grievous punishments. In these verses he reckons up their privileges, which, in the main, were the same with ours.

I. He prefaces this discourse with a note of regard: *"Moreover, brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant. I would not have you without the knowledge of this matter; it is a thing worthy both of your knowledge and attention. It is a history very instructive and monitory."* Judaism was Christianity under a veil, wrapt up in types and dark hints. The gospel was preached to them, in their legal rites and sacrifices. And the providence of God towards them, and what happened to them notwithstanding these privileges, may and ought to be warnings to us.

II. He specifies some of their privileges. He begins, 1. With their deliverance from Egypt: *"Our fathers, that is, the ancestors of us Jews, were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea."* They were all under the divine covering and conduct." The cloud served for both purposes: it sometimes contracted itself into a cloudy pillar, shining on one side to show them their way, dark on the other to hide them from their pursuing enemies; and sometimes spread itself over them as a mighty sheet, to defend them from the burning sun in the sandy desert, Ps. 105:39. They were miraculously conducted through the Red Sea, where the pursuing Egyptians were drowned: it was a lane to them, but a grave to these: a proper type of our redemption by Christ, who saves us by conquering and destroying his enemies and ours. They were very dear to God, and much in his favour, when he would work such miracles for their deliverance, and take them so immediately under his guidance and protection. 2. They had sacraments like ours. (1.) *They were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea* (v. 2), or into Moses, that is, brought under obligation to Moses's law and covenant, as we are by baptism under the Christian law and covenant. It was to them a typical baptism. (2.) *They did all eat of the same spiritual meat, and drink of the same spiritual drink*, that we do. The manna

on which they fed was a type of Christ crucified, the bread which came down from heaven, which whoso eateth shall live forever. Their drink was a stream fetched from a rock which followed them in all their journeyings in the wilderness; and this rock was Christ, that is, in type and figure. He is the rock on which the Christian church is built; and of the streams that issue from him do all believers drink, and are refreshed. Now all the Jews did eat of this meat, and drink of this rock, called here a spiritual rock, because it typified spiritual things. These were great privileges. One would think that this should have saved them; that all who ate of that spiritual meat, and drank of that spiritual drink, should have been holy and acceptable to God. Yet was it otherwise: *With many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness*, v. 5. Note, Men may enjoy many and great spiritual privileges in this world, and yet come short of eternal life. Many of those *who were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and sea*, that is, had their faith of his divine commission confirmed by these miracles, were yet overthrown in the wilderness, and never saw the promised land. Let none presume upon their great privileges, or profession of the truth; these will not secure heavenly happiness, nor prevent judgments here on earth, except the *root of the matter* be in us.

Verses 6-14

The apostle, having recited their privileges, proceeds here to an account of their faults and punishments, their sins and plagues, which are left upon record for an example to us, a warning against the like sins, if we would escape the like punishments. We must not do as they did, lest we suffer as they suffered.

I. Several of their sins are specified as cautions to us; as, 1. We should shun inordinate desires after carnal objects: *Not lust after evil things, as they lusted*, v. 6. God fed them with manna, but they must have flesh, Num. 11:4. They had food for their supply, but, not content with this, they asked *meat for their lusts*, Ps. 16:14. Carnal desires get head by indulgence, and therefore should be observed and checked in their first rise: if once they prevail, and bear sway in us, we know not whither they will carry us. This caution stands first, because carnal appetites indulged are the root and source of much sin. 2. He warns against idolatry (v. 7): *Neither be you idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play*. The sin of the golden calf is referred to, Ex. 32:6. They first sacrificed to their idol, then feasted on the sacrifices, and then danced before it. Though only eating and drinking are mentioned here, yet the sacrifice is supposed. The apostle is speaking to the case of the Corinthians, who were tempted to feast on the heathen sacrifices, things offered to idols, though they do not seem to have been under any temptation to offer sacrifice themselves. Even eating and drinking of the sacrifices before the idol, and as things sacrificed, was idolatry, which, by the example of the Israelites, they should be warned to avoid. 3. He cautions against fornication, a sin to which the inhabitants of Corinth were in a peculiar manner addicted. They had a temple among them dedicated to Venus (that is, to lust), with above a thousand priestesses belonging to it, all common prostitutes. How needful was a caution against fornication to those who lived in so corrupt a city, and had been used to such dissolute manners, especially when they were under temptations to idolatry too! and spiritual whoredom did in many cases lead to bodily prostitution. Most of the gods whom the heathens served were represented as patterns of lewdness; and much lewdness was committed in the very worship of many of them. Many of the Jewish writers, and many Christians after them,

think that such worship was paid to Baal-Peor; and that fornication was committed with the daughters of Moab in the worship of that idol. They were enticed by these women both to spiritual and corporal whoredom; first to feast on the sacrifice, if not to do more beastly acts, in honour of the idol, and then to defile themselves with strange flesh (Num. 25), which brought on a plague, that in one day slew twenty-three thousand, besides those who fell by the hand of public justice. Note, Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge, in whatever external relation they may stand to him, and whatever outward privileges he may bestow upon them. Let us fear the sins of Israel, if we would shun their plagues. 4. He warns us against *tempting Christ (as some of them tempted, and were destroyed of serpents, v. 9)*, or provoking him to jealousy, v. 22. He was with the church in the wilderness; he was the angel of the covenant, who went before them. But he was greatly grieved and provoked by them in many ways: *They spoke against him and Moses, Wherefore have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?* for which reason God sent fiery serpents among them (Num. 21:5, 6), by which many of them were stung mortally. And it is but just to fear that such as tempt Christ under the present dispensation will be left by him in the power of the old serpent. 5. He warns against murmuring: *Neither murmur you as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer (v. 10)*, by a destroying angel, an executioner of divine vengeance. They quarrelled with God, and murmured against Moses his minister, when any difficulties pressed them. When they met with discouragements in the way to Canaan, they were very apt to fly in the face of their leaders, were for displacing them, and going back to Egypt under the conduct of others of their own choosing. Something like this seems to have been the case of the Corinthians; they murmured against Paul, and in him against Christ, and seem to have set up other teachers, who would indulge and soothe them in their inclinations, and particularly in a revolt to idolatry. Rather let them feast on idol sacrifices than bear the reproach, or expose themselves to the ill-will, of heathen neighbours. Such conduct was very provoking to God, and was likely to bring upon them swift destruction, as it did on the Israelites, Num. 14:37. Note, Murmuring against divine disposals and commands is a sin that greatly provokes, especially when it grows to such a head as to issue in apostasy, and a revolt from him and his good ways.

II. The apostle subjoins to these particular cautions a more general one (v. 11): *All these things happened to them for ensamples, and were written for our admonition*. Not only the laws and ordinances of the Jews, but the providences of God towards them, were typical. Their sins against God, and backslidings from him, were typical of the infidelity of many under the gospel. God's judgments on them were types of spiritual judgments now. Their exclusion from the earthly Canaan typified the exclusion of many under the gospel out of the heavenly Canaan, for their unbelief. Their history was written, to be a standing monitor to the church, even under the last and most perfect dispensation: *To us, on whom the end of the world is come*, the concluding period of God's gracious government over men. Note, Nothing in scripture is written in vain. God had wise and gracious purposes towards us in leaving the Jewish history upon record; and it is our wisdom and duty to receive instruction from it. Upon this hint the apostle grounds a caution (v. 12): *Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*. Note, The harms sustained by others should be cautious to us. He that thinks he stands should not be confident and secure, but upon his guard. Others have fallen, and so may we. And then we are most likely to fall when we are most confident of our own strength, and thereupon most apt to be secure, and off our guard. Distrust of himself, putting him at once upon vigilance and dependence

on God, is the Christian's best security against all sin. Note, He who thinks he stands is not likely to keep his footing, if he fears no fall, nor guards against it. God has not promised to keep us from falling, if we do not look to ourselves: his protection supposes our own care and caution.

III. But to this word of caution he adds a word of comfort, v. 13. Though it is displeasing to God for us to presume, it is not pleasing to him for us to despair. If the former be a great sin, the latter is far from being innocent. Though we must fear and take heed lest we fall, yet should we not be terrified and amazed; for either our trials will be proportioned to our strength, or strength will be supplied in proportion to our temptations. We live indeed in a tempting world, where we are compassed about with snares. Every place, condition, relation, employment, and enjoyment, abounds with them; yet what comfort may we fetch from such a passage! For, 1. *"No temptation,"* says the apostle, *"hath yet taken you, but such as is common to man,* what is human; that is, such as you may expect from men of such principles as heathens, and such power; or else such as is common to mankind in the present state; or else such as the spirit and resolution of mere men may bear you through." Note, The trials of common Christians are but common trials: others have the like burdens and the like temptations; what they bear up under, and break through, we may also. 2. *God is faithful.* Though Satan be a deceiver, God is true. Men may be false, and the world may be false; but God is faithful, and our strength and security are in him. He keepeth his covenant, and will never disappoint the filial hope and trust of his children. 3. He is wise as well as faithful, and will proportion our burden to our strength. *He will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able.* He knows what we can bear, and what we can bear up against; and he will, in his wise providence, either proportion our temptations to our strength or make us able to grapple with them. He will take care that we be not overcome, if we rely upon him, and resolve to approve ourselves faithful to him. We need not perplex ourselves with the difficulties in our way when God will take care that they shall not be too great for us to encounter, especially. 4. When he will make them to issue well. *He will make a way to escape,* either the trial itself, or at least the mischief of it. There is no valley so dark but he can find a way through it, no affliction so grievous but he can prevent, or remove, or enable us to support it, and in the end overrule it to our advantage.

IV. And upon this argument he grounds another caution against idolatry: *Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.* Observe, 1. How he addresses them: *My dearly beloved.* It is out of tender affection to them that he presses this advice upon them. 2. The matter of his advice: *"Flee idolatry; shun it, and all approaches towards it."* Idolatry is the most heinous injury and affront to the true God; it is transferring his worship and honour to a rival. 3. The ground of this advice: "Seeing you have such encouragement to trust God, and to be faithful, do you approve yourselves men, be not shaken by any discouragements your heathen enemies may lay before you. God will succour and assist, help you in your trials, and help you out of them; and therefore be not guilty of any idolatrous compliances." Note, We have all the encouragement in the world to flee sin and prove faithful to God. We cannot fall by a temptation if we cleave fast to him.

Verses 15-22

In this passage the apostle urges the general caution against idolatry, in the particular case of eating the heathen sacrifices as such, and out of any religious respect to the idol to whom they were sacrificed.

I. He prefaces his argument with an appeal to their own reason and judgment: *"I speak to wise men, judge you what I say, v. 15.* You are great pretenders to wisdom, to close reasoning and argument; I can leave it with your own reason and conscience whether I do not argue justly." Note, It is no dishonour to an inspired teacher, nor disadvantage to his argument, to appeal for the truth of it to the reason and consciences of his hearers. It comes upon them with the greater force when it comes with this conviction. Paul, an inspired apostle, would yet, in some cases, leave it with the Corinthians to judge whether what he taught was not conformable to their own light and sense.

II. He lays down his argument from the Lord's supper: *The cup which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?* Is not this sacred rite an instrument of communion with God? Do we not therein profess to be in friendship, and to have fellowship, with him? Is it not a token whereby we professedly hold communion with Christ, whose body was broken, and blood shed, to procure remission of our sins, and the favour of God? And can we be in alliance with Christ, or friendship with God, without being devoted to him? In short, the Lord's supper is a feast on the sacrificed body and blood of our Lord, *epulum ex oblatis*. And to eat of the feast is to partake of the sacrifice, and so to be his guests to whom the sacrifice was offered, and this in token of friendship with him. Thus to partake of the Lord's table is to profess ourselves his guests and covenant people. This is the very purpose and intention of this symbolical eating and drinking; it is holding communion with God, and partaking of those privileges, and professing ourselves under those obligations, which result from the death and sacrifice of Christ; and this in conjunction with all true Christians, with whom we have communion also in this ordinance. *Because the bread is one, we, being many, are one body, for we are made partakers of one bread,* or loaf (v. 17), which I think is thus more truly rendered: "By partaking of one broken loaf, the emblem of our Saviour's broken body, who is the only true bread that came down from heaven, we coalesce into one body, become members of him and one another." Those who truly partake by faith have this communion with Christ, and one another; and those who eat the outward elements make profession of having this communion, of belonging to God and the blessed fraternity of his people and worshippers. This is the true meaning of this holy rite.

III. He confirms this from the Jewish worship and customs: *Behold Israel after the flesh: are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar,* that is, of the sacrifice offered upon it? Those who were admitted to eat of the offerings were reckoned to partake of the sacrifice itself, as made for them, and to be sanctified thereby; and therefore surely to worship God, and be in alliance or covenant with him, even the God of Israel, to whom the sacrifice was made: this was a symbol or token of holding communion with him.

IV. He applies this to the argument against feasting with idolaters on their sacrifices, and to prove those that do so idolaters. This he does, 1. By following the principle on which they would argue it to be lawful, namely, that an idol was nothing. Many of them were nothing at all, none of them had any divinity in them. What was sacrificed to idols was nothing, no way changed from what it was before, but was every whit as fit for food, considered in itself. They indeed seem to argue that, because an idol was nothing, what was offered was no sacrifice, but common and ordinary food, of which they might therefore eat with as little scruple. Now the apostle allows that the food was not changed as to its nature, was as fit to be eaten as common food,

where it was set before any who knew not of its having been offered to an idol. But, 2. He proves that the eating of it as a part of a heathen sacrifice was, (1.) A partaking with them in their idolatry. *It was having fellowship with devils*, because what the Gentiles sacrificed they sacrificed to devils; and to feast with them upon these sacrifices was to partake in the sacrifice, and therefore to worship the god to whom it was made, and have fellowship or communion with him just as he who eats the Lord's supper is supposed to partake in the Christian sacrifice; or as those who ate the Jewish sacrifices partook of what was offered on their altar. But heathens sacrificed to devils: "Therefore do not feast on their sacrifices. Doing it is a token of your having fellowship with the demons to whom they are offered. I would not have you be in communion with devils." (2.) It was a virtual renouncing of Christianity: *You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: you cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of devils*, v. 21. To partake of this Christian feast was to have communion with Christ: to partake of the feasts made in honour of the heathen idols, and made of things sacrificed to them, was to have communion with devils. Now this was to compound contraries; it was by no means consistent. Communion with Christ, and communion with devils, could never be had at once. One must be renounced, if the other was maintained. He who held communion with Christ must renounce that with devils; he who held communion with devils must by that very deed renounce communion with Christ. And what a manifest self-contradiction must that man's conduct be that would partake of the Lord's table, and yet partake of the table of demons! God and mammon can never be served together, nor fellowship be at once had with Christ and Satan. Those who communicate with devils must virtually renounce Christ. This may also intimate that such as indulge themselves in gluttony or drunkenness, and by so doing make their own table the table of devils, or keep up fellowship with Satan by a course of known and wilful wickedness, cannot partake truly of the cup and table of the Lord. They may use the sign, but do not the thing signified thereby. For a man can never be at once in communication with Christ and his church and yet in fellowship with Satan. Note, How much reason have we to look to it that every sin and idol be renounced by us, when we eat and drink at the Lord's table.

V. He warns them, upon the whole, against such idolatry, by signifying to them that God is a jealous God (v. 22): *Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?* It is very probable that many among the Corinthians made light of being at these heathen feasts, and thought there was no harm in it. But the apostle bids them beware. The reason with which the second commandment is enforced is, *I am a jealous God*. God cannot endure a rival in matter of worship; nor give his glory, nor suffer it to be given, to another. Those who have fellowship with other gods provoke him to jealousy, Deu. 32:16. And, before this be done, persons should consider whether they are stronger than he. It is a dangerous thing to provoke God's anger, unless we could withstand his power. But *who can stand before him when he is angry?* Nah. 1:6. This should be considered by all who continue in the love and liking of sin, and in league with it, while yet they profess to keep up communion with Christ. Is not this the way to provoke his jealousy and indignation? Note, Attention to the greatness of God's power should restrain us from provoking his jealousy, from doing any thing to displease him. Shall we rouse almighty wrath? And how shall we withstand it? Are we a match for God? Can we resist his power, or control it? And, if not, shall we arm it against us, by provoking him to jealousy? No, let us fear his power, and let this restrain us from all provocation.

Verses 23-33

In this passage the apostle shows in what instances, notwithstanding, Christians might lawfully eat what had been sacrificed to idols. They must not eat it out of religious respect to the idol, nor go into his temple, and hold a feast there, upon what they knew was an idol-sacrifice; nor perhaps out of the temple, if they knew it was a feast held upon a sacrifice, but there were cases wherein they might without sin eat what had been offered. Some such the apostle here enumerates.—But,

I. He gives a caution against abusing our liberty in lawful things. That may be lawful which is not expedient, which will not edify. A Christian must not barely consider what is lawful, but what is expedient, and for the use of edification. A private Christian should do so even in his private conduct. *He must not seek his own only, but his neighbour's wealth.* He must be concerned not to hurt his neighbour, nay, he must be concerned to promote his welfare; and must consider how to act so that he may help others, and not hinder them in their holiness, comfort, or salvation. Those who allow themselves in every thing not plainly sinful in itself will often run into what is evil by accident, and do much mischief to others. Every thing lawful in itself to be done is not therefore lawfully done. Circumstances may make that a sin which in itself is none. These must be weighed, and the expediency of an action, and its tendency to edification, must be considered before it be done. Note, The welfare of others, as well as our own convenience, must be consulted in many things we do, if we would do them well.

II. He tells them that what was *sold in the shambles they might eat without asking questions.* The priest's share of heathen sacrifices was thus frequently offered for sale, after it had been offered in the temple. Now the apostle tells them they need not be so scrupulous as to ask the butcher in the market whether the meat he sold had been offered to an idol? It was there sold as common food, and as such might be bought and used; *for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof* (v. 26), and the fruit and products of the earth were designed by him, the great proprietor, for the use and subsistence of mankind, and more especially of his own children and servants. *Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer,* 1 Tim. 4:4, 5. *To the pure all things are pure,* Tit. 1:15. Note, Though it is sinful to use any food in an idolatrous manner, it is no sin, after such abuse, to apply it, in a holy manner, to its common use.

III. He adds that if they were invited by any heathen acquaintances to a feast, *they might go, and eat what was set before them, without asking questions* (v. 27), *nay, though* they knew things sacrificed to idols were served up at such entertainments, as well as sold in the shambles. Note, The apostle does not prohibit their going to a feast upon the invitation of those that believed not. There is a civility owing even to infidels and heathens. Christianity does by no means bind us up from the common offices of humanity, nor allow us an uncourteous behaviour to any of our own kind, however they may differ from us in religious sentiments or practices. And when Christians were invited to feast with infidels they were not to ask needless questions about the food set before them, but eat without scruple. Needless enquiries might perplex their minds and consciences, for which reason they were to be avoided. Any thing fit to be eaten, that was set before them at a common entertainment, they might lawfully eat. And why then should they scrupulously enquire whether what was set before them had been sacrificed? It is to be understood of civil feasting, not religious; for the latter among the heathens was feasting upon their sacrifices, which he had

condemned before as a participation in their idolatrous worship. At a common feast they might expect common food; and they needed not to move scruples in their own minds whether what was set before them was otherwise or no. Note, Though Christians should be very careful to know and understand their duty, yet they should not, by needless enquiries, perplex themselves.

IV. Yet, even at such an entertainment, he adds, if any should say it was a thing that had been offered to idols, they should refrain: *Eat not, for his sake that showed it, and for conscience' sake*. Whether it were the master of the feast or any of the guests, whether it were spoken in the hearing of all or whispered in the ear, they should refrain for his sake who suggested this to them, whether he were an infidel or an infirm Christian; and for conscience' sake, out of regard to conscience, that they might show a regard to it in themselves, and keep up a regard to it in others. This he backs with the same reason as the former: *For the earth is the Lord's*. There is food enough provided by our common Lord, of which we may eat without scruple. The same doctrine may be variously improved, as here: "The earth is the Lord's, therefore you may eat any thing without scruple that is set before you as common food; and yet, because the earth is the Lord's, eat nothing that will give offence, lay a stumbling-block before others, and encourage some in idolatry, or tempt others to eat when they are not clear in their own mind that it is lawful, and so sin, and wound their own consciences." Note, Christians should be very cautious of doing what may thus prejudice the consciences of others, and weaken their authority with them, which is by all means to be kept up.

V. He urges them to refrain where they will give offence, while yet he allows it lawful to eat what was set before them as common food, though it had been offered in sacrifice. "Another man's conscience is no measure to our conduct. What he thinks unlawful is not thereby made unlawful to me, but may be a matter of liberty still; and as long as I own God as a giver of my food, and render him thanks for it, it is very unjust to reproach me for using it." This must be understood abstracted from the scandal given by eating in the circumstance mentioned. Though some understand it to mean, "Why should I, by using the liberty I have, give occasion to those who are scandalized to speak evil of me?" According to that advice of the apostle (Rom. 14:16), *Let not your good be evil spoken of*. Note, Christians should take care not to use their liberty to the hurt of others, nor their own reproach.

VI. The apostle takes occasion from this discourse to lay down a rule for Christians' conduct, and apply it to this particular case (v. 31, 32), namely, that in eating and drinking, and in all we do, we should aim at the glory of God, at pleasing and honouring him. This is the fundamental principle of practical godliness. The great end of all practical religion must direct us where particular and express rules are wanting. Nothing must be done against the glory of God, and the good of our neighbours, connected with it. Nay, the tendency of our behaviour to the common good, and the credit of our holy religion, should give direction to it. And therefore nothing should be done by us to offend any, *whether Jew, or Gentile, or the church*, v. 32. The Jews should not be unnecessarily grieved nor prejudiced, who have such an abhorrence of idols that they reckon every thing offered to them thereby defiled, and that it will pollute and render culpable all who partake of it; nor should heathens be countenanced in their idolatry by any behaviour of ours, which they may construe as homage or honour done to their idols; nor young converts from Gentilism take any encouragement from our conduct to retain any veneration for the heathen gods and

worship, which they have renounced: nor should we do any thing that may be a means to pervert any members of the church from their Christian profession or practice. Our own humour and appetite must not determine our practice, but the honour of God and the good and edification of the church. We should not so much consult our own pleasure and interest as the advancement of the kingdom of God among men. Note, A Christian should be a man devoted to God, and of a public spirit. VII. He presses all upon them by his own example: *Even as I please all men* (or study to do it) *in all things* (that I lawfully can), *not seeking my own profit, but that of many, that they may be saved*, v. 33. Note, A preacher may press his advice home with boldness and authority when he can enforce it with his own example. He is most likely to promote a public spirit in others who can give evidence of it in himself. And it is highly commendable in a minister to neglect his own advantage that he may promote the salvation of his hearers. This shows that he has a spirit suitable to his function. It is a station for public usefulness, and can never be faithfully discharged by a man of a narrow spirit and selfish principles.

Chapter 11

In this chapter the apostle blames, and endeavours to rectify, some great indecencies and manifest disorders in the church of Corinth; as, I. The misconduct of their women (some of whom seem to have been inspired) in the public assembly, who laid by their veils, the common token of subjection to their husbands in that part of the world. This behaviour he reprehends, requires them to keep veiled, asserts the superiority of the husband, yet so as to remind the husband that both were made for mutual help and comfort (v. 1–16). II. He blames them for their discord and neglect and contempt of the poor, at the Lord's supper (v. 17–22). III. To rectify these scandalous disorders, he sets before them the nature and intentions of this holy institution, directs them how they should attend on it, and warns them of the danger of a conduct to indecent as theirs, and of all unworthy receiving (v. 23 to the end).

Verses 1-16

Paul, having answered the cases put to him, proceeds in this chapter to the redress of grievances. The first verse of the chapter is put, by those who divided the epistle into chapters, as a preface to the rest of the epistle, but seems to have been a more proper close to the last, in which he had enforced the cautions he had given against the abuse of liberty, by his own example: *Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ* (v. 1), fitly closes his argument; and the way of speaking in the next verse looks like a transition to another. But, whether it more properly belong to this or the last chapter, it is plain from it that Paul not only preached such doctrine as they ought to believe, but led such a life as they ought to imitate. "Be ye followers of me," that is, "Be imitators of me; live as you see me live." Note, Ministers are likely to preach most to the purpose when they can press their hearers to follow their example. Yet would not Paul be followed blindly neither. He encourages neither implicit faith nor obedience. He would be followed himself no further than he followed Christ. Christ's pattern is a copy without a blot; so is no man's else. Note, We should follow no leader further than he follows Christ. Apostles should be left by us when they deviate from the example of their Master. He passes next to reprehend and reform an indecency among them, of which the women were more especially guilty, concerning which observe,

I. How he prefaces it. He begins with a commendation of what was praiseworthy in them (v. 2): *I praise you, that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you*. Many of them, it is probable, did this in the strictest sense of the expression: and he takes occasion thence to address the body of the church under this good character; and the body might, in the main, have continued to observe the ordinances and institutions of Christ, though in some things they deviated from, and corrupted, them. Note, When we reprove what is amiss in any, it is very prudent and fit to commend what is good in them; it will show that the reproof is not from ill-will, and a humour of censuring and finding fault; and it will therefore procure the more regard to it.

II. How he lays the foundation for his reprehension by asserting the superiority of the man over the woman: *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*. Christ, in his mediatorial character and glorified humanity, is at the head of mankind. He is not only first of the kind, but Lord and

Sovereign. He has a name above every name: though in this high office and authority he has a superior, God being his head. And as God is the head of Christ, and Christ the head of the whole human kind, so the man is the head of the two sexes: not indeed with such dominion as Christ has over the kind or God has over the man Christ Jesus; but a superiority and headship he has, and the woman should be in subjection and not assume or usurp the man's place. This is the situation in which God has placed her; and for that reason she should have a mind suited to her rank, and not do any thing that looks like an affectation of changing places. Something like this the women of the church of Corinth seem to have been guilty of, who were under inspiration, and prayed and prophesied even in their assemblies, v. 5. It is indeed an apostolical canon, that the women *should keep silence in the churches* (ch. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:12), which some understand without limitation, as if a woman under inspiration also must keep silence, which seems very well to agree with the connection of the apostle's discourse, ch. 14. Others with a limitation: though a woman might not from her own abilities pretend to teach, or so much as question and debate any thing in the church yet when under inspiration the case was altered, she had liberty to speak. Or, though she might not preach even by inspiration (because teaching is the business of a superior), yet she might pray or utter hymns by inspiration, even in the public assembly. She did not show any affectation of superiority over the man by such acts of public worship. It is plain the apostle does not in this place prohibit the thing, but reprehend the manner of doing it. And yet he might utterly disallow the thing and lay an unlimited restraint on the woman in another part of the epistle. These things are not contradictory. It is to his present purpose to reprehend the manner wherein the women prayed and prophesied in the church, without determining in this place whether they did well or ill in praying or prophesying. Note, The manner of doing a thing enters into the morality of it. We must not only be concerned to do good, but that the good we do be well done.

III. The thing he reprehends is the woman's praying or prophesying uncovered, or the man's doing either covered, v. 4, 5. To understand this, it must be observed that it was a signification either of shame or subjection for persons to be veiled, or covered, in the eastern countries, contrary to the custom of ours, where the being bare-headed betokens subjection, and being covered superiority and dominion. And this will help us the better to understand,

IV. The reasons on which he grounds his reprehension. 1. *The man that prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonoureth his head*, namely, Christ, the head of every man (v. 3), by appearing in a habit unsuitable to the rank in which God has placed him. Note, We should, even in our dress and habits, avoid every thing that may dishonour Christ. *The woman*, on the other hand, *who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head*, namely, the man, v. 3. She appears in the dress of her superior, and throws off the token of her subjection. She might, with equal decency, cut her hair short, or cut it close, which was the custom of the man in that age. This would be in a manner to declare that she was desirous of changing sexes, a manifest affectation of that superiority which God had conferred on the other sex. And this was probably the fault of these prophetesses in the church of Corinth. It was doing a thing which, in that age of the world, betokened superiority, and therefore a tacit claim of what did not belong to them but the other sex. Note, The sexes should not affect to change places. The order in which divine wisdom has placed persons and things is best and fittest: to endeavour to amend it is to destroy all order, and introduce confusion. The woman should keep to the rank God has chosen for her, and not dishonour

her head; for this, in the result, is to dishonour God. If she was made out of the man, and for the man, and made to be the glory of the man, she should do nothing, especially in public, that looks like a wish of having this order inverted. 2. Another reason against this conduct is that *the man is the image and glory of God*, the representative of that glorious dominion and headship which God has over the world. It is the man who is set at the head of this lower creation, and therein he bears the resemblance of God. The woman, on the other hand, *is the glory of the man* (v. 7): she is his representative. Not but she has dominion over the inferior creatures, as she is a partaker of human nature, and so far is God's representative too, but it is at second-hand. She is the image of God, inasmuch as she is the image of the man: *For the man was not made out of the woman, but the woman out of the man*, v. 8. The man was first made, and made head of the creation here below, and therein the image of the divine dominion; and the woman was made out of the man, and shone with a reflection of his glory, being made superior to the other creatures here below, but in subjection to her husband, and deriving that honour from him out of whom she was made. 3. *The woman was made for the man*, to be his help-meet, *and not the man for the woman*. She was naturally, therefore, made subject to him, because made for him, for his use, and help, and comfort. And she who was intended to be always in subjection to the man should do nothing, in Christian assemblies, that looks like an affectation of equality. 4. *She ought to have power on her head, because of the angels*. Power, that is, a veil, the token, not of her having the power or superiority, but being under the power of her husband, subjected to him, and inferior to the other sex. Rebekah, when she met Isaac, and was delivering herself into his possession, put on her veil, in token of her subjection, Gen. 24:65. Thus would the apostle have the women appear in Christian assemblies, even though they spoke there by inspiration, *because of the angels*, that is, say some, because of the evil angels. The woman was *first in the transgression, being deceived by the devil* (1 Tim. 2:14), which increased her subjection to man, Gen. 3:16. Now, believe evil angels will be sure to mix in all Christian assemblies, therefore should women wear the token of their shamefacedness and subjection, which in that age and country, was a veil. Others say because of the good angels. Jews and Christians have had an opinion that these ministering spirits are many of them present in their assemblies. Their presence should restrain Christians from all indecencies in the worship of God. Note, We should learn from all to behave in the public assemblies of divine worship so as to express a reverence for God, and a content and satisfaction with that rank in which he has placed us.

V. He thinks fit to guard his argument with a caution lest the inference be carried too far (v. 11, 12): *Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, nor the woman without the man in the Lord*. They were made for one another. *It is not good for him to be alone* (Gen. 2:18), and therefore was a woman made, and made for the man; and the man was intended to be a comfort, and help, and defence, to the woman, though not so directly and immediately made for her. They were made to be a mutual comfort and blessing, not one a slave and the other a tyrant. *Both were to be one flesh* (Gen. 2:24), and this for the propagation of a race of mankind. They are reciprocal instruments of each other's production. As the woman was first formed out of the man, the man is ever since propagated by the woman (v. 12), all by the divine wisdom and power of the First Cause so ordaining it. The authority and subjection should be no greater than are suitable to two in such near relation and close union to each other. Note, As it is the will of God that the woman know her place, so it is his will also that the man abuse not his

power.

VI. He enforces his argument from the natural covering provided for the woman (v. 13–15): "*Judge in yourselves—consult your own reason, hearken to what nature suggests—is it comely for a woman to pray to God uncovered?* Should there not be a distinction kept up between the sexes in wearing their hair, since nature has made one? Is it not a distinction which nature has kept up among all civilized nations? The woman's hair is a natural covering; to wear it long is a glory to her; but for a man to have long hair, or cherish it, is a token of softness and effeminacy." Note, It should be our concern, especially in Christian and religious assemblies, to make no breach upon the rules of natural decency.

VII. He sums up all by referring those who were contentious to the usages and customs of the churches, v. 16. Custom is in a great measure the rule of decency. And the common practice of the churches is what would have them govern themselves by. He does not silence the contentious by mere authority, but lets them know that they would appear to the world as very odd and singular in their humour if they would quarrel for a custom to which all the churches of Christ were at that time utter strangers, or against a custom in which they all concurred, and that upon the ground of natural decency. It was the common usage of the churches for women to appear in public assemblies, and join in public worship, veiled; and it was manifestly decent that they should do so. Those must be very contentious indeed who would quarrel with this, or lay it aside.

Verses 17-22

In this passage the apostle sharply rebukes them for much greater disorders than the former, in their partaking of the Lord's supper, which was commonly done in the first ages, as the ancients tell us, with a love-feast annexed, which gave occasion to the scandalous disorders which the apostle here reprehends, concerning which observe,

I. The manner in which he introduces his charge: "*Now in this that I declare to you I praise you not*, v. 17. I cannot commend, but must blame and condemn you." It is plain, from the beginning of the chapter, that he was willing and pleased to commend as far as he could. But such scandalous disorders, in so sacred an institution, as they were guilty of, called for a sharp reprehension. They quite turned the institution against itself. It was intended to make them better, to promote their spiritual interests; but it really made them worse. *They came together, not for the better, but for the worse.* Note, The ordinances of Christ, if they do not make us better, will be very apt to make us worse; if they do not do our souls good, they do us harm; if they do not melt and mend, they will harden. Corruptions will be confirmed in us, if the proper means do not work a cure of them.

II. He enters upon his charge against them in more particulars than one. 1. He tells them that, upon coming together, they fell into *divisions, schisms—schismata*. Instead of concurring unanimously in celebrating the ordinance, they fell a quarrelling with one another. Note, There may be schism where there is no separation of communion. Persons may come together in the same church, and sit down at the same table of the Lord, and yet be schismatics. Uncharitableness, alienation of affection, especially if it grows up to discord, and feuds, and contentions, constitute schism. Christians may separate from each other's communion, and yet be uncharitable one towards another; they may continue in the same communion, and yet be uncharitable. This latter is schism, rather than the former. The apostle had heard a report of the Corinthians' divisions, and he tells them he

had too much reason to believe it. For, adds he, there must be heresies also; not only quarrels, but factions, and perhaps such corrupt opinions as strike at the foundation of Christianity, and all sound religion. Note, No marvel there should be breaches of Christian love in the churches, when such offences will come as shall make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Such offences must come. Note that men are necessitated to be guilty of them; but the event is certain, and God permits them, that those who are approved (such honest hearts as will bear the trial) may be set to view, and appear faithful by their constant adherence to the truths and ways of God, notwithstanding the temptations of seducers. Note, The wisdom of God can make the wickedness and errors of others a foil to the piety and integrity of the saints. 2. He charges them not only with discord and division, but with scandalous disorder: *For in eating every one taketh before the other his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken*, v. 21. Heathens used to drink plentifully at their feasts upon their sacrifices. Many of the wealthier Corinthians seem to have taken the same liberty at the Lord's table, or at least at their *Agapai*, or *love-feasts*, that were annexed to the supper. They would not stay for one another; the rich despised the poor, and ate and drank up the provisions they themselves brought, before the poor were allowed to partake; and thus some wanted, while others had more than enough. This was profaning a sacred institution, and corrupting a divine ordinance, to the last degree. What was appointed to feed the soul was employed to feed their lusts and passions. What should have been a bond of mutual amity and affection was made an instrument of discord and disunion. The poor were deprived of the food prepared for them, and the rich turned a feast of charity into a debauch. This was scandalous irregularity.

III. The apostle lays the blame of this conduct closely on them, 1. By telling them that their conduct perfectly destroyed the purpose and use of such an institution: *This is not to eat the Lord's supper*, v. 20. It was coming to the Lord's table, and not coming. They might as well have staid away. Thus to eat the outward elements was not to eat Christ's body. Note, There is a careless and irregular eating of the Lord's supper which is as none at all; it will turn to no account, but to increase guilt. Such an eating was that of the Corinthians; their practices were a direct contradiction to the purposes of this sacred institution. 2. Their conduct carried in it a contempt of God's house, or of the church, v. 22. If they had a mind to feast, they might do it at home in their own houses; but to come to the Lord's table, and cabal and quarrel, and keep the poor from their share of the provision there made for them as well as rich, was such an abuse of the ordinance, and such a contempt of the poorer members of the church more especially, as merited a very sharp rebuke. Such a behaviour tended much to the shame and discouragement of the poor, whose souls were as dear to Christ, and cost him as much, as those of the rich. Note, Common meals may be managed after a common manner, but religious feasts should be attended religiously. Note, also, It is a heinous evil, and severely to be censured, for Christians to treat their fellow-christians with contempt and insolence, but especially at the Lord's table. This is doing what they can to pour contempt on divine ordinances. And we should look carefully to it that nothing in our behaviour at the Lord's table have the appearance of contemning so sacred an institution.

Verses 23-34

To rectify these gross corruptions and irregularities, the apostle sets the sacred institution here to view. This should be the rule in the reformation of all abuses.

I. He tells us how he came by the knowledge of it. He was not among the apostles at the first institution; but *he had received from the Lord what he delivered to them*, v. 23. He had the knowledge of this matter by revelation from Christ: and what he had received he communicated, without varying from the truth a tittle, without adding or diminishing.

II. He gives us a more particular account of the institution than we meet with elsewhere. We have here an account,

1. Of the author—our Lord Jesus Christ. The king of the church only has power to institute sacraments.

2. The time of the institution: *It was the very night wherein he was betrayed*; just as he was entering on his sufferings which are therein to be commemorated.

3. The institution itself. Our Saviour took bread, and when he had given thanks, or *blessed* (as it is in Mt. 26:26), *he broke, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. And in like manner he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood; this do, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of me*, v. 24, 25. Here observe,

(1.) The materials of this sacrament; both, [1.] As to the visible signs; these are bread and the cup, the former of which is called bread many times over in this passage, even after what the papists call consecration. What is eaten is called bread, though it be at the same time said to be *the body of the Lord*, a plain argument that the apostle knew nothing of their monstrous and absurd doctrine of transubstantiation. The latter is as plainly a part of this institution as words can make it. St. Matthew tells us, our Lord bade them all drink of it (ch. 26:27), as if he would, by this expression, lay in a caveat against the papists' depriving the laity of the cup. Bread and the cup are both made use of, because it is a holy feast. Nor is it here, or any where, made necessary, that any particular liquor should be in the cup. In one evangelist, indeed, it is plain that wine was the liquor used by our Saviour, though it was, perhaps, mingled with water, according to the Jewish custom; *vide* Lightfoot on Mt. 26. But this by no means renders it unlawful to have a sacrament where persons cannot come at wine. In every place of scripture in which we have an account of this part of the institution it is always expressed by a figure. The cup is put for what was in it, without once specifying what the liquor was, in the words of the institution. [2.] The things signified by these outward signs; they are Christ's body and blood, his body broken, his blood shed, together with all the benefits which flow from his death and sacrifice: *it is the New Testament in his blood*. His blood is the seal and sanction of all the privileges of the new covenant; and worthy receivers take it as such, at this holy ordinance. They have the New Testament, and their own title to all the blessings of the new covenant, confirmed to them by his blood.

(2.) We have here the sacramental actions, the manner in which the materials of the sacrament are to be used. [1.] Our Saviour's actions, which are taking the bread and cup, giving thanks, breaking the bread, and giving about both the one and the other. [2.] The actions of the communicants, which were to take the bread and eat, to take the cup and drink, and both in remembrance of Christ. But the external acts are not the whole nor the principal part of what is to be done at this holy ordinance; each of them has a significancy. Our Saviour, having undertaken to make an offering of himself to God, and procure, by his death, the remission of sins, with all other gospel benefits, for true believers, did, at the institution, deliver his body and blood, with all the benefits procured by his death, to his disciples, and continues to do the same every time the

ordinance is administered to the true believers. This is here exhibited, or set forth, as the food of souls. And as food, though ever so wholesome or rich, will yield no nourishment without being eaten, here the communicants are to take and eat, or to receive Christ and feed upon him, his grace and benefits, and by faith convert them into nourishment to their souls. They are to take him as their Lord and life, yield themselves up to him, and live upon him. *He is our life*, Col. 3:4.

(3.) We have here an account of the ends of this institution. [1.] It was appointed to be done *in remembrance of Christ*, to keep fresh in our minds an ancient favour, his dying for us, as well as to remember an absent friend, even Christ interceding for us, in virtue of his death, at God's right hand. The best of friends, and the greatest acts of kindness, are here to be remembered, with the exercise of suitable affections and graces. The motto on this ordinance, and the very meaning of it, is, *When this you see, remember me*. [2.] It was *to show forth Christ's death*, to declare and publish it. It is not barely in remembrance of Christ, of what he has done and suffered, that this ordinance was instituted; but to commemorate, to celebrate, his glorious condescension and grace in our redemption. We declare his death to be our life, the spring of all our comforts and hopes. And we glory in such a declaration; we show forth his death, and spread it before God, as our accepted sacrifice and ransom. We set it in view of our own faith, for our own comfort and quickening; and we own before the world, by this very service, that we are the disciples of Christ, who trust in him alone for salvation and acceptance with God.

(4.) It is moreover hinted here, concerning this ordinance, [1.] That it should be frequent: *As often as you eat this bread*, etc. Our bodily meals return often; we cannot maintain life and health without this. And it is fit that this spiritual diet should be taken often too. The ancient churches celebrated this ordinance every Lord's day, if not every day when they assembled for worship. [2.] That it must be perpetual. It is to be celebrated *till the Lord shall come*; till he shall come the second time, without sin, for the salvation of those that believe, and to judge the world. This is our warrant for keeping this feast. It was our Lord's will that we should thus celebrate the memorials of his death and passion, till he come in his own glory, and the Father's glory, with his holy angels, and put an end to the present state of things, and his own mediatorial administration, by passing the final sentence. Note, The Lord's supper is not a temporary, but a standing and perpetual ordinance.

III. He lays before the Corinthians the danger of receiving unworthily, of prostituting this institution as they did, and using it to the purposes of feasting and faction, with intentions opposite to its design, or a temper of mind altogether unsuitable to it; or keeping up the covenant with sin and death, while they are there professedly renewing and confirming their covenant with God. 1. It is great guilt which such contract. They shall *be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord* (v. 27), of violating this sacred institution, of despising his body and blood. They act as if they *counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they are sanctified, an unholy thing*, Heb. 10:29. They profane the institution, and in a manner crucify their Saviour over again. Instead of being cleansed by his blood, they are guilty of his blood. 2. It is a great hazard which they run: *They eat and drink judgment to themselves*, v. 29. They provoke God, and are likely to bring down punishment on themselves. No doubt but they incur great guilt, and so render themselves liable to damnation, to spiritual judgments and eternal misery. Every sin is in its own nature damning; and therefore surely so heinous a sin as profaning such a holy ordinance is so. And it is profaned in the grossest sense by such irreverence and rudeness as the Corinthians were guilty of. But fearful believers should not be discouraged from

attending at this holy ordinance by the sound of these words, as if they bound upon themselves the sentence of damnation by coming to the table of the Lord unprepared. Thus sin, as well as all others, leaves room for forgiveness upon repentance; and the Holy Spirit never indited this passage of scripture to deter serious Christians from their duty, though the devil has often made this advantage of it, and robbed good Christians of their choicest comforts. The Corinthians came to the Lord's table as to a common feast, *not discerning the Lord's body*—not making a difference or distinction between that and common food, but setting both on a level: nay, they used much more indecency at this sacred feast than they would have done at a civil one. This was very sinful in them, and very displeasing to God, and brought down his judgments on them: *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep*. Some were punished with sickness, and some with death. Note, A careless and irreverent receiving of the Lord's supper may bring temporal punishments. Yet the connection seems to imply that even those who were thus punished were in a state of favour with God, at least many of them: *They were chastened of the Lord, that they should not be condemned with the world*, v. 32. Now divine chastening is a sign of divine love: *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth* (Heb. 12:6), especially with so merciful a purpose, to prevent their final condemnation. In the midst of judgment, God remembers mercy: he frequently punishes those whom he tenderly loves. It is kindness to use the rod to prevent the child's ruin. He will visit such iniquity as this under consideration with stripes, and yet make those stripes the evidence of his lovingkindness. Those were in the favour of God who yet so highly offended him in this instance, and brought down judgments on themselves; at least many of them were; for they were punished by him out of fatherly good-will, punished now that they might not perish for ever. Note, It is better to bear trouble in this world than to be miserable to eternity. And God punishes his people now, to prevent their eternal woe.

IV. He points out the duty of those who would come to the Lord's table. 1. In general: *Let a man examine himself* (v. 28), try and approve himself. Let him consider the sacred intention of this holy ordinance, its nature, and use, and compare his own views in attending on it and his disposition of mind for it; and, when he has approved himself to his own conscience in the sight of God, then let him attend. Such self-examination is necessary to a right attendance at this holy ordinance. Note, Those who, through weakness of understanding, cannot try themselves, are by no means fit to eat of this bread and drink of this cup; nor those who, upon a fair trial, have just ground to charge themselves with impenitency, unbelief, and alienation from the life of God. Those should have the wedding-garment on who would be welcome at this marriage-feast-grace in habit, and grace in exercise. 2. The duty of those who were yet unpunished for their profanation of this ordinance: *If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged*, v. 31. If we would thoroughly search and explore ourselves, and condemn and correct what we find amiss, we should prevent divine judgments. Note, To be exact and severe on ourselves and our own conduct is the most proper way in the world not to fall under the just severity of our heavenly Father. We must not judge others, lest we be judged (Mt. 7:1); but we must judge ourselves, to prevent our being judged and condemned by God. We may be critical as to ourselves, but should be very candid in judging others.

V. He closes all with a caution against the irregularities of which they were guilty (v. 33, 34), charging them to avoid all indecency at the Lord's table. They were to eat for hunger and pleasure only at home, and not to change the holy supper to a

common feast; and much less eat up the provisions before those who could bring none did partake of them, lest they should come together for condemnation. Note, Our holy duties, through our own abuse, may prove matter of condemnation. Christians may keep Sabbaths, hear sermons, attend at sacraments, and only aggravate guilt, and bring on a heavier doom. A sad but serious truth! O! let all look to it that they do not come together at any time to God's worship, and all the while provoke him, and bring down vengeance on themselves. Holy things are to be used in a holy manner, or else they are profaned. What else was amiss in this matter, he tells them, he would rectify when he came to them.

Chapter 12

In this chapter the apostle, I. Considers the case of spiritual gifts, which were very plentifully poured out on the Corinthian church. He considers their original, that they are from God; their variety and use, that they were all intended for one and the same general end, the advancement of Christianity and the church's edification (v. 1–11). II. He illustrates this by an allusion to a human body, in which all the members have a mutual relation and subserviency, and each has its proper place and use (v. 12–26). III. He tells us that the church is the body of Christ, and the members are variously gifted for the benefit of the whole body, and each particular member (v. 27–30). And then, IV. Closes with an exhortation to seek somewhat more beneficial than these gifts (v. 31).

Verses 1-11

The apostle comes now to treat of spiritual gifts, which abounded in the church of Corinth, but were greatly abused. What these gifts were is at large told us in the body of the chapter; namely, extraordinary offices and powers, bestowed on ministers and Christians in the first ages, for conviction of unbelievers, and propagation of the gospel. Gifts and graces, *charismata* and *charis*, greatly differ. Both indeed were freely given of God. But where grace is given it is for the salvation of those who have it. Gifts are bestowed for the advantage and salvation of others. And there may be great gifts where there is not a dram of grace, but persons possessed of them are utterly out of the divine favour. They are great instances of divine benignity to men, but do not by themselves prove those who have them to be the objects of divine complacency. This church was rich in gifts, but there were many things scandalously out of order in it. Now concerning these spiritual gifts, that is, the extraordinary powers they had received from the Spirit,

I. The apostle tells them he would not have them ignorant either of their original or use. They came from God, and were to be used for him. It would lead them far astray if they were ignorant of one or the other of these. Note, Right information is of great use as to all religious practice. It is wretched work which gifted men make who either do not know or do not advert to the nature and right use of the gifts with which they are endowed.

II. He puts them in the mind of the sad state out of which they had been recovered: *You were Gentiles, carried away to dumb idols, even as you were led*, v. 2. While they were so, they could have no pretensions to be spiritual men, nor to have spiritual gifts. While they were under the conduct of the spirit of Gentilism, they could not be influenced by the Spirit of Christ. If they well understood their former condition, they could not but know that all true spiritual gifts were from God. Now concerning this observe, 1. Their former character: they *were Gentiles*. Not God's peculiar people, but of the nations whom he had in a manner abandoned. The Jews were, before, his chosen people, distinguished from the rest of the world by his favour. To them the knowledge and worship of the true God were in a manner confined. The rest of the world were strangers to the covenant of promise, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and in a manner without God, Eph. 2:12. Such Gentiles were the body of the Corinthians, before their conversion to Christianity. What a change was here! Christian Corinthians were once Gentiles. Note, It is of great use to the Christian, and a proper consideration to stir him up both to duty and thankfulness, to think what once he

was: *You were Gentiles*. 2. The conduct they were under: *Carried away to these dumb idols, even as you were led*. They were hurried upon the grossest idolatry, the worship even of stocks and stones, through the force of a vain imagination, and the fraud of their priests practising on their ignorance, for, whatever were the sentiments of their philosophers, this was the practice of the herd. The body of the people paid their homage and worship to dumb idols, *that had ears but could not hear, and mouths but could not speak*, Ps. 115:5, 6. Miserable abjectness of mind! And those who despised these gross conceptions of the vulgar yet countenanced them by their practice. O dismal state of Gentilism! Could the Spirit of God be among such stupid idolators, or they be influenced by it? How did the prince of this world triumph in the blindness of mankind! How thick a mist had he cast over their minds!

III. He shows them how they might discern those gifts that were from the Spirit of God, true spiritual gifts: *No man, speaking by the Spirit, calls Jesus accursed*. Thus did both Jews and Gentiles: they blasphemed him as an impostor, and execrated his name, and deemed it abominable. And yet many Jews, who were exorcists and magicians, went about, pretending to work wonders by the Spirit of God (vid. Lightfoot's *Horae in loc.*), and many among the Gentiles pretended to inspiration. Now the apostle tells them none could act under the influence, nor by the power, of the Spirit of God, who disowned and blasphemed Christ: for the Spirit of God bore uncontrollable witness to Christ by prophecy, miracles, his resurrection from the dead, the success of his doctrine among men, and its effect upon them; and could never so far contradict itself as to declare him accursed. And on the other hand *no man could say Jesus was the Lord* (that is, live by this faith, and work miracles to prove it), *but it must be by the Holy Ghost*. To own this truth before men, and maintain it to the death, and live under the influence of it, could not be done without the sanctification of the Holy Ghost. No man can call Christ *Lord*, with a believing subjection to him and dependence upon him, unless that faith be wrought by the Holy Ghost. No man can confess this truth in the day of trial but by the Holy Ghost animating and encouraging him. Note, We have as necessary a dependence on the Spirit's operation and influence for our sanctification and perseverance as on the mediation of Christ for our reconciliation and acceptance with God: and no man could confirm this truth with a miracle but by the Holy Ghost. No evil spirit would lend assistance, if it were in his power, to spread a doctrine and religion so ruinous to the devil's kingdom. The substance of what the apostle asserts and argues here is that whatever pretences there were to inspiration or miracles, among those who were enemies to Christianity, they could not be from the Spirit of God; but no man could believe this with his heart, nor prove with a miracle that Jesus was Christ, but by the Holy Ghost: so that the extraordinary operations and powers among them did all proceed from the Spirit of God. He adds,

IV. These spiritual gifts, though proceeding from the same Spirit, are yet various. They have one author and original, but are themselves of various kinds. A free cause may produce variety of effects; and the same giver may bestow various gifts, v. 4. *There are diversities of gifts*, such as revelations, tongues, prophecy, interpretations of tongues; *but the same Spirit*. There are differences of administrations, or different offices, and officers to discharge them, different ordinances and institutions (see v. 28–30), but the same Lord, who appointed all, v. 6. *There are diversities of operations*, or miraculous powers, called *energeumata dynameoun* (v. 10), as here *energeumata*, *but it is the same God that worketh all in all*. There are various

gifts, administrations, and operations, but all proceed from one God, one Lord, one Spirit; that is, from Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the spring and origin of all spiritual blessings and bequests: all issue from the same fountain; all have the same author. However different they may be in themselves, in this they agree; all are from God. And several of the kinds are here specified, v. 8–10. Several persons had their several gifts, some one, some another, all from and by the same Spirit. To one was given the *word of wisdom*; that is, say some, a knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel, and ability to explain them, an exact understanding of the design, nature, and doctrines, of the Christian religion. Others say an uttering of grave sentences, like Solomon's proverbs. Some confine this word of wisdom to the revelations made to and by the apostles.—*To another the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit*; that is, say some, the knowledge of mysteries (ch. 2:13): wrapped up in the prophecies, types, and histories of the Old Testament: say others, a skill and readiness to give advice and counsel in perplexed cases.—*To another faith, by the same Spirit*; that is, the faith of miracles, or a faith in the divine power and promise, whereby they were enabled to trust God in any emergency, and go on in the way of their duty, and own and profess the truths of Christ, whatever was the difficulty or danger.—*To another the gift of healing, by the same Spirit*; that is, healing the sick, either by laying on of hands, or anointing with oil, or with a bare word.—*To another the working of miracles*; the efficacies of powers, *energeumata dynameon*, such as raising the dead, restoring the blind to sight, giving speech to the dumb, hearing to the deaf, and the use of limbs to the lame.—*To another prophecy*, that is, ability to foretell future events, which is the more usual sense of prophecy; or to explain scripture by a peculiar gift of the Spirit. See ch. 14:24.—*To another the discerning of Spirits*, power to distinguish between true and false prophets, or to discern the real and internal qualifications of any person for an office, or to discover the inward workings of the mind by the Holy Ghost, as Peter did those of Ananias, Acts 5:3.—*To another divers kinds of tongues*, or ability to speak languages by inspiration.—*To another the interpretation of tongues*, or ability to render foreign languages readily and properly into their own. With such variety of spiritual gifts were the first ministers and churches blessed.

V. The end for which these gifts were bestowed: *The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal*, v. 7. The Spirit was manifested by the exercise of these gifts; his influence and interest appeared in them. But they were not distributed for the mere honour and advantage of those who had them, but for the benefit of the church, to edify the body, and spread and advance the gospel. Note, Whatever gifts God confers on any man, he confers them that he may do good with them, whether they be common or spiritual. The outward gifts of his bounty are to be improved for his glory, and employed in doing good to others. No man has them merely for himself. They are a trust put into his hands, to profit withal; and the more he profits others with them, the more abundantly will they turn to his account in the end, Phil. 4:17. Spiritual gifts are bestowed, that men may with them profit the church and promote Christianity. They are not given for show, but for service; not for pomp and ostentation, but for edification; not to magnify those that have them, but to edify others.

VI. The measure and proportion in which they are given: *All these worketh one and the same Spirit, dividing to every man as he will*. It is according to the sovereign pleasure of the donor. What more free than a gift? And shall not the Spirit of God do what he will with his own? May he not give to what persons he pleases, and in what proportion he pleases; one gift to one man,

and another to another; to one more, and another fewer, as he thinks fit? Is he not the best judge how his own purpose shall be served, and his own donatives bestowed? It is not as men will, nor as they may think fit, but as the Spirit pleases. Note, The Holy Ghost is a divine person. He works divine effects and divides divine gifts as he will, by his own power, and according to his own pleasure, without dependence or control. But though he distributes these gifts freely and uncontrollably, they are intended by him, not for private honour and advantage, but for public benefit, for the edification of the body, the church.

Verses 12-26

The apostle here makes out the truth of what was above asserted, and puts the gifted men among the Corinthians in mind of their duty, by comparing the church of Christ to a human body.

I. By telling us that one body may have many members, and that the many members of the same body make but one body (v. 12): *As the body is one, and hath many members, and all members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ;* that is, Christ mystical, as divines commonly speak. Christ and his church making one body, as head and members, this body is made up of many parts or members, yet but one body; for all the members are *baptized into the same body, and made to drink of the same Spirit*, v. 13. Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, are upon a level in this: all are baptized into the same body, and made partakers of the same Spirit. Christians become members of this body by baptism: they are baptized into one body. The outward rite is of divine institution, significant of the new birth, called therefore *the washing of regeneration*, Tit. 3:5. But it is by the Spirit, by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, that we are made members of Christ's body. It is the Spirit's operation, signified by the outward administration, that makes us members. And by communion at the other ordinance we are sustained; but then it is not merely by drinking the wine, but by drinking into one Spirit. The outward administration is a means appointed of God for our participation in this great benefit; but it is baptism by the Spirit, it is internal renovation and drinking into one Spirit, partaking of his sanctifying influence from time to time, that makes us true members of Christ's body, and maintains our union with him. Being animated by one Spirit makes Christians one body. Note, All who have the spirit of Christ, without difference, are the members of Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free; and none but such. And all the members of Christ make up one body; the members many, but the body one. They are one body, because they have one principle of life; all are quickened and animated by the same Spirit.

II. Each member has its particular form, place, and use. 1. The meanest member makes a part of the body. The foot and ear are less useful, perhaps, than the hand and eye; but because one is not a hand, and the other an eye, shall they say, therefore, that they do not belong to the body? v. 15, 16. So every member of the body mystical cannot have the same place and office; but what then? Shall it hereupon disown relation to the body? Because it is not fixed in the same station, or favoured with the same gifts as others, shall it say, "I do not belong to Christ?" No, the meanest member of his body is as much a member as the noblest, and as truly regarded by him. All his members are dear to him. 2. There must be a distinction of members in the body: *Were the whole body eye, where were the hearing? Were the whole ear, where were the smelling?* v. 17. *If all were one member, where were the body?* v. 19. *They are many members*, and for that reason must have distinction among them, *and yet are but one body*, v. 20. One member of a body is not a body; this is made up of many; and among these many there must be a

distinction, difference of situation, shape, use, etc. So it is in the body of Christ; its members must have different uses, and therefore have different powers, and be in different places, some having one gift, and others a different one. Variety in the members of the body contributes to the beauty of it. What a monster would a body be if it were all ear, or eye, or arm! So it is for the beauty and good appearance of the church that there should be diversity of gifts and offices in it. 3. The disposal of members in a natural body, and their situation, are as God pleases: *But now hath God set the members, every one of them, in the body, as it hath pleased him*, v. 18. We may plainly perceive the divine wisdom in the distribution of the members; but it was made according to the counsel of his will; he distinguished and distributed them as he pleased. So is it also in the members of Christ's body: they are chosen out to such stations, and endued with such gifts, as God pleases. He who is sovereign Lord of all disposes his favours and gifts as he will. And who should gainsay his pleasure? What foundation is here for repining in ourselves, or envying others? We should be doing the duties of our own place, and not murmuring in ourselves, nor quarrelling with others, that we are not in theirs. 4. All the members of the body are, in some respect, useful and necessary to each other: *The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor the head to the feet, I have no need of your*: nay, those members of the body *which seem to be more feeble* (the bowels, etc.) *are necessary* (v. 21, 22); God has so fitted and tempered them together that they are all necessary to one another, and to the whole body; there is no part redundant and unnecessary. Every member serves some good purpose or other: it is useful to its fellow-members, and necessary to the good state of the whole body. Nor is there a member of the body of Christ but may and ought to be useful to his fellow-members, and at some times, and in some cases, is needful to them. None should despise and envy another, seeing God has made the distinction between them as he pleased, yet so as to keep them all in some degree of mutual dependence, and make them valuable to each other, and concerned for each other, because of their mutual usefulness. Those who excel in any gift cannot say that they have no need of those who in that gift are their inferiors, while perhaps, in other gifts, they exceed them. Nay, the lowest members of all have their use, and the highest cannot do well without them. The eye has need of the hand, and the head of the feet. 5. Such is the man's concern for his whole body that *on the less honourable members more abundant honour is bestowed, and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness*. Those parts which are not fit, like the rest, to be exposed to view, which are either deformed or shameful, we most carefully clothe and cover; whereas the comely parts have no such need. The wisdom of Providence has so contrived and tempered things that the most abundant regard and honour should be paid to that which most wanted it, v. 24. So should the members of Christ's body behave towards their fellow-members: instead of despising them, or reproaching them, for their infirmities, they should endeavour to cover and conceal them, and put the best face upon them that they can. 6. Divine wisdom has contrived and ordered things in this manner that the members of the body should not be schismatics, divided from each other and acting upon separate interests, but well affected to each other, tenderly concerned for each other, having a fellow-feeling of each other's griefs and a communion in each other's pleasures and joys, v. 25, 26. God has tempered the members of the body natural in the manner mentioned, that *there might be no schism in the body* (v. 25), no rupture nor disunion among the members, nor so much as the least mutual disregard. This should be avoided also in the spiritual body of Christ. There should be no schism in this body, but the members should be closely united by the strongest

bonds of love. All decays of this affection are the seeds of schism. Where Christians grow cold towards each other, they will be careless and unconcerned for each other. And this mutual disregard is a schism begun. The members of the natural body are made to have a care and concern for each other, to prevent a schism in it. So should it be in Christ's body; the members should sympathize with each other. As in the natural body the pain of the one part afflicts the whole, the ease and pleasure of one part affects the whole, so should Christians reckon themselves honoured in the honours of their fellow-christians, and should suffer in their sufferings. Note, Christian sympathy is a great branch of Christian duty. We should be so far from slighting our brethren's sufferings that we should suffer with them, so far from envying their honours that we should rejoice with them and reckon ourselves honoured in them.

Verses 27-31

I. Here the apostle sums up the argument, and applies this similitude to the church of Christ, concerning which observe,

1. The relation wherein Christians stand to Christ and one another. The church, or whole collective body of Christians, in all ages, is his body. Every Christian is a member of his body, and every other Christian stands related to him as a fellow-member (v. 27): *Now you are the body of Christ, and members in particular*, or particular members. Each is a member of the body, not the whole body; each stands related to the body as a part of it, and all have a common relation to one another, dependence upon one another, and should have a mutual care and concern. Thus are the members of the natural body, thus should the members of the mystical body be, disposed. Note, Mutual indifference, and much more contempt, and hatred, and envy, and strife, are very unnatural in Christians. It is like the members of the same body being destitute of all concern for one another, or quarrelling with each other. This is the apostle's scope in this argument. He endeavours in it to suppress the proud, vaunting, and contentious spirit, that had prevailed among the Corinthians, by reason of their spiritual gifts.

2. The variety of offices instituted by Christ, and gifts or favours dispensed by him (v. 28): *God hath set some in the church; first, apostles*, the chief ministers entrusted with all the powers necessary to found a church, and make an entire revelation of God's will. *Secondarily, prophets*, or persons enabled by inspiration, as the evangelists did. *Thirdly, teachers*, those who labour in word and doctrine, whether with pastoral charge or without it. After that, *miracles*, or miracle-workers. *The gifts of healing*, or those who had power to heal diseases; *helps*, or such as had compassion on the sick and weak, and ministered to them; *governments*, or such as had the disposal of the charitable contributions of the church, and dealt them out to the poor; *diversities of tongues*, or such as could speak divers languages. Concerning all these observe, (1.) The plenteous variety of these gifts and offices. What a multitude are they! A good God was free in his communications to the primitive church; he was no niggard of his benefits and favours. No, he provided richly for them. They had no want, but a store-all that was necessary, and even more; what was convenient for them too. (2.) Observe the order of these offices and gifts. They are here placed in their proper ranks. Those of most value have the first place. Apostles, prophets, and teachers, were all intended to instruct the people, to inform them well in the things of God, and promote their spiritual edification: without them, neither evangelical knowledge nor holiness could have been promoted. But the rest, however fitted to answer the great intentions of Christianity, had no such immediate regard to religion, strictly so called. Note, God does, and we should, value things according to their real

worth: and the use of things is the best criterion of their real worth. Those are most valuable that best answer the highest purposes. Such were apostolical powers, compared with theirs who had only the gift of healing and miracles. What holds the last and lowest rank in this enumeration is diversity of tongues. It is by itself the most useless and insignificant of all these gifts. Healing diseases, relieving the poor, helping the sick, have their use: but how vain a thing is it to speak languages, if a man does it merely to amuse or boast himself! This may indeed raise the admiration, but cannot promote the edification, of the hearers, nor do them any good. And yet it is manifest from ch. 14 that the Corinthians valued themselves exceedingly on this gift. Note, How proper a method it is to beat down pride to let persons know the true value of what they pride themselves in! It is but too common a thing for men to value themselves most on what is least worth: and it is of great use to bring them to a sober mind by letting them know how much they are mistaken. (3.) The various distribution of these gifts, not all to one, nor to every one alike. All members and officers had not the same rank in the church, nor the same endowments (v. 29, 30): *Are all apostles? Are all prophets?* This were to make the church a monster: all one as if the body were all ear or all eye. Some are fit for one office and employment, and some for another; and the Spirit distributes to every one as he will. We must be content with our own rank and share, if they be lower and less than those of others. We must not be conceited of ourselves, and despise others, if we are in the higher rank and have greater gifts. Every member of the body is to preserve its own rank, and do its own office; and all are to minister to one another, and promote the good of the body in general, without envying, or despising, or neglecting, or ill-using, any one particular member. How blessed a constitution were the Christian church, if all the members did their duty!

II. He closes this chapter with an advice (as the generality read it) and a hint. 1. An advice to covet the best gifts, *charismata ta kreittona*—*dona potiora, praestantiora*, either the most valuable in themselves or the most serviceable to others; and these are, in truth, most valuable in themselves, though men may be apt to esteem those most that will raise their fame and esteem highest. Those are truly best by which God will be most honoured and his church edified. Such gifts should be most earnestly coveted. Note, We should desire that most which is best, and most worth. Grace is therefore to be preferred before gifts; and, of gifts, those are to be preferred which are of greatest use. But some read this passage, not as an advice, but a charge: *zeploute*, *You are envious* at each other's gifts. In ch. 13:4, the same word is thus translated. You quarrel and contend about them. This they certainly did. And this behaviour the apostle here reprehends, and labours to rectify. *Only of pride cometh contention*. These contests in the church of Corinth sprang from this original. It was a quarrel about precedency (as most quarrels among Christians are, with whatever pretences they are gilded over); and it is no wonder that a quarrel about precedence should extinguish charity. When all would stand in the first rank, no wonder if they jostle, or throw down, or thrust back, their brethren. Gifts may be valued for their use, but they are mischievous when made the fuel of pride and contention. This therefore the apostle endeavours to prevent. 2. By giving them the hint of a more excellent way, namely, of charity, of mutual love and good-will. This was the only right way to quiet and cement them, and make their gifts turn to the advantage and edification of the church. This would render them kind to each other, and concerned for each other, and therefore calm their spirits, and put an end to their little piques and contests, their disputes about precedency. Those would appear to be in the

foremost rank, according to the apostle, who had most of true Christian love. Note, True charity is greatly to be preferred to the most glorious gifts. To have the heart glow with mutual love is vastly better than to glare with the most pompous titles, offices, or powers.

Chapter 13

In this chapter the apostle goes on to show more particularly what that more excellent way was of which he had just before been speaking. He recommends it, I. By showing the necessity and importance of it (v. 1-3). II. By giving a description of its properties and fruits (v. 4-7). III. By showing how much it excels the best of gifts and other graces, by its continuance, when they shall be no longer in being, or of any use (v. 8 to the end).

Verses 1-3

Here the apostle shows what more excellent way he meant, or had in view, in the close of the former chapter, namely, *charity*, or, as it is commonly elsewhere rendered, *love*—*agape*μ: not what is meant by charity in our common use of the word, which most men understand of alms—giving, but love in its fullest and most extensive meaning, true love to God and man, a benevolent disposition of mind towards our fellow-christians, growing out of sincere and fervent devotion to God. This living principle of all duty and obedience is the more excellent way of which the apostle speaks, preferable to all gifts. Nay, without this the most glorious gifts are nothing, of no account to us, of no esteem in the sight of God. He specifies, 1. The gift of tongues: *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal*, v. 1. Could a man speak all the languages on earth, and that with the greatest propriety, elegance, and fluency, could he talk like an angel, and yet be without charity, it would be all empty noise, mere unharmonious and useless sound, that would neither profit nor delight. It is not talking freely, nor finely, nor learnedly, of the things of God, that will save ourselves, or profit others, if we are destitute of holy love. It is the charitable heart, not the voluble tongue, that is acceptable with God. The apostle specifies first this gift because hereupon the Corinthians seemed chiefly to value themselves and despise their brethren. 2. Prophecy, and the understanding of mysteries, and all knowledge. This without charity is as nothing, v. 2. Had a man ever so clear an understanding of the prophecies and types under the old dispensation, ever so accurate a knowledge of the doctrines of Christianity, nay, and this by inspiration, from the infallible dictates and illumination of the Spirit of God, without charity he would be nothing; all this would stand him in no stead. Note, A clear and deep head is of no signification, without a benevolent and charitable heart. It is not great knowledge that God sets a value upon, but true and hearty devotion and love. 3. Miraculous faith, the faith of miracles, or the faith by which persons were enabled to work miracles: *Had I all faith* (the utmost degree of this kind of faith), *that I could remove mountains* (or say to them, "Go hence into the midst of the sea," and have my command obeyed, Mk. 11:23), *and had no charity, I am nothing*. The most wonder-working faith, to which nothing is in a manner impossible, is itself nothing without charity. Moving mountains is a great achievement in the account of men; but one dram of charity is, in God's account, of much greater worth than all the faith of this sort in the world. Those may do many wondrous works in Christ's name whom yet he will disown, and bid depart from him, as workers of iniquity, Mt. 7:22, 23. Saving faith is ever in conjunction with charity, but the faith of miracles may be without it. 4. The outward acts of charity: *Bestowing his goods to feed the poor*, v. 3. Should all a man has be laid out in this manner, if he had no charity, it would profit him nothing. There may be an open and lavish hand, where there is no liberal and charitable heart. The external act of giving

alms may proceed from a very ill principle. Vain-glorious ostentation, or a proud conceit of merit, may put a man to large expense this way who has no true love to God nor men. Our doing good to others will do none to us, if it be not well done, namely, from a principle of devotion and charity, love to God, and good-will to men. Note, If we leave charity out of religion, the most costly services will be of no avail to us. If we give away all we have, while we withhold the heart from God, it will not profit. 5. Even sufferings, and even those of the most grievous kind: *If we give our bodies to be burnt, without charity, it profiteth nothing*, v. 3. Should we sacrifice our lives for the faith of the gospel, and be burnt to death in maintenance of its truth, this will stand us in no stead without charity, unless we be animated to these sufferings by a principle of true devotion to God, and sincere love to his church and people, and good-will to mankind. The outward carriage may be plausible, when the invisible principle is very bad. Some men have thrown themselves into the fire to procure a name and reputation among men. It is possible that the very same principle may have worked up some to resolution enough to die for their religion who never heartily believed and embraced it. But vindicating religion at the cost of our lives will profit nothing if we feel not the power of it; and true charity is the very heart and spirit of religion. If we feel none of its sacred heat in our hearts, it will profit nothing, though we be burnt to ashes for the truth. Note, The most grievous sufferings, the most costly sacrifices, will not recommend us to God, if we do not love the brethren; should we give our own bodies to be burnt, it would not profit us. How strange a way of recommending themselves to God are those got into who hope to do it by burning others, by murdering, and massacring, and tormenting their fellow-christians, or by any injurious usage of them! *My soul, enter not thou into their secrets*. If I cannot hope to recommend myself to God by giving my own body to be burnt while I have no charity, I will never hope to do it by burning or maltreating others, in open defiance to all charity.

Verses 4-7

The apostle gives us in these verses some of the properties and effects of charity, both to describe and commend it, that we may know whether we have this grace and that if we have not we may fall in love with what is so exceedingly amiable, and not rest till we have obtained it. It is an excellent grace, and has a world of good properties belonging to it. As,

I. *It is long suffering—makrothymei*. It can endure evil, injury, and provocation, without being filled with resentment, indignation, or revenge. It makes the mind firm, gives it power over the angry passions, and furnishes it with a persevering patience, that shall rather wait and wish for the reformation of a brother than fly out in resentment of his conduct. It will put up with many slights and neglects from the person it loves, and wait long to see the kindly effects of such patience on him.

II. *It is kind—chresteuetai*. It is benign, bountiful; it is courteous and obliging. *The law of kindness is in her lips*; her heart is large, and her hand open. She is ready to show favours and to do good. She seeks to be useful; and not only seizes on opportunities of doing good, but searches for them. This is her general character. She is patient under injuries, and apt and inclined to do all the good offices in her power. And under these two generals all the particulars of the character may be reduced.

III. Charity suppresses envy: *It envieth not*; it is not grieved at the good of others; neither at their gifts nor at their good qualities, their honours nor their estates. If we love our neighbour we shall be so far from envying his welfare, or being

displeased with it, that we shall share in it and rejoice at it. His bliss and sanctification will be an addition to ours, instead of impairing or lessening it. This is the proper effect of kindness and benevolence: envy is the effect of ill-will. The prosperity of those to whom we wish well can never grieve us; and the mind which is bent on doing good to all can never with ill to any.

IV. Charity subdues pride and vain-glory; *It vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up*, is not bloated with self-conceit, does not swell upon its acquisitions, nor arrogate to itself that honour, or power, or respect, which does not belong to it. It is not insolent, apt to despise others, or trample on them, or treat them with contempt and scorn. Those who are animated with a principle of true brotherly love will in honour prefer one another, Rom. 12:10. They will *do nothing out* of a spirit of contention or *vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind will esteem others better than themselves*, Phil. 2:3. True love will give us an esteem of our brethren, and raise our value for them; and this will limit our esteem of ourselves, and prevent the tumours of self-conceit and arrogance. These ill qualities can never grow out of tender affection for the brethren, nor a diffusive benevolence. The word rendered in our translation *vaunteth itself* bears other significations; nor is the proper meaning, as I can find, settled; but in every sense and meaning true charity stands in opposition to it. The Syriac renders it, *non tumultuatur—does not raise tumults* and disturbances. Charity calms the angry passions, instead of raising them. Others render it, *Non perperà et perversè agit—It does not act insidiously with any*, seek to ensnare them, nor tease them with needless importunities and addresses. It is not froward, nor stubborn and untractable, nor apt to be cross and contradictory. Some understand it of dissembling and flattery, when a fair face is put on, and fine words are said, without any regard to truth, or intention of good. Charity abhors such falsehood and flattery. Nothing is commonly more pernicious, nor more apt to cross the purposes of true love and good will.

V. Charity is careful not to pass the bounds of decency; *ouk ascheumonei—it behaveth not unseemly*; it does nothing indecorous, nothing that in the common account of men is base or vile. It does nothing out of place or time; but behaves towards all men as becomes their rank and ours, with reverence and respect to superiors, with kindness and condescension to inferiors, with courtesy and good-will towards all men. It is not for breaking order, confounding ranks bringing all men on a level; but for keeping up the distinction God has made between men, and acting decently in its own station, and minding its own business, without taking upon it to mend, or censure, or despise, the conduct of others. Charity will do nothing that misbecomes it.

VI. Charity is an utter enemy to selfishness: *Seeketh not its own*, does not inordinately desire nor seek its own praise, or honour, or profit, or pleasure. Indeed self-love, in some degree, is natural to all men, enters into their very constitution. And a reasonable love of self is by our Saviour made the measure of our love to others, that charity which is here described, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. The apostle does not mean that charity destroys all regard to self; he does not mean that the charitable man should never challenge what is his own, but utterly neglect himself and all his interests. Charity must then root up that principle which is wrought into our nature. But charity never seeks its own to the hurt of others, or with the neglect of others. It often neglects its own for the sake of others; prefers their welfare, and satisfaction, and advantage, to its own; and it ever prefers the weal of the public, of the community, whether civil or ecclesiastical, to its private advantage. It would not advance, nor aggrandize, nor enrich, nor gratify itself, at the cost and damage of the public.

VII. It tempers and restrains the passions. *Ou paroxynetai*—*is not exasperated*. It corrects a sharpness of temper, sweetens and softens the mind, so that it does not suddenly conceive, nor long continue, a vehement passion. Where the fire of love is kept in, the flames of wrath will not easily kindle, nor long keep burning. Charity will never be angry without a cause, and will endeavour to confine the passions within proper limits, that they may not exceed the measure that is just, either in degree or duration. Anger cannot rest in the bosom where love reigns. It is hard to be angry with those we love, but very easy to drop our resentments and be reconciled.

VIII. Charity *thinks no evil*. It cherishes no malice, nor gives way to revenge: so some understand it. It is not soon, nor long, angry; it is never mischievous, nor inclined to revenge; it does not suspect evil of others, *ou logizetai to kakon*—*it does not reason out evil*, charge guilt upon them by inference and *innuendo*, when nothing of this sort appears open. True love is not apt to be jealous and suspicious; it will hide faults that appear, and draw a veil over them, instead of hunting and raking out those that lie covered and concealed: it will never indulge suspicion without proofs, but will rather incline to darken and disbelieve evidence against the person it affects. It will hardly give into an ill opinion of another, and it will do it with regret and reluctance when the evidence cannot be resisted; hence it will never be forward to suspect ill, and reason itself into a bad opinion upon mere appearances, nor give way to suspicion without any. It will not make the worst construction of things, but put the best face that it can on circumstances that have no good appearance.

IX. The matter of its joy and pleasure is here suggested: 1. Negatively: *It rejoiceth not in iniquity*. It takes no pleasure in doing injury or hurt to any. It thinks not evil of any, without very clear proof. It wishes ill to none, much less will it hurt or wrong any, and least of all make this matter of its delight, rejoice in doing harm and mischief. Nor will it rejoice at the faults and failings of others, and triumph over them, either out of pride or ill-will, because it will set off its own excellences or gratify its spite. The sins of others are rather the grief of a charitable spirit than its sport or delight; they will touch it to the quick, and stir all its compassion, but give it no entertainment. It is the very height of malice to take pleasure in the misery of a fellow-creature. And is not falling into sin the greatest calamity that can befall one? How inconsistent is it with Christian charity, to rejoice at such fall! 2. Affirmatively: *It rejoiceth in the truth*, is glad of the success of the gospel, commonly called *the truth*, by way of emphasis, in the New Testament; and rejoices to see men moulded into an evangelical temper by it, and made good. It takes no pleasure in their sins, but is highly delighted to see them do well, to approve themselves men of probity and integrity. It gives it much satisfaction to see truth and justice prevail among men, innocency cleared, and mutual faith and trust established, and to see piety and true religion flourish.

X. *It beareth all things, it endureth all things, panta stegei, panta hypomenei*. Some read the first, *covers all things*. So the original also signifies. *Charity will cover a multitude of sins*, 1 Pt. 4:8. It will draw a veil over them, as far as it can consistently with duty. It is not for blazing nor publishing the faults of a brother, till duty manifestly demands it. Necessity only can extort this from the charitable mind. Though such a man be free to tell his brother his faults in private, he is very unwilling to expose him by making them public. Thus we do by our own faults, and thus charity would teach us to do by the faults of others; not publish them to their shame and reproach, but cover them from public notice as long as we can, and be faithful to God and to

others. Or, it *beareth all things*,—will pass by and put up with injuries, without indulging anger or cherishing revenge, will be patient upon provocation, and long patient, *panta hypomenei*—holds firm, though it be much shocked, and borne hard upon; sustains all manner of injury and ill usage, and bears up under it, such as curses, contumacies, slanders, prison, exile, bonds, torments, and death itself, for the sake of the injurious, and of others; and perseveres in this firmness. Note, What a fortitude and firmness fervent love will give the mind! What cannot a lover endure for the beloved and for his sake! How many slights and injuries will he put up with! How many hazards will he run and how many difficulties encounter!

XI. Charity believes and hopes well of others: *Believeth all things; hopeth all things*. Indeed charity does by no means destroy prudence, and, out of mere simplicity and silliness, believe every word, Prov. 14:15. Wisdom may dwell with love, and charity be cautious. But it is apt to believe well of all, to entertain a good opinion of them when there is no appearance to the contrary; nay, to believe well when there may be some dark appearances, if the evidence of ill be not clear. All charity is full of candour, apt to make the best of every thing, and put on it the best face and appearance? it will judge well, and believe well, as far as it can with any reason, and will rather stretch its faith beyond appearances for the support of a kind opinion; but it will go into a bad one with the upmost reluctance, and fence against it as much as it fairly and honestly can. And when, in spite of inclination, it cannot believe well of others, it will yet hope well, and continue to hope as long as there is any ground for it. It will not presently conclude a case desperate, but wishes the amendment of the worst of men, and is very apt to hope for what it wishes. How well-natured and amiable a thing is Christian charity? How lovely a mind is that which is tintured throughout with such benevolence, and has it diffused over its whole frame! Happy the man who has this heavenly fire glowing in his heart, flowing out of his mouth, and diffusing its warmth over all with whom he has to do! How lovely a thing would Christianity appear to the world, if those who profess it were more actuated and animated by this divine principle, and paid a due regard to a command on which its blessed author laid a chief stress! *A new commandment give I to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another*, Jn. 13:34. *By this shall all men know that you are my disciples*, v. 35. Blessed Jesus! how few of thy professed disciples are to be distinguished and marked out by this characteristic!

Verses 8-13

Here the apostle goes on to commend charity, and show how much it is preferable to the gifts on which the Corinthians were so apt to pride themselves, to the utter neglect, and almost extinction, of charity. This he makes out,

I. From its longer continuance and duration: *Charity never faileth*. It is a permanent and perpetual grace, lasting as eternity; whereas the extraordinary gifts on which the Corinthians valued themselves were of short continuance. They were only to edify the church on earth, and that but for a time, not during its whole continuance in this world; but in heaven would be all superseded, which yet is the very seat and element of love. *Prophecy must fail*, that is, either the prediction of things to come (which is its most common sense) or the interpretation of scripture by immediate inspiration. *Tongues will cease*, that is, the miraculous power of speaking languages without learning them. There will be but one language in heaven. There is no confusion of tongues in the region of perfect tranquility. And *knowledge will vanish away*. Not that, in the perfect state above, holy and happy souls shall be unknowing, ignorant: it is a very poor happiness that can consist with utter ignorance. The

apostle is plainly speaking of miraculous gifts, and therefore of knowledge to be had out of the common way (see ch. 14:6), a knowledge of mysteries supernaturally communicated. Such knowledge was to vanish away. Some indeed understand it of common knowledge acquired by instruction, taught and learnt. This way of knowing is to vanish away, though the knowledge itself, once acquired, will not be lost. But it is plain that the apostle is here setting the grace of charity in opposition to supernatural gifts. And it is more valuable, because more durable; *it shall last, when they shall be no more; it shall enter into heaven, where they will have no place, because they will be of no use, though, in a sense, even our common knowledge may be said to cease in heaven, by reason of the improvement that will then be made in it. The light of a candle is perfectly obscured by the sun shining in its strength.*

II. He hints that these gifts are adapted only to a state of imperfection: *We know in part, and we prophesy in part, v. 9.* Our best knowledge and our greatest abilities are at present like our condition, narrow and temporary. Even the knowledge they had by inspiration was but in part. How little a portion of God, and the unseen world, was heard even by apostles and inspired men! How much short do others come of them! But these gifts were fitted to the present imperfect state of the church, valuable in themselves, but not to be compared with charity, because they were to vanish with the imperfections of the church, nay, and long before, whereas charity was to last for ever.

III. He takes occasion hence to show how much better it will be with the church hereafter than it can be here. A state of perfection is in view (v. 10): *When that which is perfect shall come, then that which is in part shall be done away.* When the end is once attained, the means will of course be abolished. There will be no need of tongues, and prophecy, and inspired knowledge, in a future life, because then the church will be in a state of perfection, complete both in knowledge and holiness. God will be known then clearly, and in a manner by intuition, and as perfectly as the capacity of glorified minds will allow; not by such transient glimpses, and little portions, as here. The difference between these two states is here pointed at in two particulars: 1. The present state is a state of childhood, the future that of manhood: *When I was a child, I spoke as a child* (that is, as some think, spoke with tongues), *I understood as a child; ephronoun—sapiebam* (that is, "I prophesied, I was taught the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, in such an extraordinary way as manifested I was not out of my childish state"), *I thought, or reasoned, elogizomeun, as a child; but, when I became a man, I put away childish things.* Such is the difference between earth and heaven. What narrow views, what confused and indistinct notions of things, have children, in comparison of grown men! And how naturally do men, when reason is ripened and matured, despise and relinquish their infant thoughts, put them away, reject them, esteem as nothing! Thus shall we think of our most valued gifts and acquisitions in this world, when we come to heaven. We shall despise our childish folly, in priding ourselves in such things when we are grown up to men in Christ. 2. Things are all dark and confused now, in comparison of what they will be hereafter: *Now we see through a glass darkly (ev ainigmati, in a riddle), then face to face; now we know in part, but then we shall know as we are known.* Now we can only discern things at a great distance, as through a telescope, and that involved in clouds and obscurity; but hereafter the things to be known will be near and obvious, open to our eyes; and our knowledge will be free from all obscurity and error. God is to be seen *face to face; and we are to know him as we are known by him; not indeed as perfectly, but in some sense in*

the same manner. We are known to him by mere inspection; he turns his eye towards us, and sees and searches us throughout. We shall then fix our eye on him, *and see him as he is*, 1 Jn. 3:2. We shall know how we are known, enter into all the mysteries of divine love and grace. O glorious change! To pass from darkness to light, from clouds to the clear sunshine of our Saviour's face, and in God's own light to see light! Ps. 36:9. Note, It is the light of heaven only that will remove all clouds and darkness from the face of God. It is at best but twilight while we are in this world; there it will be perfect and eternal day.

IV. To sum up the excellences of charity, he prefers it not only to gifts, but to other graces, to faith and hope (v. 13): *And now abide faith, hope, and charity; but the greatest of these is charity*. True grace is much more excellent than any spiritual gifts whatever. And faith, hope, and love, are the three principal graces, of which charity is the chief, being the end to which the other two are but means. This is the divine nature, the soul's felicity, or its complacental rest in God, and holy delight in all his saints. And it is everlasting work, when faith and hope shall be no more. Faith fixes on the divine revelation, and assents to that: hope fastens on future felicity, and waits for that: and in heaven faith well be swallowed up in vision, and hope in fruition. There is no room to believe and hope, when we see and enjoy. But love fastens on the divine perfections themselves, and the divine image on the creatures, and our mutual relation both to God and them. These will all shine forth in the most glorious splendours in another world, and there will love be made perfect; there we shall perfectly love God, because he will appear amiable for ever, and our hearts will kindle at the sight, and glow with perpetual devotion. And there shall we perfectly love one another, when all the saints meet there, when none but saints are there, and saints made perfect. O blessed state! How much surpassing the best below! O amiable and excellent grace of charity! How much does it exceed the most valuable gift, when it outshines every grace, and is the everlasting consummation of them! When faith and hope are at an end, true charity will burn for ever with the brightest flame. Note, Those border most upon the heavenly state and perfection whose hearts are fullest of this divine principle, and burn with the most fervent charity. It is the surest offspring of God, and bears his fairest impression. For God is love, 1 Jn. 4:8, 16. And where God is to be seen as he is, and face to face, there charity is in its greatest height-there, and there only, will it be perfected.

Chapter 14

In this chapter the apostle directs them about the use of their spiritual gifts, preferring those that are best and fitted to do the greatest good. I. He begins with advising them of all spiritual gifts to prefer prophesying, and shows that this is much better than speaking with tongues (v. 1-5). II. He goes on to show them how unprofitable the speaking of foreign languages is, and useless to the church; it is like piping in one tone, like sounding a trumpet without any certain note, like talking gibberish; whereas gifts should be used for the good of the church (v. 6–14). III. He advises that worship should be celebrated so that the most ignorant might understand, and join in prayer and praise, and presses the advice by his own example (v. 15–20). IV. He informs them that tongues were a sign for unbelievers rather than those that believe; and represents the advantage of prophecy above speaking with tongues, from the different suggestions they would give to the mind of an unbeliever coming into their assemblies (v. 21–25). V. He blames them for the disorder and confusion they had brought into the assembly, by their vanity and ostentation of their gifts; and directs them in using the gifts both of tongues and prophecy (v. 26–33). VI. He forbids women speaking in the church; and closes this subject by requiring them to perform every thing in the public worship with order and decency (v. 34 to the end).

Verses 1-5

The apostle, in the foregoing chapter, had himself preferred, and advised the Corinthians to prefer, Christian charity to all spiritual gifts. Here he teaches them, among spiritual gifts, which they should prefer, and by what rules they should make comparison. He begins the chapter,

I. With an exhortation to charity (v. 1): *Follow after charity*, pursue it. The original, *διουκete*, when spoken of a thing, signifies a singular concern to obtain it; and is commonly taken in a good and laudable sense. It is an exhortation to obtain charity, to get this excellent disposition of mind upon any terms, whatever pains or prayers it may cost: as if he had said, "In whatever you fail, see you do not miss of this; the principal of all graces is worth your getting at any rate."

II. He directs them which spiritual gift to prefer, from a principle of charity: "*Desire spiritual gifts, but rather that you may prophesy*, or chiefly that you may prophesy." While they were in close pursuit of charity, and made this Christian disposition their chief scope, they might be zealous of spiritual gifts, be ambitious of them in some measure, but especially of prophesying, that is, of interpreting scripture. This preference would most plainly discover that they were indeed upon such pursuit, that they had a due value for Christian charity, and were intent upon it. Note, Gifts are fit objects of our desire and pursuit, in subordination to grace and charity. That should be sought first and with the greatest earnestness which is most worth.

III. He assigns the reasons of this preference. And it is remarkable here that he only compares prophesying with speaking with tongues. It seems, this was the gift on which the Corinthians principally valued themselves. This was more ostentatious than the plain interpretation of scripture, more fit to gratify pride, but less fit to pursue the purposes of Christian charity; it would not equally edify nor do good to the souls of men. For, 1. He that spoke with tongues must wholly speak between God and himself; for, whatever mysteries might be communicated in his language, none of his own countrymen could understand them,

because they did not understand the language, v. 2. Note, What cannot be understood can never edify. No advantage can be reaped from the most excellent discourses, if delivered in unintelligible language, such as the audience can neither speak nor understand: but he that prophesies speaks to the advantage of his hearers; they may profit by his gift. Interpretation of scripture will be for their edification; they may be exhorted and comforted by it, v. 3. And indeed these two must go together. Duty is the proper way to comfort; and those that would be comforted must bear being exhorted. 2. He that speaks with tongues may edify himself, v. 4. He may understand and be affected with what he speaks; and so every minister should; and he that is most edified himself is in the disposition and fitness to do good to others by what he speaks; but he that speaks with tongues, or language unknown, can only edify himself; others can reap no benefit from his speech. Whereas the end of speaking in the church is to edify the church (v. 4), to which prophesying, or interpreting scripture by inspiration or otherwise, is immediately adapted. Note, That is the best and most eligible gift which best answers the purposes of charity and does most good; not that which can edify ourselves only, but that which will edify the church. Such is prophesying, or preaching, and interpreting scripture, compared with speaking in an unknown tongue. 3. Indeed, no gift is to be despised, but the best gifts are to be preferred. *I could wish*, says the apostle, *that you all spoke with tongues, but rather that you prophesied*, v. 5. Every gift of God is a favour from God, and may be improved for his glory, and as such is to be valued and thankfully received; but then those are to be most valued that are most useful. *Greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, unless he interpret, that the church may receive edifying*, v. 5. Benevolence makes a man truly great. *It is more blessed to give than to receive*. And it is true magnanimity to study and seek to be useful to others, rather than to raise their admiration and draw their esteem. Such a man has a large soul, copious and diffused in proportion to his benevolence and bent of mind for public good. Greater is he who interprets scripture to edify the church than he who speaks tongues to recommend himself. And what other end he who spoke with tongues could have, unless he interpreted what he spoke, is not easy to say, Note, That makes most for the honour of a minister which is most for the church's edification, not that which shows his gifts to most advantage. He acts in a narrow sphere, while he aims at himself; but his spirit and character increase in proportion to his usefulness, I mean his own intention and endeavours to be useful.

Verses 6-14

In this paragraph he goes on to show how vain a thing the ostentation of speaking unknown and unintelligible language must be. It was altogether unedifying and unprofitable (v. 6): *If I come to you speaking with tongues, what will it profit you, unless I speak to you by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?* It would signify nothing to utter any of these in an unknown tongue. An apostle, with all his furniture, could not edify, unless he spoke to the capacity of his hearers. New revelations, the most clear explications of old ones, the most instructive discourses in themselves, would be unprofitable in a language not understood. Nay, interpretations of scripture made in an unknown tongue would need to be interpreted over again, before they could be of any use.

I. He illustrates this by several allusions. 1. To a pipe and a harp playing always in one tone. Of what use can this be to those who are dancing? If there be no distinction of sounds, how should they order their steps or motions? Unintelligible language is

like piping or harping without distinction of sounds: it gives no more direction how a man should order his conversation than a pipe with but one stop or a harp with but one string can direct a dancer how he should order his steps, v. 7. 2. To a trumpet giving an *uncertain sound*, *adeulon phouneun*, a sound not manifest; either not the proper sound for the purpose, or not distinct enough to be discerned from every other sound. If, instead of sounding on onset, it sounded a retreat, or sounded one knew not what, who would prepare for the battle? To talk in an unknown language in a Christian assembly is altogether as vain and to no purpose as for a trumpet to give no certain sound in the field or day of battle. The army in one case, and the congregation in the other, must be all in suspense, and at a perfect nonplus. To speak words that have no significancy to those who hear them is to leave them ignorant of what is spoken; it is speaking to the air, v. 9. Words without a meaning can convey no notion nor instruction to the mind; and words not understood have no meaning with those who do not understand them: to talk to them in such language is to waste our breath. 3. He compares the speaking in an unknown tongue to the gibberish of barbarians. There are, as he says (v. 10), many kinds of voices in the world, none of which is without its proper signification. This is true of the several languages spoken by different nations. All of them have their proper signification. Without this they would be *phounai aphounoi*—*a voice, and no voice*. For that is no language, nor can it answer the end of speaking, which has no meaning. But whatever proper signification the words of any language may have in themselves, and to those who understand them, they are perfect gibberish to men of another language, who understand them not. In this case, speaker and hearers are barbarians to each other (v. 11), they talk and hear only sounds without sense; for this is to be a barbarian. For thus says the polite Ovid, when banished into Pontus,

Barbarus hic ego sum, quia non intelligor ulli,
I am a barbarian here, none understand me.

To speak in the church in an unknown tongue is to talk gibberish; it is to play the barbarian; it is to confound the audience, instead of instructing them; and for this reason is utterly vain and unprofitable.

II. Having thus established his point, in the two next verses he applies, 1. By advising them to be chiefly desirous of those gifts that were most for the church's edification, v. 12. "Forasmuch as you are zealous of spiritual gifts, this way it will become commendable zeal, be zealous to edify the church, to promote Christian knowledge and practice, and covet those gifts most that will do the best service to men's souls." This is the great rule he gives, which, 2. He applies to the matter in hand, that, if they did speak a foreign language, they should beg of God the gift of interpreting it, v. 13. That these were different gifts, see ch. 12:10. Those might speak and understand a foreign language who could not readily translate it into their own: and yet was this necessary to the church's edification; for the church must understand, that it might be edified, which yet it could not do till the foreign language was translated into its own. Let him therefore pray for the gift of interpreting what he speaks in an unknown tongue; or rather covet and ask of God the gift of interpreting than of speaking in a language that needs interpretation, this being most for the church's benefit, and therefore among the gifts that excel; *vide* v. 12. Some understand it, "Let him pray so as to interpret what he utters in prayer in a language unintelligible without it." The sum is that they should perform all religious exercises in their assemblies so that all might join in them and profit by them. 3. He enforces this advice

with a proper reason, that, if *he prayed in an unknown tongue, his spirit might pray*, that is, a spiritual gift might be exercised in prayer, or his own mind might be devoutly engaged, *but his understanding would be unfruitful* (v. 14), that is, the sense and meaning of his words would be unfruitful, he would not be understood, nor therefore would others join with him in his devotions. Note, It should be the concern of such as pray in public to pray intelligibly, not in a foreign language, nor in a language that, if it be not foreign, is above the level of his audience. Language that is most obvious and easy to be understood is the most proper for public devotion and other religious exercises.

Verses 15-20

The apostle here sums up the argument hitherto, and,

I. Directs them how they should sing and pray in public (v. 15): *What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also. I will sing with the spirit*, etc. He does not forbid their praying or singing under a divine *afflatus*, or when they were inspired for this purpose, or had such a spiritual gift communicated to them; but he would have them perform both so as to be understood by others, that others might join with them. Note, Public worship should be performed so as to be understood.

II. He enforces the argument with several reasons.

1. That otherwise the unlearned could not say Amen to their prayers or thanksgivings, could not join in the worship, for they did not understand it, v. 16. He who fills up or occupies the place of the unlearned, that is, as the ancients interpret it, the body of the people, who, in most Christian assemblies, are illiterate; how should they say *Amen* to prayers in an unknown tongue? How should they declare their consent and concurrence? This is saying *Amen*, So be it. *God grant the thing we have requested*; or, We join in the confession that has been made of sin, and in the acknowledgment that has been made of divine mercies and favours. This is the import of saying *Amen*. All should say *Amen* inwardly; and it is not improper to testify this inward concurrence in public prayers and devotions, by an audible *Amen*. The ancient Christians said *Amen* aloud. *Vide Just. Mart. apol. 2. propè fin.* Now, how should the people say *Amen* to what they did not understand? Note, There can be no concurrence in those prayers that are not understood. The intention of public devotions is therefore entirely destroyed if they are performed in an unknown tongue. He who performs may pray well, and give thanks well, but not in that time and place, because others are not, cannot be, edified (v. 17) by what they understand not.

2. He alleges his own example, to make the greater impression, concerning which observe, (1.) That he did not come behind any of them in this spiritual gift: *"I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than you all* (v. 18); not only more than any single person among you, but more than all together." It was not envy at their better furniture that made Paul depreciate what they so highly valued and so much vaunted of; he surpassed them all in this very gift of tongues, and did not vilify their gift because he had it not. This spirit of envy is too common in the world. But the apostle took care to guard against this misconstruction of his purpose, by letting them know there was more ground for them to envy him upon this head than for him to envy them. Note, When we beat down men's unreasonable value for themselves, or any of their possessions or attainments, we should let them see, if possible, that this does not proceed from an envious and grudging spirit. We miss our aim if they can

fairly give our conduct this invidious turn. Paul could not be justly censured, nor suspected for any such principle in this whole argument. He spoke more language than they all. Yet, (2.) He had rather *speak five words with understanding*, that is, so as to be understood, and instruct and edify others, *than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue*, v. 19. He was so far from valuing himself upon talking languages, or making ostentation of his talents of this kind, that he had rather speak five intelligible words, to benefit others, than make a thousand, ten thousand fine discourses, that would do no one else any good, because they did not understand them. Note, A truly Christian minister will value himself much more upon doing the least spiritual good to men's souls than upon procuring the greatest applause and commendation to himself. This is true grandeur and nobleness of spirit; it is acting up to his character; it is approving himself the servant of Christ, and not a vassal to his own pride and vanity. 3. He adds a plain intimation that the fondness then discovered for this gift was but too plain an indication of the immaturity of their judgment: *Brethren, be not children in understanding; in malice be you children, but in understanding be men*, v. 20. Children are apt to be struck with novelty and strange appearances. They are taken with an outward show, without enquiring into the true nature and worth of things. Do not you act like them, and prefer noise and show to worth and substance; show a greater ripeness of judgment, and act a more manly part; be like children in nothing but an innocent and inoffensive disposition. A double rebuke is couched in this passage, both of their pride upon account of their gifts, and their arrogance and haughtiness towards each other, and the contests and quarrels proceeding from them. Note, Christians should be harmless and inoffensive as children, void of all guile and malice; but should have wisdom and knowledge that are ripe and mature. They should not be unskilful in the word of righteousness (Heb. 5:13), though they should be unskilful in all the arts of mischief.

Verses 21-25

In this passage the apostle pursues the argument, and reasons from other topics; as,

I. Tongues, as the Corinthians used them, were rather a token of judgment from God than mercy to any people (v. 21): *In the law* (that is, the Old Testament) *it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak to this people; and yet for all this they will not hear me, saith the Lord*, Isa. 28:11. Compare Deu. 28:46, 49. To both these passages, it is thought, the apostle refers. Both are delivered by way of threatening, and one is supposed to interpret the other. The meaning in this view is that it is an evidence that a people are abandoned of God when he gives them up to this sort of instruction, to the discipline of those who speak in another language. And surely the apostle's discourse implies, "You should not be fond of the tokens of divine displeasure. God can have no gracious regards to those who are left merely to this sort of instruction, and taught in language which they cannot understand. They can never be benefited by such teaching as this; and, when they are left to it, it is a sad sign that God gives them over as past cure." And should Christians covet to be in such a state, or to bring the churches into it? Yet thus did the Corinthian preachers in effect, who would always deliver their inspirations in an unknown tongue.

II. Tongues were rather a sign to unbelievers than to believers, v. 22. They were a spiritual gift, intended for the conviction and conversion of infidels, that they might be brought into the Christian church; but converts were to be built up in Christianity by profitable instructions in their own language. The gift of tongues was necessary to spread Christianity, and gather churches; it was proper and intended to convince unbelievers of that doctrine which Christians had already embraced; but prophesying, and

interpreting scripture in their own language, were most for the edification of such as did already believe: so that speaking with tongues in Christians assemblies was altogether out of time and place; neither one nor the other was proper for it. Note, That gifts may be rightly used, it is proper to know the ends which they are intended to serve. To go about the conversion of infidels, as the apostles did, had been a vain undertaking without the gift of tongues, and the discovery of this gift; but, in an assembly of Christians already converted to the Christian faith, to make use and ostentation of this gift would be perfectly impertinent, because it would be of no advantage to the assembly; not for conviction of truth, because they had already embraced it; not for their edification, because they did not understand, and could not get benefit without understanding, what they heard.

III. The credit and reputation of their assemblies among unbelievers required them to prefer prophesying before speaking with tongues. For, 1. If, when they were all assembled for Christian worship, their ministers, or all employed in public worship, should talk unintelligible language, and infidels should drop in, they would conclude them to be mad, to be no better than a parcel of wild fanatics. Who in their right senses could carry on religious worship in such a manner? Or what sort of religion is that which leaves out sense and understanding? Would not this make Christianity ridiculous to a heathen, to hear the ministers of it pray, or preach, or perform any other religious exercise, in a language that neither he nor the assembly understood? Note, The Christian religion is a sober and reasonable thing in itself, and should not, by the ministers of it, be made to look wild or senseless. Those disgrace their religion, and vilify their own character, who do any thing that has this aspect. But, on the other hand, 2. If, instead of speaking with tongues, those who minister plainly interpret scripture, or preach, in language intelligible and proper, the great truths and rules of the gospel, a heathen or unlearned person, coming in, will probably be convinced, and become a convert to Christianity (v. 24, 25); his conscience will be touched, the secrets of his heart will be revealed to him, he will be condemned by the truth he hears, and so will be brought to confess his guilt, to pay his homage to God, and own that he is indeed among you, present in the assembly. Note, Scripture—truth, plainly and duly taught, has a marvellous aptness to awaken the conscience, and touch the heart. And is not this much more for the honour of our religion than that infidels should conclude the ministers of it a set of madmen, and their religious exercises only fits of frenzy? This last would at once cast contempt on them and their religion too. Instead of procuring applause for them, it would render them ridiculous, and involve their profession in the same censure: whereas prophesying would certainly edify the church, much better keep up their credit, and might probably convince and convert infidels who might occasionally hear them. Note, Religious exercises in Christian assemblies should be such as are fit to edify the faithful, and convince, affect, and convert unbelievers. The ministry was not instituted to make ostentation of gifts and parts, but to save souls.

Verses 26-33

In this passage the apostle reproves them for their disorder, and endeavours to correct and regulate their conduct for the future.

I. He blames them for the confusion they introduced into the assembly, by ostentation of their gifts (v. 26): *When you come together every one hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, etc.*; that is, "You are apt to confound the several parts of worship; and, while one has a psalm to utter by inspiration, another has a doctrine, or revelation;" or else, "You are apt to be

confused in the same branch of worship, many of you having psalms or doctrines to propose at the same time, without staying for one another. Is not this perfect uproar? Can this be edifying? And yet all religious exercises in public assemblies should have this view, *Let all things be done to edifying.*"

II. He corrects their faults, and lays down some regulations for their future conduct. 1. As to speaking in an unknown tongue, he orders that no more than two or three should do it at one meeting, and this not altogether, but successively, one after another. And even this was not to be done unless there were some one to interpret (v. 27, 28), some other interpreter besides himself, who spoke; for to speak in an unknown tongue what he himself was afterwards to interpret could only be for ostentation. But, if another were present who could interpret, two miraculous gifts might be exercised at once, and thereby the church edified, and the faith of the hearers confirmed at the same time. But, if there were none to interpret, he was to be silent in the church, and only exercise his gift between God and himself (v. 28), that is (as I think) in private, at home; for all who are present at public worship should join in it, and not be at their private devotions in public assemblies. Solitary devotions are out of time and place when the church has met for social worship. 2. As to prophesying he orders, (1.) That two or three only should speak at one meeting (v. 20), and this successively, not all at once; and that the other should examine and judge what he delivered, that is, discern and determine concerning it, whether it were of divine inspiration or not. There might be false prophets, mere pretenders to divine inspiration; and the true prophets were to judge of these, and discern and discover who was divinely inspired, and by such inspiration interpreted scripture, and taught the church, and who was not—what was of divine inspiration and what was not. This seems to be the meaning of this rule. For where a prophet was known to be such, and under the divine *afflatus*, he could not be judged; for this were to subject even the Holy Spirit to the judgment of men. He who was indeed inspired, and known to be so, was above all human judgment. (2.) He orders that, if any assistant prophet had a revelation, while another was prophesying, the other should hold his peace, be silent (v. 30), before the inspired assistant uttered his revelation. Indeed, it is by many understood that the former speaker should immediately hold his peace. But this seems unnatural, and not so well to agree with the context. For why must one that was speaking by inspiration be immediately silent upon another man's being inspired, and suppress what was dictated to him by the same Spirit? Indeed, he who had the new revelation might claim liberty of speech in his turn, upon producing his vouchers; but why must liberty of speech be taken from him who was speaking before, and his mouth stopped, when he was delivering the dictates of the same Spirit, and could produce the same vouchers? Would the Spirit of God move one to speak, and, before he had delivered what he had to say, move another to interrupt him, and put him to silence? This seems to me an unnatural thought. Nor is it more agreeable to the context, and the reason annexed (v. 31): *That all might prophesy, one by one*, or one after another, which could not be where any one was interrupted and silenced before he had done prophesying; but might easily be if he who was afterwards inspired forbore to deliver his new revelation till the former prophet had finished what he had to say. And, to confirm this sense, the apostle quickly adds, *The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets* (v. 33); that is, the spiritual gifts they have leave them still possessed of their reason, and capable of using their own judgment in the exercise of them. Divine inspirations are not, like the diabolical possessions of heathen priests, violent and ungovernable, and prompting them to act as if they were

beside themselves; but are sober and calm, and capable of regular conduct. The man inspired by the Spirit of God may still act the man, and observe the rules of natural order and decency in delivering his revelations. His spiritual gift is thus far subject to his pleasure, and to be managed by his discretion.

III. The apostle gives the reasons of these regulations. As, 1. That they would be for the church's benefit, their instruction and consolation. It is that *all may learn, and all may be comforted or exhorted*, that the prophets were to speak in the orderly manner the apostle advises. Note, The instruction, edification, and comfort of the church, is that for which God instituted the ministry. And surely ministers should, as much as possible, fit their ministrations to these purposes. 2. He tells them, *God is not the God of confusion, but of peace and good order*, v. 33. Therefore divine inspiration should by no means throw Christian assemblies into confusion, and break through all rules of common decency, which yet would be unavoidable if several inspired men should all at once utter what was suggested to them by the Spirit of God, and not wait to take their turns. Note, The honour of God requires that things should be managed in Christian assemblies so as not to transgress the rules of natural decency. If they are managed in a tumultuous and confused manner, what a notion must this give of the God who is worshipped, to considerate observers! Does it look as if he were the God of peace and order, and an enemy to confusion? Things should be managed so in divine worship that no unlovely nor dishonourable notion of God should be formed in the minds of observers. 3. He adds that things were thus orderly managed in all the other churches: *As in all the churches of the saints* (v. 33); they kept to these rules in the exercise of their spiritual gifts, which was a manifest proof that the church of Corinth might observe the same regulations. And it would be perfectly scandalous for them, who exceeded most churches in spiritual gifts, to be more disorderly than any in the exercise of them. Note, Though other churches are not to be our rule, yet the regard they pay to the rules of natural decency and order should restrain us from breaking these rules. Thus far they may be proposed as examples, and it is a shame not to follow them.

Verses 34-35

Here the apostle, 1. Enjoins silence on their women in public assemblies, and to such a degree that they must not ask questions for their own information in the church, but ask their husbands at home. *They are to learn in silence with all subjection; but*, says the apostle, *I suffer them not to teach*, 1 Tim. 2:11, 12. There is indeed an intimation (ch. 11:5) as if the women sometimes did pray and prophecy in their assemblies, which the apostle, in that passage, does not simply condemn, but the manner of performance, that is, praying or prophesying with the head uncovered, which, in that age and country, was throwing off the distinction of sexes, and setting themselves on a level with the men. But here he seems to forbid all public performances of theirs. They are not permitted to speak (v. 34) in the church, neither in praying nor prophesying. The connection seems plainly to include the latter, in the limited sense in which it is taken in this chapter, namely, for preaching, or interpreting scripture by inspiration. And, indeed, for a woman to prophesy in this sense were to teach, which does not so well befit her state of subjection. A teacher of others has in that respect a superiority over them, which is not allowed the woman over the man, nor must she therefore be allowed to teach in a congregation: *I suffer them not to teach*. But praying, and uttering hymns inspired, were not teaching. And seeing there were women who had spiritual gifts of this sort in that age of the church (see Acts 22:9),

and might be under this impulse in the assembly, must they altogether suppress it? Or why should they have this gift, if it must never be publicly exercised? For these reasons, some think that these general prohibitions are only to be understood in common cases; but that upon extraordinary occasions, when women were under a divine *afflatus*, and known to be so, they might have liberty of speech. They were not ordinarily to teach, nor so much as to debate and ask questions in the church, but learn in silence there; and, if difficulties occurred, *ask their own husbands at home*. Note, As it is the woman's duty to learn in subjection, it is the man's duty to keep up his superiority, by being able to instruct her; if it be her duty to ask her husband at home, it is his concern and duty to endeavour at least to be able to answer her enquiries; if it be a shame for her to speak in the church, where she should be silent, it is a shame for him to be silent when he should speak, and not be able to give an answer, when she asks him at home. 2. We have here the reason of this injunction: It is God's law and commandment that they should be under obedience (v. 34); they are placed in subordination to the man, and it is a shame for them to do any thing that looks like an affectation of changing ranks, which speaking in public seemed to imply, at least in that age, and among that people, as would public teaching much more: so that the apostle concludes it was a shame for women to speak in the church, in the assembly. Shame is the mind's uneasy reflection on having done an indecent thing. And what more indecent than for a woman to quit her rank, renounce the subordination of her sex, or do what in common account had such aspect and appearance? Note, Our spirit and conduct should be suitable to our rank. The natural distinctions God has made, we should observe. Those he has placed in subjection to others should not set themselves on a level, nor affect or assume superiority. The woman was made subject to the man, and she should keep her station and be content with it. For this reason women must be silent in the churches, not set up for teachers; for this is setting up for superiority over the man.

Verses 36-40

In these verses the apostle closes his argument, 1. With a just rebuke of the Corinthians for their extravagant pride and self-conceit: they so managed with their spiritual gifts as no church did like them; they behaved in a manner by themselves, and would not easily endure control nor regulation. Now, says the apostle, to beat down this arrogant humour, "*Came the gospel out from you? Or came it to you only?*" v. 36. Did Christianity come out of Corinth? was its original among you? Or, if not, is it now limited and confined to you? are you the only church favoured with divine revelations, that you will depart from the decent usages of all other churches, and, to make ostentation of your spiritual gifts, bring confusion into Christian assemblies? How intolerably assuming is this behaviour! Pray bethink yourselves." When it was needful or proper the apostle could rebuke with all authority; and surely his rebukes, if ever, were proper here. Note, Those must be reprov'd and humbled whose spiritual pride and self-conceit throw Christian churches and assemblies into confusion, though such men will hardly bear even the rebukes of an apostle. 2. He lets them know that what he said to them was the command of God; nor durst any true prophet, any one really inspired, deny it (v. 37): "*If any man think himself a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge, etc., nay, let him be tried by this very rule. If he will not own what I deliver on this head to be the will of Christ, he himself never had the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit of Christ can never contradict itself; if it speak in me, and in them, it must speak the same things in both. If their revelations contradict mine, they do not come from the same Spirit; either I or they must be false prophets. By this*

therefore you may know them. If they say that my directions in this matter are no divine commandments, you may depend upon it they are not divinely inspired. But if any continue after all, through prejudice or obstinacy, uncertain or ignorant whether they or I speak by the Spirit of God, they must be left under the power of this ignorance. If their pretences to inspiration can stand in competition with the apostolical character and powers which I have, I have lost all my authority and influence; and the persons who allow of this competition against me are out of the reach of conviction, and must be left to themselves." Note, It is just with God to leave those to the blindness of their own minds who wilfully shut out the light. Those who would be ignorant in so plain a case were justly left under the power of their mistake. 3. He sums up all in two general advices:—(1.) That though they should not despise the gift of tongues, nor altogether disuse it, under the regulations mentioned, yet they should prefer prophesying. This is indeed the scope of the whole argument. It was to be preferred to the other, because it was the more useful gift. (2.) He charges them to let all things be done decently and in order (v. 40), that is, that they should avoid every thing that was manifestly indecent and disorderly. Not that they should hence take occasion to bring into the Christian church and worship any thing that a vain mind might think ornamental to it, or that would help to set it off. Such indecencies and disorders as he had remarked upon were especially to be shunned. They must do nothing that was manifestly childish (v. 20), or that would give occasion to say they were mad (v. 23), nor must they act so as to breed confusion, v. 33. This would be utterly indecent; it would make a tumult and mob of a Christian assembly. But they were to do things in order; they were to speak one after another, and not all at once; take their turns, and not interrupt one another. To do otherwise was to destroy the end of a Christians ministry, and all assemblies for Christian worship. Note, Manifest indecencies and disorders are to be carefully kept out of all Christian churches, and every part of divine worship. They should have nothing in them that is childish, absurd, ridiculous, wild, or tumultuous; but all parts of divine worship should be carried on in a manly, grave, rational, composed, and orderly manner. God is not to be dishonoured, nor his worship disgraced, by our unbecoming and disorderly performance of it and attendance at it.

Chapter 15

In this chapter the apostle treats of that great article of Christianity—the resurrection of the dead. I. He establishes the certainty of our Saviour's resurrection (v. 1–11). II. He, from this truth, sets himself to refute those who said, There is no resurrection of the dead (v. 12–19). III. From our Saviour's resurrection he establishes the resurrection of the dead and confirms the Corinthians in the belief of it by some other considerations (v. 20–34). IV. He answers an objection against this truth, and takes occasion thence to show what a vast change will be made in the bodies of believers at the resurrection (v. 35–50). V. He informs us what a change will be made in those who shall be living at the sound of the last trumpet, and the complete conquest the just shall then obtain over death and the grave (v. 51–57). And, VI. He sums up the argument with a very serious exhortation to Christians, to be resolved and diligent in their Lord's service, because they know they shall be so gloriously rewarded by him (v. 58).

Verses 1-11

It is the apostle's business in this chapter to assert and establish the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which some of the Corinthians flatly denied, v. 12. Whether they turned this doctrine into allegory, as did Hymeneus and Philetus, by saying it was already past (2 Tim. 2:17, 18), and several of the ancient heretics, by making it mean no more than a changing of their course of life; or whether they rejected it as absurd, upon principles of reason and science; it seems they denied it in the proper sense. And they disowned a future state of recompences, by denying the resurrection of the dead. Now that heathens and infidels should deny this truth does not seem so strange; but that Christians, who had their religion by revelation, should deny a truth so plainly discovered is surprising, especially when it is a truth of such importance. It was time for the apostle to confirm them in this truth, when the staggering of their faith in this point was likely to shake their Christianity; and they were yet in great danger of having their faith staggered. He begins with an epitome or summary of the gospel, what he had preached among them, namely, the death and resurrection of Christ. Upon this foundation the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is built. Note, Divine truths appear with greatest evidence when they are looked upon in their mutual connection. The foundation may be strengthened, that the superstructure may be secured. Now concerning the gospel observe,

I. What a stress he lays upon it (v. 1, 2): *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached to you.* 1. It was what he constantly preached. His word was not yea and nay: he always preached the same gospel, and taught the same truth. He could appeal to his hearers for this. Truth is in its own nature invariable; and the infallible teachers of divine truth could never be at variance with themselves or one another. The doctrine which Paul had heretofore taught, he still taught. 2. It was what they had received; they had been convinced of the faith, believed it in their hearts, or at least made profession of doing so with their mouths. It was no strange doctrine. It was that very gospel in which, or by which, they had hitherto stood, and must continue to stand. If they gave up this truth, they left themselves no ground to stand upon, no footing in religion. Note, The doctrine of Christ's death and resurrection is at the foundation of Christianity. Remove this foundation, and the whole fabric falls, all our hopes for eternity sink at once. And it is by holding this truth firmly that Christians are made to stand in a day of

trial, and kept faithful to God. 3. It was that alone by which they could hope for salvation (v. 2), for there is *no salvation in any other name; no name given under heaven by which we may be saved, but by the name of Christ*. And there is no salvation in his name, but upon supposition of his death and resurrection. These are the saving truths of our holy religion. The crucifixion of our Redeemer and his conquest over death are the very source of our spiritual life and hopes. Now concerning these saving truths observe, (1.) They must be retained in mind, they must be held fast (so the word is translated, Heb. 10:23): *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith*. Note, The saving truths of the gospel must be fixed in our mind, revolved much in our thoughts, and maintained and held fast to the end, if we would be saved. They will not save us, if we do not attend to them, and yield to their power, and continue to do so to the end. *He only that endureth to the end shall be saved*, Mt. 10:22. (2.) We believe in vain, unless we continue and persevere in the faith of the gospel. We shall be never the better for a temporary faith; nay, we shall aggravate our guilt by relapsing into infidelity. And in vain is it to profess Christianity, or our faith in Christ, if we deny the resurrection; for this must imply and involve the denial of his resurrection; and, take away this, you make nothing of Christianity, you leave nothing for faith or hope to fix upon.

II. Observe what this gospel is, on which the apostle lays such stress. It was that doctrine which he had received, and delivered to them, *en proutois*—*among the first, the principal*. It was a doctrine of the first rank, a most necessary truth, That Christ died for our sins, and was buried, and rose again: or, in other words, that *he was delivered for our offences and rose again for our justification* (Rom. 4:25), that he was offered in sacrifice for our sins, and rose again, to show that he had procured forgiveness for them, and was accepted of God in this offering. Note, Christ's death and resurrection are the very sum and substance of evangelical truth. Hence we derive our spiritual life now, and here we must find our hopes of everlasting life hereafter.

III. Observe how this truth is confirmed,

1. By Old-Testament predictions. He died for our sins, according to the scriptures; he was buried, and rose from the dead, according to the scriptures, according to the scripture-prophecies, and scripture-types. Such prophecies as Ps. 16:10; Isa. 53:4-6; Dan. 9:26, 27; Hos. 6:2. Such scripture-types as Jonah (Mt. 12:4), as Isaac, who is expressly said by the apostle to have been *received from the dead in a figure*, Heb. 11:19. Note, It is a great confirmation of our faith of the gospel to see how it corresponds with ancient types and prophecies.

2. By the testimony of many eye-witnesses, who saw Christ after he had risen from the dead. He reckons up five several appearances, beside that to himself. *He was seen of Cephas, or Peter, then of the twelve*, called so, though Judas was no longer among them, because this was their usual number; then he was *seen of above five hundred brethren at once*, many of whom were living when the apostle wrote this epistle, though some had fallen asleep. This was in Galilee, Mt. 28:10. After that, he was seen of James singly, and then by all the apostles when he was taken up into heaven. This was on mount Olivet, Lu. 24:50. Compare Acts 1:2, 5-7. Note, How uncontrollably evident was Christ's resurrection from the dead, when so many eyes saw him at so many different times alive, and when he indulged the weakness of one disciple so far as to let him handle him, to put his resurrection out of doubt! And what reason have we to believe those who were so steady in maintaining this truth, though

they hazarded all that was dear to them in this world, by endeavouring to assert and propagate it! Even Paul himself was last of all favoured with the sight of him. It was one of the peculiar offices of an apostle to be a witness of our Saviour's resurrection (Lu. 24:48); and, when Paul was called to the apostolical office, he was made an evidence of this sort; the Lord Jesus appeared to him by the way to Damascus, Acts 9:17. Having mentioned this favour, Paul takes occasion from it to make a humble digression concerning himself. He was highly favoured of God, but he always endeavoured to keep up a mean opinion of himself, and to express it. So he does here, by observing, (1.) That he was *one born out of due time* (v. 8), an abortive, *ektromma*, a child dead born, and out of time. Paul resembled such a birth, in the suddenness of his new birth, in that he was not matured for the apostolic function, as the others were, who had personal converse with our Lord. He was called to the office when such conversation was not to be had, he was out of time for it. He had not known nor followed the Lord, nor been formed in his family, as the others were, for this high and honourable function. This was in Paul's account a very humbling circumstance. (2.) By owning himself inferior to the other apostles: *Not meet to be called an apostle*. The least, because the last of them; called latest to the office, and not worthy to be called an apostle, to have either the office or the title, because he had been *a persecutor of the church of God*, v. 9. Indeed, he tells us elsewhere that he was *not a whit behind the very chief apostles* (2 Co. 11:5)—for gifts, graces, service, and sufferings, inferior to none of them. Yet some circumstances in his case made him think more meanly of himself than of any of them. Note, A humble spirit, in the midst of high attainments, is a great ornament to any man; it sets his good qualities off to much greater advantage. What kept Paul low in an especial manner was the remembrance of his former wickedness, his raging and destructive zeal against Christ and his members. Note, How easily God can bring a good out of the greatest evil! When sinners are by divine grace turned into saints, he makes the remembrance of their former sins very serviceable, to make them humble, and diligent, and faithful. (3.) By ascribing all that was valuable in him to divine grace: *But by the grace of God I am what I am*, v. 10. It is God's prerogative to say, *I am that I am*; it is our privilege to be able to say, "By God's grace we are what we are." We are nothing but what God makes us, nothing in religion but what his grace makes us. All that is good in us is a stream from this fountain. Paul was sensible of this, and kept humble and thankful by this conviction; so should we. Nay, though he was conscious of his own diligence, and zeal, and service, so that he could say of himself, *the grace of God was not given him in vain, but he laboured more abundantly than they all*: he thought himself so much more the debtor to divine grace. *Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me*. Note, Those who have the grace of God bestowed on them should take care that it be not in vain. They should cherish, and exercise, and exert, this heavenly principle. So did Paul, and therefore laboured with so much heart and so much success. And yet the more he laboured, and the more good he did, the more humble he was in his opinion of himself, and the more disposed to own and magnify the favour of God towards him, his free and unmerited favour. Note, A humble spirit will be very apt to own and magnify the grace of God. A humble spirit is commonly a gracious one. Where pride is subdued there it is reasonable to believe grace reigns.

After this digression, the apostle returns to his argument, and tells them (v. 11) that he not only preached the same gospel himself at all times, and in all places, but that all the apostles preached the same: *Whether it were they or I, so we preached,*

and so you believed. Whether Peter, or Paul, or any other apostle, had converted them to Christianity, all maintained the same truth, told the same story, preached the same doctrine, and confirmed it by the same evidence. All agreed in this that Jesus Christ, and him crucified and slain, and then rising from the dead, was the very sum and substance of Christianity; and this all true Christians believe. All the apostles agreed in this testimony; all Christians agree in the belief of it. By this faith they live. In this faith they die.

Verses 12-19

Having confirmed the truth of our Saviour's resurrection, the apostle goes on to refute those among the Corinthians who said there would be none: *If Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?* v. 12. It seems from this passage, and the course of the argument, there were some among the Corinthians who thought the resurrection an impossibility. This was a common sentiment among the heathens. But against this the apostle produces an incontestable fact, namely, the resurrection of Christ; and he goes on to argue against them from the absurdities that must follow from their principle. As,

I. *If there be (can be) no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not risen* (v. 13); and again, *"If the dead rise not, cannot be raised or recovered to life, then is Christ not raised,* v. 16. And yet it was foretold in ancient prophecies that he should rise; and it has been proved by multitudes of eye-witnesses that he had risen. And will you say, will any among you dare to say, that is not, cannot be, which God long ago said should be, and which is now undoubted matter of fact?"

II. It would follow hereupon that the preaching and faith of the gospel would be vain: *If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith vain,* v. 14. This supposition admitted, would destroy the principal evidence of Christianity; and so, 1. Make preaching vain. *"We apostles should be found false witnesses of God; we pretend to be God's witnesses for truth, and to work miracles by his power in confirmation of it, and are all the while deceivers, liars for God, if in his name, and by power received from him, we go forth, and publish and assert a thing false in fact, and impossible to be true. And does not this make us the vainest men in the world, and our office and ministry the vainest and most useless thing in the world? What end could we propose to ourselves in undertaking this hard and hazardous service, if we knew our religion stood on no better foundation, nay, if we were not well assured of the contrary? What should we preach for? Would not our labour be wholly in vain? We can have no very favourable expectations in this life; and we could have none beyond it. If Christ be not raised, the gospel is a jest; it is chaff and emptiness."* 2. This supposition would make the faith of Christians vain, as well as the labours of ministers: *If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins* (v. 17), yet under the guilt and condemnation of sin, because it is through his death and sacrifice for sin alone that forgiveness is to be had. *We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,* Eph. 1:7. No remission of sins is to be had but through the shedding of his blood. And had his blood been shed, and his life taken away, without ever being restored, what evidence could we have had that through him we should have justification and eternal life? Had he remained under the power of death, how could he have delivered us from its power? And how vain a thing is faith in him, upon this supposition! He must rise for our justification who was delivered for our sins, or in vain we look for any such benefit by him. There had been no justification nor salvation if Christ had not risen.

And must not faith in Christ be vain, and of no signification, if he be still among the dead?

III. Another absurdity following from this supposition is that *those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished*. if there be no resurrection, they cannot rise, and therefore are lost, even those who have died in the Christian faith, and for it. It is plain from this that those among the Corinthians who denied the resurrection meant thereby a state of future retribution, and not merely the revival of the flesh; they took death to be the destruction and extinction of the man, and not merely of the bodily life; for otherwise the apostle could not infer the utter loss of those who slept in Jesus, from the supposition that they would never rise more or that they had no hopes in Christ after life; for they might have hope of happiness for their minds if these survived their bodies, and this would prevent the limiting of their hopes in Christ to this life only. "Upon supposition there is no resurrection in your sense, no after-state and life, then dead Christians are quite lost. How vain a thing were our faith and religion upon this supposition!" And this,

IV. Would infer that Christ's ministers and servants were *of all men most miserable*, as having *hope in him in this life only* (v. 19), which is another absurdity that would follow from asserting no resurrection. Their condition who hope in Christ would be worse than that of other men. *Who hope in Christ*. Note, All who believe in Christ have hope in him; all who believe in him as a Redeemer hope for redemption and salvation by him; but if there be no resurrection, or state of future recompence (which was intended by those who denied the resurrection at Corinth), their hope in him must be limited to this life: and, if all their hopes in Christ lie within the compass of this life, they are in a much worse condition than the rest of mankind, especially at that time, and under those circumstances, in which the apostles wrote; for then they had no countenance nor protection from the rulers of the world, but were hated and persecuted by all men. Preachers and private Christians therefore had a hard lot if in this life only they had hope in Christ. Better be any thing than a Christian upon these terms; for in this world they are hated, and hunted, and abused, stripped of all worldly comforts and exposed to all manner of sufferings: they fare much harder than other men in this life, and yet have no further nor better hopes. And is it not absurd for one who believes in Christ to admit a principle that involves so absurd an inference? Can that man have faith in Christ who can believe concerning him that he will leave his faithful servants, whether ministers or others, in a worse state than his enemies? Note, It were a gross absurdity in a Christian to admit the supposition of no resurrection or future state. It would leave no hope beyond this world, and would frequently make his condition the worst in the world. Indeed, the Christian is by his religion crucified to this world, and taught to live upon the hope of another. Carnal pleasures are insipid to him in a great degree; and spiritual and heavenly pleasures are those which he affects and pants after. How sad is his case indeed, if he must be dead to worldly pleasures and yet never hope for any better!

Verses 20-34

In this passage the apostle establishes the truth of the resurrection of the dead, the holy dead, the dead in Christ,

I. On the resurrection of Christ. 1. Because he is indeed *the first-fruits of those that slept*, v. 20. He has truly risen himself, and he has risen in this very quality and character, as the first-fruits of those who sleep in him. As he has assuredly risen, so in his resurrection there is as much an earnest given that the dead in him shall rise as there was that the Jewish harvest in general

should be accepted and blessed by the offering and acceptance of the first-fruits. The whole lump was made holy by the consecration of the first-fruits (Rom. 11:16), and the whole body of Christ, all that are by faith united to him, are by his resurrection assured of their own. As he has risen, they shall rise; just as the lump is holy because the first fruits are so. He has not risen merely for himself, but as head of the body, the church; and *those that sleep in him God will bring with him*, 1 Th. 4:14. Note, Christ's resurrection is a pledge and earnest of ours, if we are true believers in him; because he has risen, we shall rise. We are a part of the consecrated lump, and shall partake of the acceptance and favour vouchsafed the first-fruits. This is the first argument used by the apostle in confirmation of the truth; and it is, 2. Illustrated by a parallel between the first and second Adam. For, since by man came death, it was every way proper that by man should come deliverance from it, or, which is all one, a resurrection, v. 21. And so, *as in Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive*; as through the sin of the first Adam all men became mortal, because all derived from him the same sinful nature, so through the merit and resurrection of Christ shall all who are made to partake of the Spirit, and the spiritual nature, revive, and become immortal. All who die through the sin of Adam; all who are raised, in the sense of the apostle, rise through the merit and power of Christ. But the meaning is not that, as all men died in Adam, so all men, without exception, shall be made alive in Christ; for the scope of the apostle's argument restrains the general meaning. Christ rose as the first-fruits; therefore *those that are Christ's* (v. 23) shall rise too. Hence it will not follow that all men without exception shall rise too; but it will fitly follow that all who thus rise, rise in virtue of Christ's resurrection, and so that their revival is owing to the man Christ Jesus, as the mortality of all mankind was owing to the first man; and so, as by man came death, by man came deliverance. Thus it seemed fit to the divine wisdom that, as the first Adam ruined his posterity by sin, the second Adam should raise his seed to a glorious immortality. 3. Before he leaves the argument he states that there will be an order observed in their resurrection. What that precisely will be we are nowhere told, but in the general only here that there will be order observed. Possibly those may rise first who have held the highest rank, and done the most eminent service, or suffered the most grievous evils, or cruel deaths, for Christ's sake. It is only here said that the first-fruits are supposed to rise first, and afterwards all who are Christ's, when he shall come again. Not that Christ's resurrection must in fact go before the resurrection of any of his, but it must be laid as the foundation: as it was not necessary that those who lived remote from Jerusalem must go thither and offer the first-fruits before they could account the lump holy, yet they must be set apart for this purpose, till they could be offered, which might be done at any time from pentecost till the feast of dedication. See Bishop Patrick on Num. 24:2. The offering of the first-fruits was what made the lump holy; and the lump was made holy by this offering, though it was not made before the harvest was gathered in, so it were set apart for that end, and duly offered afterwards. So Christ's resurrection must, in order of nature, precede that of his saints, though some of these might rise in order of time before him. It is because he has risen that they rise. Note, Those that are Christ's must rise, because of their relation to him.

II. He argues from the continuance of the mediatorial kingdom till all Christ's enemies are destroyed, the last of which is death, v. 24–26. He has risen, and, upon his resurrection, was invested with sovereign empire, *had all power in heaven and earth put into his hands* (Mt. 28:18), *had a name given him above every name, that every knee might bow to him, and every tongue*

confess him Lord. Phil. 2:9–11. And the administration of this kingdom must continue in his hands till all opposing *power, and rule, and authority, be put down* (v. 24), *till all enemies are put under his feet* (v. 25), and *till the last enemy is destroyed*, which is death, v. 26.

1. This argument implies in it all these particulars:—(1.) That our Saviour rose from the dead to have all power put into his hands, and have and administer a kingdom, as Mediator: *For this end he died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living*, Rom. 14:9. (2.) That this mediatorial kingdom is to have an end, at least as far as it is concerned in bringing his people safely to glory, and subduing all his and their enemies: *Then cometh the end*, v. 24. (3.) That it is not to have an end till all opposing power be put down, and all enemies brought to his feet, v. 24, 25. (4.) That, among other enemies, death must be destroyed (v. 26) or abolished; its powers over its members must be disannulled. Thus far the apostle is express; but he leaves us to make the inference that therefore the saints must rise, else death and the grave would have power over them, nor would our Saviour's kingly power prevail against the last enemy of his people and annul its power. When saints shall live again, and die no more, then, and not till then, will death be abolished, which must be brought about before our Saviour's mediatorial kingdom is delivered up, which yet must be in due time. The saints therefore shall live again and die no more. This is the scope of the argument; but,

2. The apostle drops several hints in the course of it which it will be proper to notice: as, (1.) That our Saviour, as man and mediator between God and man, has a delegated royalty, a kingdom given: *All things are put under him, he excepted that did put all things under him*, v. 27. As man, all his authority must be delegated. And, though his mediation supposes his divine nature, yet as Mediator he does not so explicitly sustain the character of God, but a middle person between God and man, partaking of both natures, human and divine, as he was to reconcile both parties, God and man, and receiving commission and authority from God the Father to act in this office. The Father appears, in this whole dispensation, in the majesty and with the authority of God: the Son, made man, appears as the minister of the Father, though he is God as well as the Father. Nor is this passage to be understood of the eternal dominion over all his creatures which belongs to him as God, but of a kingdom committed to him as Mediator and God-man, and that chiefly after his resurrection, when, having overcome, he sat down with his Father on his throne, Rev. 3:21. Then was the prediction verified, *I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion* (Ps. 2:6), placed him on his throne. This is meant by the phrase so frequent in the writings of the New Testament, of *sitting at the right hand of God* (Mk. 16:19; Rom. 8:34; Col. 3:1 etc.), *on the right hand of power* (Mk. 14:62; Lu. 22:69), *on the right hand of the throne of God* (Heb. 12:2), *on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens*, Heb. 8:1. Sitting down in this seat is taking upon him the exercise of his mediatorial power and royalty, which was done upon his ascension into heaven, Mk. 16:19. And it is spoken of in scripture as a recompence made him for his deep humiliation and self-abasement, in becoming man, and dying for man the accursed death of the cross, Phil. 2:6–12. Upon his ascension, he was made head over all things to the church, had power given him to govern and protect it against all its enemies, and in the end destroy them and complete the salvation of all that believe in him. This is not a power appertaining to Godhead as such; it is not original and unlimited power, but power given and limited to special purposes. And though he who has it is God, yet, inasmuch as he is somewhat else

besides God, and in this whole dispensation acts not as God, but as Mediator, not as the offended Majesty, but as one interposing in favour of his offending creatures, and this by virtue of his consent and commission who acts and appears always in that character, he may properly be said to have this power given him; he may reign as God, with power unlimited, and yet may reign as Mediator, with a power delegated, and limited to these particular purposes. (2.) That this delegated royalty must at length *be delivered up to the Father*, from whom it was received (v. 24); for it is a power received for particular ends and purposes, a power to govern and protect his church till all the members of it be gathered in, and the enemies of it for ever subdued and destroyed (v. 25, 26), and when these ends shall be obtained the power and authority will not need to be continued. The Redeemer must reign till his enemies be destroyed, and the salvation of his church and people accomplished; and, when this end is attained, then will he deliver up the power which he had only for this purpose, though he may continue to reign over his glorified church and body in heaven; and in this sense it may notwithstanding be said that *he shall reign for ever and ever* (Rev. 11:15), *that he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end* (Lu. 1:33), *that his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away*, Dan. 7:14. See also Mich. 4:7. (3.) The Redeemer shall certainly reign till the last enemy of his people be destroyed, till death itself be abolished, till his saints revive and recover perfect life, never to be in fear and danger of dying any more. He shall have all power in heaven and earth till then—*he who loved us, and gave himself for us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood*—he who is so nearly related to us, and so much concerned for us. What support should this be to his saints in every hour of distress and temptation! *He is alive who was dead, and liveth for ever*, and doth reign, and will continue to reign, till the redemption of his people be completed, and the utter ruin of their enemies effected. (4.) When this is done, *and all things are put under his feet, then shall the Son become subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all*, v. 28. The meaning of this I take to be that then the man Christ Jesus, who hath appeared in so much majesty during the whole administration of his kingdom, shall appear upon giving it up to be a subject of the Father. Things are in scripture many times said *to be* when they are *manifested* and *made to appear*; and this delivering up of the kingdom will make it manifest that he who appeared in the majesty of the sovereign king was, during this administration, a subject of God. The glorified humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all the dignity and power conferred on it, was no more than a glorious creature. This will appear when the kingdom shall be delivered up; and it will appear to the divine glory, that God may be all in all, that the accomplishment of our salvation may appear altogether divine, and God alone may have the honour of it. Note, Though the human nature must be employed in the work of our redemption, yet God was all in all in it. *It was the Lord's doing and should be marvellous in our eyes*.

III. He argues for the resurrection, from the case of those who were baptized for the dead (v. 29): *What shall those do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they baptized for the dead? What shall they do if the dead rise not? What have they done? How vain a thing hath their baptism been! Must they stand by it, or renounce it? why are they baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not? hyper τῶν νεκρῶν*. But what is this baptism for the dead? It is necessary to be known, that the apostle's argument may be understood; whether it be only *argumentum ad hominem*, or *ad rem*; that is, whether it conclude for the thing in dispute universally, or only against the particular persons who were baptized for the dead. But who shall

interpret this very obscure passage, which, though it consists of no more than three words, besides the articles, has had more than three times three senses put on it by interpreters? It is not agreed what is meant by baptism, whether it is to be taken in a proper or figurative sense, and, if in a proper sense, whether it is to be understood or Christian baptism properly so called, or some other ablution. And as little is it agreed who are the dead, or in what sense the preposition *hyper* is to be taken. Some understand the dead of our Saviour himself; *vide* Whitby *in loc.* Why are persons baptized in the name of a dead Saviour, a Saviour who remains among the dead, if the dead rise not? But it is, I believe, and instance perfectly singular for *hoi nekroi* to mean no more than one dead person; it is a signification which the words have nowhere else. And the *hoi baptizomenoi* (*the baptized*) seem plainly to mean some particular persons, not Christians in general, which yet must be the signification if the *hoi nekroi* (*the dead*) be understood of our Saviour. Some understand the passage of the martyrs: Why do they suffer martyrdom for their religion? This is sometimes called the baptism of blood by ancients, and, by our Saviour himself, baptism indefinitely, Mt. 20:22; Lu. 12:50. But in what sense can those who die martyrs for their religion be said to be baptized (that is, die martyrs) for the dead? Some understand it of a custom that was observed, as some of the ancients tell us, among many who professed the Christian name in the first ages, of baptizing some in the name and stead of catechumens dying without baptism. But this savoured of such superstition that, if the custom had prevailed in the church so soon, the apostle would hardly have mentioned it without signifying a dislike of it. Some understand it of baptizing over the dead, which was a custom, they tell us, that early obtained; and this to testify their hope of the resurrection. This sense is pertinent to the apostle's argument, but it appears not that any such practice was in use in the apostle's time. Others understand it of those who have been baptized for the sake, or on occasion, of the martyrs, that is, the constancy with which they died for their religion. Some were doubtless converted to Christianity by observing this: and it would have been a vain thing for persons to have become Christians upon this motive, if the martyrs, by losing their lives for religion, became utterly extinct, and were to live no more. But the church at Corinth had not, in all probability, suffered much persecution at this time, or seem many instances of martyrdom among them, nor had many converts been made by the constancy and firmness which the martyrs discovered. Not to observe that *hoi nekroi* seems to be too general an expression to mean only the martyred dead. It is as easy an explication of the phrase as any I have met with, and as pertinent to the argument, to suppose the *hoi nekroi* to mean some among the Corinthians, who had been taken off by the hand of God. We read that *many were sickly among them, and many slept* (ch. 11:30), because of their disorderly behaviour at the Lord's table. These executions might terrify some into Christianity; as the miraculous earthquake did the jailer, Acts 16:29, 30, etc. Persons baptized on such an occasion might be properly said to be baptized for the dead, that is, on their account. And the *hoi baptizomenoi* (*the baptized*) and the *hoi nekroi* (*the dead*) answer to one another; and upon this supposition the Corinthians could not mistake the apostle's meaning. "Now," says he, "what shall they do, and why were they baptized, if the dead rise not? You have a general persuasion that these men have done right, and acted wisely, and as they ought, on this occasion; but why, if the dead rise not, seeing they may perhaps hasten their death, by provoking a jealous God, and have no hopes beyond it?" But whether this be the meaning, or whatever else be, doubtless the apostle's argument was good and intelligible to the Corinthians. And his next is as plain to us.

IV. He argues from the absurdity of his own conduct and that of other Christians upon this supposition,

1. It would be a foolish thing for them to run so many hazards (v. 30): "*Why stand we in jeopardy every hour? Why do we expose ourselves to continual peril—we Christians, especially we apostles?*" Every one knows that it was dangerous being a Christian, and much more a preacher and an apostle, at that time. "Now," says the apostle, "what fools are we to run these hazards, if we have no better hopes beyond death, if when we die we die wholly, and revive no more!" Note, Christianity were a foolish profession if it proposed no hopes beyond this life, at least in such hazardous times as attended the first profession of it; it required men to risk all the blessings and comforts of this life, and to face and endure all the evils of it, without any future prospects. And is this a character of his religion fit for a Christian to endure? And must he not fix this character on it if he give up his future hopes, and deny the resurrection of the dead? This argument the apostle brings home to himself: "*I protest,*" says he, "*by your rejoicing in Jesus Christ, by all the comforts of Christianity, and all the peculiar succours and supports of our holy faith, that I die daily,*" v. 31. He was in continual danger of death, and carried his life, as we say, in his hand. And why should he thus expose himself, if he had no hopes after life? To live in daily view and expectation of death, and yet have no prospect beyond it, must be very heartless and uncomfortable, and his case, upon this account, a very melancholy one. He had need be very well assured of the resurrection of the dead, or he was guilty of extreme weakness, in hazarding all that was dear to him in this world, and his life into the bargain. He had encountered very great difficulties and fierce enemies; he had *fought with beasts at Ephesus* (v. 32), and was in danger of being pulled to pieces by an enraged multitude, stirred up by Demetrius and the other craftsmen (Acts 19:24, etc.), though some understand this literally of Paul's being exposed to fight with wild beasts in the amphitheatre, at a Roman show in that city. And Nicephorus tells a formal story to this purport, and of the miraculous complaisance of the lions to him when they came near him. But so remarkable a trial and circumstance of his life, methinks, would not have been passed over by Luke, and much less by himself, when he gives us so large and particular a detail of his sufferings, 2 Co. 11:24, *ad fin.* When he mentioned that he was five times scourged of the Jews, thrice beaten with rods, once stoned, thrice shipwrecked, it is strange that he should not have said that he was once exposed to fight with the beasts. I take it, therefore, that this fighting with beasts is a figurative expression, that the beasts intended were men of a fierce and ferine disposition, and that this refers to the passage above cited. "Now," says he, "what advantage have I from such contests, if the dead rise not? Why should I die daily, expose myself daily to the danger of dying by violent hands, if the dead rise not? And if *post mortem nihil—if I am to perish by death*, and expect nothing after it, could any thing be more weak?" Was Paul so senseless? Had he given the Corinthians any ground to entertain such a thought of him? If he had not been well assured that death would have been to his advantage, would he, in this stupid manner, have thrown away his life? Could any thing but the sure hopes of a better life after death have extinguished the love of life in him to this degree? "*What advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? What can I propose to myself?*" Note, It is very lawful and fit for a Christian to propose advantage to himself by his fidelity to God. Thus did Paul. Thus did our blessed Lord himself, Heb. 12:2. And thus we are bidden to do after his example, and have our fruit to holiness, that our end may be everlasting life. This is the very end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls (1 Pt. 1:9), not only what it will issue in, but what we should aim at.

2. It would be a much wiser thing to take the comforts of this life: *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die* (v. 32); let us turn epicures. Thus this sentence means in the prophet, Isa. 22:13. Let us even live like beasts, if we must die like them. This would be a wiser course, if there were no resurrection, no after-life or state, than to abandon all the pleasures of life, and offer and expose ourselves to all the miseries of life, and live in continual peril of perishing by savage rage and cruelty. This passage also plainly implies, as I have hinted above, that those who denied the resurrection among the Corinthians were perfect Sadducees, of whose principles we have this account in the holy writings, that they say, *There is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit* (Acts 23:8), that is, "Man is all body, there is nothing in him to survive the body, nor will that, when once he is dead, ever revive again." Such Sadducees were the men against whom the apostle argued; otherwise his arguments had no force in them; for, though the body should never revive, yet, as long as the mind survived it, he might have much advantage from all the hazards he ran for Christ's sake. Nay, it is certain that the mind is to be the principal seat and subject of the heavenly glory and happiness. But, if there were no hopes after death, would not every wise man prefer an easy comfortable life before such a wretched one as the apostle led; nay, and endeavour to enjoy the comforts of life as fast as possible, because the continuance of it is short? Note, Nothing but the hopes of better things hereafter can enable a man to forego all the comforts and pleasures here, and embrace poverty, contempt, misery, and death. Thus did the apostles and primitive Christians; but how wretched was their case, and how foolish their conduct, if they deceived themselves, and abused the world with vain and false hopes!

V. The apostle closes his argument with a caution, exhortation, and reproof. 1. A caution against the dangerous conversation of bad men, men of loose lives and principles: *Be not deceived*, says he; *evil communications corrupt good manners*, v. 33. Possibly, some of those who said that there was no resurrection of the dead were men of loose lives, and endeavoured to countenance their vicious practices by so corrupt a principle; and had that speech often in their mouths *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die*. Now, the apostle grants that their talk was to the purpose if there was no future state. But, having confuted their principle, he now warns the Corinthians how dangerous such men's conversation must prove. He tells them that they would probably be corrupted by them, and fall in with their course of life, if they gave into their evil principles. Note, Bad company and conversation are likely to make bad men. Those who would keep their innocence must keep good company. Error and vice are infectious: and, if we would avoid the contagion, we must keep clear of those who have taken it. *He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed*, Prov. 13:20. 2. Here is an exhortation to break off their sins, and rouse themselves, and lead a more holy and righteous life (v. 34): *Awake to righteousness*, or *awake righteously*, *ekneupsate dikaiou*s, and *sin not*, or *sin no more*. "Rouse yourselves, break off your sins by repentance: renounce and forsake every evil way, correct whatever is amiss, and do not, by sloth and stupidity, be led away into such conversation and principles as will sap your Christian hopes, and corrupt your practice." The disbelief of a future state destroys all virtue and piety. But the best improvement to be made of the truth is to cease from sin, and set ourselves to the business of religion, and that in good earnest. If there will be a resurrection and a future life, we should live and act as those who believe it, and should not give into such senseless and sottish notions as will debauch our morals, and render us loose and sensual in our lives. 3. Here is a reproof, and a sharp one, to some at least among them: *Some of you have not the knowledge of God; I speak*

this to your shame. Note, It is a shame in Christians not to have the knowledge of God. The Christian religion gives the best information that can be had about God, his nature, and grace, and government. Those who profess this religion reproach themselves, by remaining without the knowledge of God; for it must be owing to their own sloth, and slight of God, that they are ignorant of him. And is it not a horrid shame for a Christian to slight God, and be so wretchedly ignorant in matters that so nearly and highly concern him? Note, also, It must be ignorance of God that leads men into the disbelief of a resurrection and future life. Those who know God know that he will not abandon his faithful servants, nor leave them exposed to such hardships and sufferings without any recompence or reward. They know he is not unfaithful nor unkind, to forget their labour and patience, their faithful services and cheerful sufferings, or let their *labour be in vain*. But I am apt to think that the expression has a much stronger meaning; that there were atheistical people among them who hardly owned a God, or one who had any concern with or took cognizance of human affairs. These were indeed a scandal and shame to any Christian church. Note, Real atheism lies at the bottom of men's disbelief of a future state. Those who own a God and a providence, and observe how unequal the distributions of the present life are, and how frequently the best men fare worst, can hardly doubt an after state, where every thing will be set to rights.

Verses 35-50

The apostle comes now to answer a plausible and principal objection against the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, concerning which observe the proposal of the objection: *Some man will say, How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?* v. 35. The objection is plainly two-fold. *How are they raised up?* that is, "By what means? How can they be raised? What power is equal to this effect?" It was an opinion that prevailed much among the heathens, and the Sadducees seem to have been in the same sentiment, that it was not within the compass of divine power, *mortales aeternitate donare, aut revocare defunctos*—to make mortal men immortal, or revive and restore the dead. Such sort of men those seem to have been who among the Corinthians denied the resurrection of the dead, and object here, "How are they raised? How should they be raised? Is it not utterly impossible?" The other part of the objection is about the quality of their bodies, who shall rise: "*With what body will they come? Will it be with the same body, with like shape, and form, and stature, and members, and qualities, or various?*" The former objection is that of those who opposed the doctrine, the latter the enquiry of curious doubters.

I. To the former the apostle replies by telling them this was to be brought about by divine power, that very power which they had all observed to do something very like it, year after year, in the death and revival of the corn; and therefore it was an argument of great weakness and stupidity to doubt whether the resurrection of the dead might not be effected by the same power: *Thou fool! that which thou sowest is not quickened unless it die*, v. 36. It must first corrupt, before it will quicken and spring up. It not only sprouts after it is dead, but it must die that it may live. And why should any be so foolish as to imagine that the man once dead cannot be made to live again, by the same power which every year brings the dead grain to life? This is the substance of the apostle's answer to the first question. Note, It is a foolish thing to question the divine power to raise the dead, when we see it every day quickening and reviving things that are dead.

II. But he is longer in replying to the second enquiry.

1. He begins by observing that there is a change made in the grain that is sown: It is *not that body which shall be* that is sown, but *bare grain*, of wheat or barley, etc.; but God gives it such a body as he will, and in such way as he will, only so as to distinguish the kinds from each other. Every seed sown has its *proper body*, is constituted of such materials, and figured in such a manner, as are proper to it, proper to that kind. This is plainly in the divine power, though we no more know how it is done than we know how a dead man is raised to life again. It is certain the grain undergoes a great change, and it is intimated in this passage that so will the dead, when they rise again, and live again, in their bodies, after death.

2. He proceeds hence to observe that there is a great deal of variety among others bodies, as there is among plants: as, (1.) In bodies of flesh: *All flesh is not the same*; that of men is of one kind, that of beasts another, another that of fishes, and that of birds another, v. 39. There is a variety in all the kinds, and somewhat peculiar in every kind, to distinguish it from the other. (2.) In bodies celestial and terrestrial there is also a difference; and what is for the glory of one is not for the other; for the true glory of every being consists in its fitness for its rank and state. Earthly bodies are not adapted to the heavenly regions, nor heavenly bodies fitted to the condition of earthly beings. Nay, (3.) There is a variety of glory among heavenly bodies themselves: *There is one glory of the sun, and another of the moon, and another of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory*, v. 41. All this is to intimate to us that the bodies of the dead, when they rise, will be so far changed, that they will be fitted for the heavenly regions, and that there will be a variety of glories among the bodies of the dead, when they shall be raised, as there is among the sun, and moon, and stars, nay among the stars themselves. All this carries an intimation along with it that it must be as easy to divine power to raise the dead, and recover their mouldered bodies, as out of the same materials to form so many different kinds of flesh and plants, and, for aught we know, celestial bodies as well as terrestrial ones. The sun and stars may, for aught we know, be composed of the same materials as the earth we tread on, though as much refined and changed by the divine skill and power. And can he, out of the same materials, form such various beings, and yet not be able to raise the dead? Having thus prepared the way, he comes,

3. To speak directly to the point: *So also*, says he, *is the resurrection of the dead*; so (as the plant growing out of the putrefied grain), so as no longer to be a terrestrial but a celestial body, and varying in glory from the other dead, who are raised, as one star does from another. But he specifies some particulars: as, (1.) *It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown*. Burying the dead is like sowing them; it is like committing the seed to the earth, that it may spring out of it again. And our bodies, which are sown, are corruptible, liable to putrefy and moulder, and crumble to dust; but, when we rise, they will be out of the power of the grave, and never more be liable to corruption. (2.) *It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory*. Ours is at present a vile body, Phil. 3:21. Nothing is more loathsome than a dead body; it is thrown into the grave as a despised and broken vessel, in which there is no pleasure. But at the resurrection a glory will be put upon it; it will be made like the glorious body of our Saviour; it will be purged from all the dregs of earth, and refined into an ethereal substance, and shine out with a splendour resembling his. (3.) *It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power*. It is laid in the earth, a poor helpless thing, wholly in the power of death, deprived of all vital capacities and powers, of life and strength: it is utterly unable to move or stir. But when we arise our bodies will have heavenly life and vigour infused into them; they will be hale, and firm, and durable, and

lively, and liable no more to any infirmity, weakness, or decay. (4.) *It is sown a natural, or animal body, $\sigma\upsilon\mu\mu\alpha$ psychikon*, a body fitted to the low condition and sensitive pleasures and enjoyments of this life, which are all gross in comparison of the heavenly state and enjoyments. But when we rise it will be quite otherwise; our body will rise spiritual. Not that body would be changed into spirit: this would be a contradiction in our common conceptions; it would be as much as to say, Body changed into what is not body, matter made immaterial. The expression is to be understood comparatively. We shall at the resurrection have bodies purified and refined to the last degree, made light and agile; and, though they are not changed into spirit, yet made fit to be perpetual associates of spirits made perfect. And why should it not be as much in the power of God to raise incorruptible, glorious, lively, spiritual bodies, out of the ruins of those vile, corruptible, lifeless, and animal ones, as first to make matter out of nothing, and then, out of the same mass of matter, produce such variety of beings, both in earth and heaven? *To God all things are possible*; and this cannot be impossible.

4. He illustrates this by a comparison of the first and second Adam: *There is an animal body, says he, and there is a spiritual body*; and then goes into the comparison in several instances. (1.) As we have our natural body, the animal body we have in this world, from the first Adam, we expect our spiritual body from the second. This is implied in the whole comparison. (2.) This is but consonant to the different characters these two persons bear: *The first Adam was made a living soul*, such a being as ourselves, and with a power of propagating such beings as himself, and conveying to them a nature and animal body like his own, but none other, nor better. *The second Adam is a quickening Spirit*; he is the resurrection and the life, Jn. 11:25. He hath life in himself, and quickeneth whom he will, Jn. 5:20, 21. *The first man was of the earth*, made out of the earth, and was earthy; his body was fitted to the region of his abode: *but the second Adam is the Lord from heaven*; he who came down from heaven, and giveth life to the world (Jn. 6:33); he who came down from heaven and was in heaven at the same time (Jn. 3:13); the Lord of heaven and earth. If the first Adam could communicate to us natural and animal bodies, cannot the second Adam make our bodies spiritual ones? If the deputed lord of this lower creation could do the one, cannot the Lord from heaven, the Lord of heaven and earth, do the other? (3.) We must first have natural bodies from the first Adam before we can have spiritual bodies from the second (v. 49); *we must bear the image of the earthy before we can bear the image of the heavenly*. Such is the established order of Providence. We must have weak, frail, mortal bodies by descent from the first Adam, before we can have lively, spiritual, and immortal ones by the quickening power of the second. We must die before we can live to die no more. (4.) Yet if we are Christ's, true believers in him (for this whole discourse relates to the resurrection of the saints), it is as certain that we shall have spiritual bodies as it is now that we have natural or animal ones. By these we are as the first Adam, earthy, we bear his image; by those we shall be as the second Adam, have bodies like his own, heavenly, and so bear his image. And we are as certainly intended to bear the one as we have borne the other. As surely therefore as we have had natural bodies, we shall have spiritual ones. The dead in Christ shall not only rise, but shall rise thus gloriously changed.

5. He sums up this argument by assigning the reason of this change (v. 50): *Now this I say that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor doth corruption inherit incorruption*. The natural body is flesh and blood, consisting of bones, muscles, nerves, veins, arteries, and their several fluids; and, as such, it is of a corruptible frame and form, liable to dissolution,

to rot and moulder. But no such thing shall inherit the heavenly regions; for this were for corruption to inherit incorruption, which is little better than a contradiction in terms. The heavenly inheritance is incorruptible, and never fadeth away, 1 Pt. 1:4. How can this be possessed by flesh and blood, which is corruptible and will fade away? It must be changed into ever-during substance, before it can be capable of possessing the heavenly inheritance. The sum is that the bodies of the saints, when they shall rise again, will be greatly changed from what they are now, and much for the better. They are now corruptible, flesh and blood; they will be then incorruptible, glorious, and spiritual bodies, fitted to the celestial world and state, where they are ever afterwards to dwell, and have their eternal inheritance.

Verses 51-57

To confirm what he had said of this change,

I. He here tells them what had been concealed from or unknown to them till then—that all the saints would not die, but all would be changed. Those that are alive at our Lord's coming will be caught up into the clouds, without dying, 1 Th. 4:11. But it is plain from this passage that it will not be without changing from corruption to incorruption. The frame of their living bodies shall be thus altered, as well as those that are dead; and this *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*, v. 52. What cannot almighty power effect? That power that calls the dead into life can surely thus soon and suddenly change the living; for changed they must be as well as the dead, because flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. This is the mystery which the apostle shows the Corinthians: *Behold, I show you a mystery*; or bring into open light a truth dark and unknown before. Note, There are many mysteries shown to us in the gospel; many truths that before were utterly unknown are there made known; many truths that were but dark and obscure before are there brought into open day, and plainly revealed; and many things are in part revealed that will never be fully known, nor perhaps clearly understood. The apostle here makes known a truth unknown before, which is that the saints living at our Lord's second coming will not die, but be changed, that this change will be made in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and *at the sound of the last trump*; for, as he tells us elsewhere, *the Lord himself shall descend with a shout, with a voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God* (1 Th. 4:16), so here, *the trumpet must sound*. It is the loud summons of all the living and all the dead, to come and appear at the tribunal of Christ. At this summons the graves shall open, the dead saints shall rise incorruptible, and the living saints be changed to the same incorruptible state, v. 52.

II. He assigns the reason of this change (v. 53): *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*. How otherwise could the man be a fit inhabitant of the incorruptible regions, or be fitted to possess the eternal inheritance? How can that which is corruptible and mortal enjoy what is incorruptible, permanent, and immortal? This corruptible body must be made incorruptible, this mortal body must be changed into immortal, that the man may be capable of enjoying the happiness designed for him. Note, It is this corruptible that must put on incorruption; the demolished fabric that must be reared again. What is sown must be quickened. Saints will come in their own bodies (v. 38), not in other bodies.

III. He lets us know what will follow upon this change of the living and dead in Christ: *Then shall be brought to pass that saying, Death is swallowed up in victory*; or, *He will swallow up death in victory*. Isa. 25:8. *For mortality shall be then*

swallowed up of life (2 Co. 5:4), and death perfectly subdued and conquered, and saints for ever delivered from its power. Such a conquest shall be obtained over it that it shall for ever disappear in those regions to which our Lord will bear his risen saints. And therefore will the saints hereupon sing their *epinikion*, their *song of triumph*. Then, when this mortal shall have put on immortality, will death be swallowed up, for ever swallowed up, *eis nikos*. Christ hinders it from swallowing his saints when they die; but, when they rise again, death shall, as to them, be swallowed for ever. And upon this destruction of death will they break out into a song of triumph.

1. They will glory over death as a vanquished enemy, and insult this great and terrible destroyer: "*O death! where is thy sting? Where is now thy sting, thy power to hurt? What mischief hast thou done us? We are dead; but behold we live again, and shall die no more. Thou art vanquished and disarmed, and we are out of the reach of thy deadly dart. Where now is thy fatal artillery? Where are thy stores of death? We fear no further mischiefs from thee, nor heed thy weapons, but defy thy power, and despise thy wrath. And, O grave! where is thy victory? Where now is thy victory? What has become of it? Where are the spoils and trophies of it? Once we were thy prisoners, but the prison-doors are burst open, the locks and bolts have been forced to give way, our shackles are knocked off, and we are for ever released. Captivity is taken captive. The imaginary victor is conquered, and forced to resign his conquest and release his captives. Thy triumphs, grave, are at an end. The bonds of death are loosed, and we are at liberty, and are never more to be hurt by death, nor imprisoned in the grave.*" In a moment, the power of death, and the conquests and spoils of the grave, are gone; and, as to the saints, the very signs of them will not remain. Where are they? Thus will they raise themselves, when they become immortal, to the honour of their Saviour and the praise of divine grace: they shall glory over vanquished death.

2. The foundation for this triumph is here intimated, (1.) In the account given whence death had its power to hurt: *The sting of death is sin*. This gives venom to his dart: this alone puts it into the power of death to hurt and kill. Sin unpardoned, and nothing else, can keep any under his power. And the *strength of sin is the law*; it is the divine threatening against the transgressors of the law, the curse there denounced, that gives power to sin. Note, Sin is the parent of death, and gives it all its hurtful power. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin*, Rom. 5:12. It is its cursed progeny and offspring. (2.) In the account given of the victory saints obtain over it through Jesus Christ, v. 56. *The sting of death is sin*; but Christ, by dying, has taken out this sting. He has made atonement for sin; he has obtained remission of it. It may hiss therefore, but it cannot hurt. *The strength of sin is the law*; but the curse of the law is removed by our Redeemer's *becoming a curse for us*. So that sin is deprived of its strength and sting, through Christ, that is, by his incarnation, suffering, and death. Death may seize a believer, but cannot sting him, cannot hold him in his power. There is a day coming when the grave shall open, the bands of death be loosed, the dead saints revive, and become incorruptible and immortal, and put out of the reach of death for ever. And then will it plainly appear that, as to them, death will have lost its strength and sting; and all by the mediation of Christ, by his dying in their room. By dying, he conquered death, and spoiled the grave; and, through faith in him, believers become sharers in his conquests. They often rejoice beforehand, in the hope of this victory; and, when they arise glorious from the grave, they will boldly triumph over death. Note, It is altogether owing to the grace of God in Christ that sin is pardoned and death

disarmed. The law puts arms into the hand of death, to destroy the sinner; but pardon of sin takes away this power from the law, and deprives death of its strength and sting. It is *by the grace of God, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, that we are freely justified*, Rom. 3:24. It is no wonder, therefore, (3.) If this triumph of the saints over death should issue in thanksgiving to God: *Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through Christ Jesus, our Lord*, v. 57. The way to sanctify all our joy is to make it tributary to the praise of God. Then only do we enjoy our blessings and honours in a holy manner when God has his revenue of glory out of it, and we are free to pay it to him. And this really improves and exalts our satisfaction. We are conscious at once of having done our duty and enjoyed our pleasure. And what can be more joyous in itself than the saints' triumph over death, when they shall rise again? And shall they not then rejoice in the Lord, and be glad in the God of their salvation? Shall not their souls magnify the Lord? When he shows *such wonders to the dead, shall they not arise and praise him?* Ps. 88:10. Those who remain under the power of death can have no heart to praise; but such conquests and triumphs will certainly tune the tongues of the saints to thankfulness and praise—praise for the victory (it is great and glorious in itself), and for the means whereby it is obtained (it is given of God through Christ Jesus), a victory obtained not by our power, but the power of God; not given because we are worthy, but because Christ is so, and has by dying obtained this conquest for us. Must not this circumstance endear the victory to us, and heighten our praise to God? Note, How many springs of joy to the saints and thanksgiving to God are opened by the death and resurrection, the sufferings and conquests, of our Redeemer! With what acclamations will saints rising from the dead applaud him! How will the heaven of heavens resound his praises for ever! *Thanks be to God* will be the burden of their song; and angels will join the chorus, and declare their consent with a loud Amen, Hallelujah.

Verse 58

In this verse we have the improvement of the whole argument, in an exhortation, enforced by a motive resulting plainly from it.

I. An exhortation, and this threefold:—1. That they should be stedfast—*hedraioi*, firm, fixed in the faith of the gospel, that gospel which he had preached and they had received, namely, *That Christ died for our sins, and arose again the third day, according to the scriptures* (v. 3, 4), and fixed in the faith of the glorious resurrection of the dead, which, as he had shown, had so near and necessary a connection with the former. "Do not let your belief of these truths be shaken or staggered. They are most certain, and of the last importance." Note, Christians should be stedfast believers of this great article of the resurrection of the dead. It is evidently founded on the death of Christ. *Because he lives, his servants shall live also*, Jn. 14:19. And it is of the last importance; a disbelief of a future life will open a way to all manner of licentiousness, and corrupt men's morals to the last degree. It will be easy and natural to infer hence that we may live like beasts, and eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. 2. He exhorts them to be *immovable*, namely, in their expectation of this great privilege of being raised incorruptible and immortal. Christians should not be moved away from this hope of this gospel (Col. 1:23), this glorious and blessed hope; they should not renounce nor resign their comfortable expectations. They are not vain, but solid hopes, built upon sure foundations, the purchase and power of their risen Saviour, and the promise of God, to whom it is impossible to lie—hopes that shall be their

most powerful supports under all the pressures of life, the most effectual antidotes against the fears of death, and the most quickening motives to diligence and perseverance in Christian duty. Should they part with these hopes? Should they suffer them to be shaken? Note, Christians should live in the most firm expectation of a blessed resurrection. This hope should be an anchor to their souls, firm and sure, Heb. 6:19. 3. He exhorts them *to abound in the work of the Lord*, and that *always*, in the Lord's service, in obeying the Lord's commands. They should be diligent and persevering herein, and going on towards perfection; they should be continually making advances in true piety, and ready and apt for every good work. The most cheerful duty, the greatest diligence, the most constant perseverance, become those who have such glorious hopes. Can we too much abound in zeal and diligence in the Lord's work, when we are assured of such abundant recompences in a future life? What vigour and resolution, what constancy and patience, should those hopes inspire! Note, Christians should not stint themselves as to their growth in holiness, but be always improving in sound religion, and abounding in the work of the Lord.

II. The motive resulting from the former discourse is that their *labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*; nay, they know it shall not. They have the best grounds in the world to build upon: they have all the assurance that can rationally be expected: as surely as Christ is risen, they shall rise; and Christ is as surely risen as the scriptures are true, and the word of God. The apostles saw him after his death, testified this truth to the world in the face of a thousand deaths and dangers, and confirmed it by miraculous powers received from him. Is there any room to doubt a fact so well attested? Note, True Christians have undoubted evidence that their labour will not be in vain in the Lord; not their most diligent services, nor their most painful sufferings; they will not be in vain, not be vain and unprofitable. Note, The labour of Christians will not be lost labour; they may lose for God, but they will lose nothing by him; nay, there is more implied than is expressed in this phrase: it means that they shall be abundantly rewarded. He will never be found unjust to forget their labour of love, Heb. 6:10. Nay, he will do exceedingly abundantly above what they can now ask or think. Neither the services they do for him, nor the sufferings they endure for him here, are worthy to be compared with the joy hereafter to be revealed in them, Rom. 8:18. Note, Those who serve God have good wages; they cannot do too much nor suffer too much for so good a Master. If they serve him now, they shall see him hereafter; if they suffer for him on earth, they shall reign with him in heaven; if they die for his sake, they shall rise again from the dead, be crowned with glory, honour, and immortality, and inherit eternal life.

Chapter 16

In this chapter the apostle, I. Gives directions about some charitable collection to be made in this church, for the afflicted and impoverished churches in Judea (v. 1-4). II. He talks of paying them a visit (v. 5-9). III. He recommends Timothy to them, and tells them Apollos intended to come to them (v. 10-12). IV. He presses them to watchfulness, constancy, charity, and to pay a due regard to all who helped him and his fellow-labourers in their work (v. 13-19). V. After salutations from others, and his own, he closes the epistle with a solemn admonition to them, and his good wishes for them (v. 20 to the end).

Verses 1-4

In this chapter Paul closes this long epistle with some particular matters of less moment; but, as all was written by divine inspiration, it is all profitable for our instruction. He begins with directing them about a charitable collection on a particular occasion, the distresses and poverty of Christians in Judea, which at this time were extraordinary, partly through the general calamities of that nation and partly through the particular sufferings to which they were exposed. Now concerning this observe, I. How he introduces his direction. It was not a peculiar service which he required of them; he had given similar *orders to the churches of Galatia*, v. 1. He desired them only to conform to the same rules which he had given to other churches on a similar occasion. *He did not desire that others should be eased and they burdened*, 2 Co. 8:13. He also prudently mentions these orders of his to the churches of Galatia, to excite emulation, and stir them up to be liberal, according to their circumstances, and the occasion. Those who exceeded most churches in spiritual gifts, and, as it is probable, in worldly wealth (see the argument), surely would not suffer themselves to come behind any in their bounty to their afflicted brethren. Note, The good examples of other Christians and churches should excite in us a holy emulation. It is becoming a Christian not to bear to be outdone by a fellow-christian in any thing virtuous and praise-worthy, provided this consideration only makes him exert himself, not envy others; and the more advantages we have above others the more should we endeavour to exceed them. The church of Corinth should not be outdone in this service of love by the churches of Galatia, which do not appear to have been enriched with equal spiritual gifts nor outward ability.

II. The direction itself, concerning which observe,

1. The manner in which the collection was to be made: *Every one was to lay by in store* (v. 2), have a treasury, or fund, with himself, for this purpose. The meaning is that he should lay by as he could spare from time to time, and by this means make up a sum for this charitable purpose. Note, It is a good thing to lay up in store for good uses. Those who are rich in this world should be rich in good works, 1 Tim. 6:17, 18. The best way to be so is to appropriate of their income, and have a treasury for this purpose, a stock for the poor as well as for themselves. By this means they will be ready to every good work as the opportunity offers; and many who labour with their own hands for a livelihood should so work that they may have to give to him that needeth, Eph. 4:28. Indeed their treasury for good works can never be very large (though, according to circumstances, it may considerably vary); but the best way in the world for them to get a treasury for this purpose is to lay by from time to time, as they can afford. Some of the Greek fathers rightly observe here that this advice was given for the sake of the poorer

among them. They were to lay by from week to week, and not bring in to the common treasury, that by this means their contributions might be easy to themselves, and yet grow into a fund for the relief of their brethren. "Every little," as the proverb says, "would make a mickle." Indeed all our charity and benevolence should be free and cheerful, and for that reason should be made as easy to ourselves as may be. And what more likely way to make us easy in this matter than thus to lay by? We may cheerfully give when we know that we can spare, and that we have been laying by in store that we may.

2. Here is the measure in which they are to lay by: *As God hath prospered them; ti an euodoutai*, as he has been prospered, namely, by divine Providence, as God has been pleased to bless and succeed his labours and business. Note, All our business and labour are that to us which God is pleased to make them. It is not the diligent hand that will make rich by itself, without the divine blessing, Prov. 10:4, 22. Our prosperity and success are from God and not from ourselves; and he is to be owned in all and honoured with all. It is his bounty and blessing to which we owe all we have; and whatever we have is to be used, and employed, and improved, for him. His right to ourselves and all that is ours is to be owned and yielded to him. And what argument more proper to excite us to charity to the people and children of God than to consider all we have as his gift, as coming from him? Note, When God blesses and prospers us, we should be ready to relieve and comfort his needy servants; when his bounty flows forth upon us, we should not confine it to ourselves, but let it stream out to others. The good we receive from him should stir us up to do good to others, to resemble him in our beneficence; and therefore the more good we receive from God the more we should do good to others. They were to lay by as God had blessed them, in that proportion. The more they had, through God's blessing, gained by their business or labour, their traffic or work, the more they were to lay by. Note, God expects that our beneficence to others should hold some proportion to his bounty to us. All we have is from God; the more he gives (circumstances being considered), the more he enables us to give, and the more he expects we should give, that we should give more than others who are less able, that we should give more than ourselves when we were less able. And, on the other hand, from him to whom God gives less he expects less. He is no tyrant nor cruel taskmaster, to exact brick without straw, or expect men shall do more good than he gives ability. Note, *Where there is a willing mind he accepts according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not* (2 Co. 8:12); but as he prospers and blesses us, and puts us in a capacity to do good, he expects we should. The greater ability he gives, the more enlarged should our hearts be, and the more open our hands; but, where the ability is less, the hands cannot be as open, however willing the mind and however large the heart; nor does God expect it.

3. Here is the time when this is to be done: *The first day of the week, kata mian sabbatoyn* (Lu. 24:1), the Lord's day, the Christian holiday, when public assemblies were held and public worship was celebrated, and the Christian institutions and mysteries (as the ancients called them) were attended upon; then let every one lay by him. It is a day of holy rest; and the more vacation the mind has from worldly cares and toils the more disposition has it to show mercy: and the other duties of the day should stir us up to the performance of this; works of charity should always accompany works of piety. True piety towards God will beget kind and friendly dispositions towards men. *This commandment have we from him that he who loveth God love his brother also*, 1 Jn. 4:21. Works of mercy are the genuine fruits of true love to God, and therefore are a proper service on his

own day. Note, God's day is a proper season on which to lay up for charitable uses, or lay out in them, according as he has prospered us; it is paying tribute for the blessings of the past week, and it is a proper way to procure his blessing on the work of our hands for the next.

4. We have here the disposal of the collections thus made: the apostle would have every thing ready against he came, and therefore gave direction as before: *That there be no gatherings when I come*, v. 2. But, when he came, as to the disposal of it, he would leave it much to themselves. The charity was theirs, and it was fit they should dispose of it in their own way, so it answered its end, and was applied to the right use. Paul no more pretended to lord it over the purses of his hearers than over their faith; he would not meddle with their contributions without their consent. (1.) He tells them that they should give letters of credence, and send messengers of their own with their liberality, v. 3. This would be a proper testimony of their respect and brotherly love to their distressed brethren, to send their gift by members of their own body, trusty and tenderhearted, who would have compassion on their suffering brethren, and a Christian concern for them, and not defraud them. It would argue that they were very hearty in this service, when they should send some of their own body on so long and hazardous a journey or voyage, to convey their liberality. Note, We should not only charitably relieve our poor fellow-christians but do it in such a way as will best signify our compassion to them and care of them. (2.) He offers to go with their messengers, if they think proper, v. 4. His business, as an apostle, was not to serve tables, but to give himself to the word and prayer; yet he was never wanting to set on foot, or help forward, a work of charity, when an opportunity offered. He would go to Jerusalem, to carry the contributions of the church at Corinth to their suffering brethren, rather than they should go without them, or the charity of the Corinthians fail of a due effect. It was no hindrance to his preaching work, but a great furtherance to the success of it, to show such a tender and benign disposition of mind. Note, Ministers are doing their proper business when they are promoting or helping in works of charity. Paul stirs up the Corinthians to gather for the relief of the churches in Judea, and he is ready to go with their messengers, to convey what is gathered; and he is still in the way of his duty, in the business of his office.

Verses 5-9

In this passage the apostle notifies and explains his purpose of visiting them, concerning which, observe, 1. His purpose: he intended to pass out of Asia, where he now was (*vide* v. 8, 19) and to go through Macedonia into Achaia, where Corinth was, and to stay some time with them, and perhaps the winter, v. 5, 6. He had long laboured in this church, and done much good among them, and had his heart set upon doing much more (if God saw fit), and therefore he had it in his thoughts to see them, and stay with them. Note, The heart of a truly Christian minister must be much towards that people among whom he has long laboured, and with remarkable success. No wonder that Paul was willing to see Corinth and stay with them as long as the other duties of his office would permit. Though some among this people despised him, and made a faction against him, doubtless there were many who loved him tenderly, and paid him all the respect due to an apostle and their spiritual father. And is it any wonder that he should be willing to visit them, and stay with them? And as to the rest, who now manifested great disrespect, he might hope to reduce them to a better temper, and thereby rectify what was out of order in the church, by staying among them for some time. It is plain that he hoped for some good effect, because he says he intended to stay, *that they might bring him on*

his journey whithersoever he went (v. 6); not that they might accompany him a little way on the road, but expedite and furnish him for his journey, help and encourage him to it, and provide him for it. He is to be understood of being brought forward in his journey after a godly sort (as it is expressed, 3 Jn. 6), so that nothing might be wanting to him, as he himself speaks, Tit. 3:13. His stay among them, he hoped, would cure their factious humour, and reconcile them to himself and their duty. Note, It was a just reason for an apostle to make his abode in a place that he had a prospect of doing good. 2. His excuse for not seeing them now, because it would be *only by the way* (v. 7), *en parodoμ*—*in transitu*—*en passant*: *it would only be a transient visit*. He would not see them because he could not stay with them. Such a visit would give neither him nor them any satisfaction or advantage; it would rather raise the appetite than regale it, rather heighten their desires of being together than satisfy them. He loved them so much that he longed for an opportunity to stay with them, take up his abode among them for some length of time. This would be more pleasing to himself, and more serviceable to them, than a cursory visit in his way; and therefore he would not see them now, but another time, when he could tarry longer. 3. We have the limitation of this purpose: *I trust to tarry awhile with you, if the Lord permit*, v. 7. Though the apostles wrote under inspiration, they did not know thereby how God would dispose of them. Paul had a purpose of coming to Corinth, and staying there, and hoped to do good thereby. This was not a purpose proceeding from any extraordinary motion or impulse of the Spirit of God; it was not the effect of inspiration; for had it been such he could not have spoken of it in this manner. A purpose formed thus in him must have been the purpose of God, signified to him by his Spirit; and could he say he would come to Corinth upon this view only, if God permit, that is, that he would execute God's own purpose concerning himself, with God's permission? It is to be understood then of a common purpose, formed in his own spirit. And concerning all our purposes it is fit we should say, "We will execute them if the Lord permit." Note, All our purposes must be made with submission to the divine providence. We should say, *If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this and that*, James 4:15. It is not in us to effect our own designs, without the divine leave. It is by God's power and permission, and under his direction, that we must do every thing. Heathens have concurred in acknowledging this concern of Providence in all our actions and concerns; surely we should readily own it, and frequently and seriously attend to it. 4. We have his purpose expressed of staying at Ephesus for the present. He says he would stay there till pentecost, v. 8. It is very probable that at the time of writing this epistle he was in Ephesus, from this passage, compared with v. 19, where he says, *The churches of Asia salute you*. A proper salutation from Ephesus, but hardly so proper had he been at Philippi, as the subscription to this epistle in our common copies has it. "*The churches of Macedonia salute you*" had been much more properly inserted in the close of a letter from Philippi, than the other. But, 5. We have the reason given for his staying at Ephesus for the present: *Because a great door, and effectual, was opened to him, and there were many adversaries*, v. 9. A great door and effectual was opened to him; many were prepared to receive the gospel at Ephesus, and God gave him great success among them; he had brought over many to Christ, and he had great hope of bringing over many more. For this reason he determined to stay awhile at Ephesus. Note, Success, and a fair prospect of more, was a just reason to determine an apostle to stay and labour in a particular place. And there were many adversaries, because a great door, and an effectual, was opened. Note, Great success in the work of the gospel commonly creates many enemies. The devil opposes those most, and

makes them most trouble, who most heartily and successfully set themselves to destroy his kingdom. There were many adversaries; and therefore the apostle determined to stay. Some think he alludes in this passage to the custom of the Roman Circus, and the doors of it, at which the charioteers were to enter, as their antagonists did at the opposite doors. True courage is whetted by opposition; and it is no wonder that the Christian courage of the apostle should be animated by the zeal of his adversaries. They were bent to ruin him, and prevent the effect of his ministry at Ephesus; and should he at this time desert his station, and disgrace his character and doctrine? No, the opposition of adversaries only animated his zeal. He was in nothing daunted by his adversaries; but the more they raged and opposed the more he exerted himself. Should such a man as he flee? Note, Adversaries and opposition do not break the spirits of faithful and successful ministers, but only enkindle their zeal, and inspire them with fresh courage. Indeed, to labour in vain is heartless and discouraging. This damps the spirits, and breaks the heart. But success will give life and vigour to a minister, though enemies rage, and blaspheme, and persecute. It is not the opposition of enemies, but the hardness and obstinacy of his hearers, and the backslidings and revolt of professors, that damp a faithful minister, and break his heart.

Verses 10-12

In this passage,

I. He recommends Timothy to them, in several particulars. As, 1. He bids them take care that he should *be among them without feat*, v. 10. Timothy was sent by the apostle to correct the abuses which had crept in among them; and not only to direct, but to blame, and censure, and reprove, those who were culpable. They were all in factions, and no doubt the mutual strife and hatred ran very high among them. There were some very rich, as it is probable; and many very proud, upon account both of their outward wealth and spiritual gifts. Proud spirits cannot easily bear reproof. It was reasonable therefore to think young Timothy might be roughly used; hence the apostle warns them against using him ill. Not but that he was prepared for the worst; but, whatever his firmness and prudence might be, it was their duty to behave themselves well towards him, and not discourage and dishearten him in his Lord's work. They should not fly out into resentment at his reproof. Note, Christians should bear faithful reproofs from their ministers, and not terrify and discourage them from doing their duty. 2. He warns them against despising him, v. 11. He was but a young man, and alone, as Ecumenius observes. He had no one to back him, and his own youthful face and years commanded but little reverence; and therefore the great pretenders to wisdom among them might be apt to entertain contemptuous thoughts of him. "Now," says the apostle, "guard against this." Not that he distrusted Timothy; he knew that Timothy would do nothing to bring contempt on his character, nothing to make his youth despicable. But pride was a reigning sin among the Corinthians, and such a caution was but too necessary. Note, Christians should be very careful not to pour contempt on any, but especially on ministers, the faithful ministers of Christ. These, whether young or old, are to be had in high esteem for their works sake. 3. He tells them they should give him all due encouragement, use him well while he was with them; and, as an evidence of this, they should send him away in friendship, and well prepared for his journey back again to Paul. This, as I have before observed, is the meaning of bringing him on his journey in peace, v. 11. Note, Faithful ministers are not only to be well received by a people among whom they may for a season minister, but are to be sent away with due

respect.

II. He assigns the reasons why they should behave thus towards Timothy. 1. Because he was employed in the same work as Paul, and acted in it by the same authority, v. 10. He did not come on Paul's errand among them, nor to do his work, but the work of the Lord. Though he was not an apostle, he was assistant to one, and was sent upon this very business by a divine commission. And therefore to vex his spirit would be to grieve the Holy Spirit; to despise him would be to despise him that sent him, not Paul, but Paul's Lord and theirs. Note, Those who work the work of the Lord should be neither terrified nor despised, but treated with all tenderness and respect. Such are all the faithful ministers of the word, though not all in the same rank and degree. Pastors and teachers, as well as apostles and evangelists, while they are doing their duty, are to be treated with honour and respect. 2. Another reason is implied; as they were to esteem him for his work's sake, so also for Paul's sake, who had sent him to Corinth; not of his own errand indeed, but to work the work of the Lord: *Conduct him forth in peace, that he may come to me, for I look for him with the brethren* (v. 11); or *I with the brethren look for him* (the original will bear either), *ekdechomai gar auton meta toum adelphoum*—"I am expecting his return, and his report concerning you; and shall judge by your conduct towards him what your regard and respect for me will be. Look to it that you send him back with no evil report." Paul might expect from the Corinthians, that a messenger from him, upon such an errand, should be regarded, and well treated. His services and success among them, his authority with them as an apostle, would challenge this at their hands. They would hardly dare to send back Timothy with a report that would grieve or provoke the apostle. "I and the brethren expect his return, wait for the report he is to make; and therefore do not use him ill, but respect him, regard his message, and let him return in peace."

III. He informs them of Apollos's purpose to see them. 1. He himself had greatly desired him to come to them, v. 12. Though one party among them had declared for Apollos against Paul (if that passage is to be understood literally, *vide* ch. 4:6), yet Paul did not hinder Apollos from going to Corinth in his own absence, nay, he pressed him to go thither. He had no suspicions of Apollos, as if he would lessen Paul's interest and respect among them, to the advancement of his own. Note, Faithful ministers are not apt to entertain jealousies of each other, nor suspect of such selfish designs. True charity and brotherly love think no evil. And where should these reign, if not in the breasts of the ministers of Christ? 2. Apollos could not be prevailed on for the present to come, but would at a more convenient season. Perhaps their feuds and factions might render the present season improper. He would not go to be set at the head of a party and countenance the dividing and contentious humour. When this had subsided, through Paul's epistle to them and Timothy's ministry among them, he might conclude a visit would be more proper. Apostles did not vie with each other, but consulted each other's comfort and usefulness. Paul intimates his great regard to the church of Corinth, when they had used him ill, by entreating Apollos to go to them; and Apollos shows his respect to Paul, and his concern to keep up his character and authority, by declining the journey till the Corinthians were in better temper. Note, It is very becoming the ministers of the gospel to have and manifest a concern for each other's reputation and usefulness.

Verses 13-18

In this passage the apostle gives,

I. Some general advices; as, 1. That they should watch (v. 13), be wakeful and upon their guard. A Christian is always in danger, and therefore should ever be on the watch; but the danger is greater at some times and under some circumstances. The Corinthians were in manifest danger upon many accounts: their feuds ran high, the irregularities among them were very great, there were deceivers got among them, who endeavoured to corrupt their faith in the most important articles, those without which the practice of virtue and piety could never subsist. And surely in such dangerous circumstances it was their concern to watch. Note, If a Christian would be secure, he must be on his guard; and the more his danger the greater vigilance is needful for his security. 2. He advises them to *stand fast in the faith*, to keep their ground, adhere to the revelation of God, and not give it up for the wisdom of the world, nor suffer it to be corrupted by it—stand for the faith of the gospel, and maintain it even to death; and stand in it, so as to abide in the profession of it, and feel and yield to its influence. Note, A Christian should be fixed in the faith of the gospel, and never desert nor renounce it. It is by this faith alone that he will be able to keep his ground in an hour of temptation; it is by faith that we stand (2 Co. 1:24); it is by this that we must overcome the world (1 Jn. 5:4), both when it fawns and when it frowns, when it tempts and when it terrifies. We must stand therefore in the faith of the gospel, if we would maintain our integrity. 3. He advises them to act like men, and be strong: "Act the manly, firm, and resolved part: behave strenuously, in opposition to the bad men who would divide and corrupt you, those who would split you into factions or seduce you from the faith: be not terrified nor inveigled by them; but show yourselves men in Christ, by your steadiness, by your sound judgment and firm resolution." Note, Christians should be manly and firm in all their contests with their enemies, in defending their faith, and maintaining their integrity. They should, in an especial manner, be so in those points of faith that lie at the foundation of sound and practical religion, such as were attacked among the Corinthians: these must be maintained with solid judgment and strong resolution. 4. He advises them to do every thing in charity, v. 14. Our zeal and constancy must be consistent with charity. When the apostle would have us play the man for our faith or religion, he puts in a caution against playing the devil for it. We may defend our faith, but we must, at the same time, maintain our innocence, and not devour and destroy, and think with ourselves that the wrath of man will work the righteousness of God, James 1:24. Note, Christians should be careful that charity not only reign in their hearts, but shine out in their lives, nay, in their most manly defences of the faith of the gospel. There is a great difference between constancy and cruelty, between Christian firmness and feverish wrath and transport. Christianity never appears to so much advantage as when the charity of Christians is most conspicuous when they can bear with their mistaken brethren, and oppose the open enemies of their holy faith in love, when every thing is done in charity, when they behave towards one another, and towards all men, with a spirit of meekness and good will.

II. Some particular directions how they should behave towards some that had been eminently serviceable to the cause of Christ among them.

1. He gives us their character (1.) The household of Stephanas is mentioned by him, and their character is, that they were the first-fruits of Achaia, the first converts to Christianity in that region of Greece in which Corinth was. Note, It is an honourable character to any man to be early a Christian, betimes in Christ. But they had moreover addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints, to serve the saints. They have *disposed and devoted themselves*—*etaxan heautous*, to serve the saints, to do

service to the saints. It is not meant of the ministry of the word properly, but of serving them in other respects, supplying their wants, helping and assisting them upon all occasions, both in their temporal and spiritual concerns. The family of Stephanas seems to have been a family of rank and importance in those parts, and yet they willingly offered themselves to this service. Note, It is an honour to persons of the highest rank to devote themselves to the service of the saints. I do not mean to change ranks, and become proper servants to the inferiors, but freely and voluntarily to help them, and do good to them in all their concerns. (2.) He mentions Stephanas, and Fortunatus, and Achaicus, as coming to him from the church of Corinth. The account he gives of them is that they supplied the deficiencies of the church towards him, and by so doing *refreshed his spirit and theirs*, v. 17, 18. They gave him a more perfect account of the state of the church by word of mouth than he could acquire by their letter, and by that means much quieted his mind, and upon their return from him would quiet the minds of the Corinthians. Report had made their cause much worse than it was in fact, and their letters had not explained it sufficiently to give the apostle satisfaction; but he had been made more easy by converse with them. It was a very good office they did, by truly stating facts, and removing the ill opinion Paul had received by common fame. They came to him with a truly Christian intention, to set the apostle right, and give him as favourable sentiments of the church as they could, as peace-makers. Note, It is a great refreshment to the spirit of a faithful minister to hear better of a people by wise and good men of their own body than by common report, to find himself misinformed concerning them, that matters are not so bad as they had been represented. It is a grief to him to hear ill of those he loves; it gladdens his heart to hear the report thereof is false. And the greater value he has for those who give him this information, and the more he can depend upon their veracity, the greater is his joy.

2. Upon this account of the men, he directs how they should behave towards them; and, (1.) He would have them acknowledged (v. 11), that is, owned and respected. They deserve it for their good offices. Those who serve the saints, those who consult the honour and good esteem of the churches, and are concerned to wipe off reproaches from them, and take off from the ill opinion fame had propagated, are to be valued, and esteemed, and loved. Those who discover so good a spirit cannot easily be over-valued. (2.) He advises that they should *submit themselves to such, and to all who helped with the apostles, and laboured*, v. 16. This is not to be understood of subjection to proper superiors, but of a voluntary acknowledgment of their worth. They were persons to whom they owed peculiar respect, and whom they should have in veneration. Note, It is a venerable character which those bear who serve the saints and labour hard to help the success of the gospel, who countenance and encourage the faithful ministers of Christ, and endeavour to promote their usefulness. Such should be had in honourable esteem.

Verses 19-24

The apostle closes his epistle,

I. With salutations to the church of Corinth, first from those of Asia, from *Priscilla and Aquila* (who seem to have been at this time inhabitants of Ephesus, *vid.* Acts 18:26), *with the church in their house* (v. 19), and from *all the brethren* (v. 20) at Ephesus, where, it is highly probable at least, he then was. All these saluted the church at Corinth, by Paul. Note, Christianity does by no means destroy civility and good manners. Paul could find room in an epistle treating of very important matters to

send the salutations of friends. Religion should promote a courteous and obliging temper towards all. Those misrepresent and reproach it who would take any encouragement from it to be sour and morose. Some of these *salute them much in the Lord*. Note, Christian salutations are not empty compliments; they carry in them real expressions of good-will, and are attended with hearty recommendations to the divine grace and blessing. Those who salute in the Lord wish their brethren all good from the Lord, and breathe out their good wishes in fervent prayers. We read also of a church in a private family, v. 19. It is very probable that the family itself is called *the church in their house*. Note, Every Christian family should in some respects be a Christian church. In some cases (as, for instance, were they cast away on a foreign shore, where there are no other Christians), they should be a church themselves, if large enough, and live in the use of all ordinances; but in common cases they should live under the direction of Christian rules, and daily offer up Christian worship. Wherever two or three are gathered together, and Christ is among them, there is a church. To these salutations he subjoins, 1. An advice, that *they should greet one another with a holy kiss* (v. 20), or with sincere good-will, a tacit reproof of their feuds and factions. When the churches of Asia, and the Christian brethren so remote, did so heartily salute them in the Lord, and own and love them as brethren, and expressed so much good-will to them, it would be a shame for them not to own and love one another as brethren. Note, The love of the brethren should be a powerful incentive to mutual love. When the other churches of Christ love us all, we are very culpable if we do not love one another. 2. He subjoins his own salutation: *The salutation of me Paul with my own hand*, v. 21. His *amanuensis*, it is reasonable to think, wrote the rest of his epistle from his mouth, but at the close it was fit that himself should sign it, that they might know it to be genuine; and therefore it is added (2 Th. 3:17), *Which is my token in every epistle*, the mark of its being genuine; so he wrote in every epistle which he did not wholly pen, as he did that to the Galatians, Gal. 6:11. Note, Those churches to whom apostolical letters were sent were duly certified of their being authentic and divine. Nor would Paul be behind the rest of the brethren in respect to the Corinthians; and therefore, after he has given their salutations, he adds his own.

II. With a very solemn warning to them: *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha*, v. 22. We sometimes need words of threatening, that we may fear. *Blessed is he*, says the wise man, *who feareth always*. Holy fear is a very good friend both to holy faith and holy living. An how much reason have all Christians to fear falling under this doom! *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha*. Here observe, 1. The person described, who is liable to this doom: *He that loveth not the Lord Jesus Christ*. A *meiopsis*, as some think; he who blasphemes Christ disowns his doctrine, slights and contemns his institutions, or, through pride of human knowledge and learning, despises his revelations. It stands here as a warning to the Corinthians and a rebuke of their criminal behaviour. It is an admonition to them not to be led away from the simplicity of the gospel, or those principles of it which were the great motives to purity of life, by pretenders to science, by the wisdom of the world, which would call their religion folly, and its most important doctrines absurd and ridiculous. Those men had a spite at Christ; and, if the Corinthians give ear to their seducing speeches, they were in danger of apostatizing from him. Against this he gives them here a very solemn caution. "Do not give into such conduct, if you would escape the severest vengeance." Note, Professed Christians will, by contempt of Christ, and revolt from him, bring upon

themselves the most dreadful destruction. Some understand the words as they lie, in their plain and obvious meaning, for such as are without holy and sincere affection for the Lord Jesus Christ. Many who have his name much in their mouths have no true love to him in their hearts, will not have him to rule over them (Lu. 19:27), no, not though they have very towering hopes of being saved by him. And none love him in truth who do not love his laws and keep his commandments. Note, There are many Christians in name who do not love Christ Jesus the Lord in sincerity. But can any thing be more criminal or provoking? What, not love the most glorious lover in the world! Him who loved us, and gave himself for us, who shed his blood for us, to testify his love to us, and that after heinous wrong and provocation! What had we a power of loving for, if we are unmoved with such love as this, and without affection to such a Saviour? But, 2. We have here the doom of the person described: "*Let him be Anathema, Maran-atha*, lie under the heaviest and most dreadful curse. Let him be separated from the people of God, from the favour of God, and delivered up to his final, irrevocable, and inexorable vengeance" *Maran-atha* is a Syriac phrase, and signifies *The Lord cometh*. That very Lord whom they do not love, to whom they are inwardly and really disaffected whatever outward profession they make, is coming to execute judgment. And to be exposed to his wrath, to be divided to his left hand, to be condemned by him, how dreadful! If he will destroy, who can save? Those who fall under his condemning sentence must perish, and that for ever. Note, Those who love not the Lord Jesus Christ must perish without remedy. *The wrath of God abides on every one who believes not on the Son*, Jn. 3:36. And true faith in Christ will evermore be productive of sincere love to him. Those who love him not cannot be believers in him.

III. With his good wishes for them and expressions of good-will to them. 1. With his good wishes: *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you*, v. 23. As much as if he had said, "Though I warn you against falling under his displeasure, I heartily wish you an interest in his dearest love and his eternal favour." The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ comprehends in it all that is good, for time or eternity. To wish our friends may have this grace with them is wishing them the utmost good. And this we should wish all our friends and brethren in Christ. We can wish them nothing more, and we should wish them nothing less. We should heartily pray that they may value, and seek, and obtain, and secure, the grace and good-will of their Lord and Judge. Note, The most solemn warnings are the result of the tenderest affection and the greatest good-will. We may tell our brethren and friends with great plainness and pathos that, if they love not the Lord Jesus Christ, they must perish, while we heartily wish the grace of Christ may be with them. Nay, we may give them this warning that they may prize and lay hold of this grace. Note also, How much true Christianity enlarges our hearts; it makes us wish those whom we love the blessings of both worlds; for this is implied in wishing the grace of Christ to be with them. And therefore it is no wonder that the apostle should close all, 2. With the declaration of his love to them in Christ Jesus: *My love be with you all, in Christ Jesus, Amen*, v. 24. He had dealt very plainly with them in this epistle, and told them of their faults with just severity; but, to show that he was not transported with passion, he parts with them in love, makes solemn profession of his love to them, nay, to them all in Christ Jesus, that is, for Christ's sake. He tells them that his heart was with them, that he truly loved them; but lest this, after all, should be deemed flattery and insinuation, he adds that his affection was the result of his religion, and would be guided by the rules of it. His heart would be with them, and he would bear them dear affection as long as their hearts were with Christ, and they bore true

affection to his cause and interest. Note, We should be cordial lovers of all who are in Christ, and who love him in sincerity. Not but we should love all men, and wish them well, and do them what good is in our power; but *those* must have our dearest affection who are dear to Christ, and lovers of him. May our love be with all those who are in Christ Jesus! Amen.