

**Record of Sermons delivered during the month of**  
**August 2022**

(added progressively for each Sunday)

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(see following pages)

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

**The Resurrection of the Christian**

per S Olyott

**1 Corinthians 15:42**

***42 So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.***

We are studying 1 Corinthians. We're in Chapter 15 – which deals with the subject of resurrection. Today we come to verse 35 to the end of the Chapter.

Why is Paul dealing with this subject? Because some of the Corinthians, were so very far from really understanding the Gospel, that they had a creed, which could be put in 5 words: dead men do not rise!

So how does Paul tackle this error? He does it by a series of steps. First of all he shows that Christ rose, (verse 1-11) and that disproves forever their little creed – dead men do not rise. Christ rose! Then in verse 12 -19, he shows us the consequences of their 'little belief'. Verses 20 – 28, He shows us the consequences of Christ rising – this means that there will be a general resurrection at the end of the world. Then he argues again for resurrection from Christian experience in verses 29 – 34.

But when we get to verse 34, we still have a lot of questions which haven't been answered. These questions are probably your questions. We grow older. We die. What happens after death? What happens to a Christian after death? What will resurrection really be like. How can men and women possibly rise, when their bodies have disintegrated? What sort of body can arise from a heap of rubbish?

And what happens to those Christians who don't die. In other words, who are alive when Christ comes back again? Besides – all this is in the future. What's the practical relevance. How can men and women, who are dead, possibly rise, when their bodies have disintegrated? What is the relevance of all of this, in my Christian life?

It's precisely those questions which Paul now answers. They then, are of great interest to us all. We'll take them one at a time and see what Paul says as answer.

The first question is: That's what the first part of verse 35 is about. Some man asks, "How are the dead raised up? That's a question not about the method of resurrection, but about the possibility of it. You know that when a corpse is laid in the ground. If it's dug up afterwards. It's very severely decomposed. Eventually there's only a skeleton. Finally no visible trace. (Also the more immediate result of cremation.) Millions of people have died, of which there is no trace. How can such people possibly rise on the last day?

Look at Paul's answer – it's very brief. Verse 36: <sup>36</sup> *You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.* “How ignorant you are.” Says the Apostle Paul. “You take up a seed and you throw it into the ground and it disintegrates. But what is the result? Well the result is that after a little while, you have a beautiful, green, colourful, vigorous plant, because you throw a seed into the ground and it disintegrates.” Now we are so familiar, with the marvel of growth, that we have become dulled to what a marvel it is. If you didn't know, could you have ever imagined, that by taking a little grain and putting it in the ground – so that it disintegrates from the form in which you put it – that it would actually come out of the ground like that? Could you ever have believed it, if you hadn't known?

If you had never heard of growth of seeds and some one came up to you with one of those little things that budgies eat. Saying, “Put this in the ground. Put a bit of water on it.” So you do. After a little while you're curious so you have a little dig. The seed isn't at all like it was when you put it in the ground. But eventually, if you leave it, it becomes whatever budgie seed turns into. Or the same with any viable seeds. You would never have guessed it. It is a marvel!

“Now then,” says the Apostle, “why should you regard resurrection as incredible.” That seed of course doesn't come alive of itself. The seed must be destroyed, if the new life is to appear. But it is God, who gives it life! It's the same with resurrection.”

Now, Paul is already showing to us, that what follows death is much more glorious than what the Greek's thought. The Greeks thought that when you die, you became a sort of fluttering, shadowy, pathetic ... somewhat. Who fluttered around in a semi-existent Hades. That was the limit of their hope. But Paul is already showing to us, that what follows death is much more marvellous than what preceded it.

So how can men and women rise, once their bodies have disintegrated? He takes us to the seed – that's a marvel, but is not impossible for God. Likewise resurrection is a marvel, but not impossible for God. He leaves it there.

Someone asks a second question. Verse 35: <sup>35</sup> ... *“How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?”* We take a corpse. It's in the ground ... it decomposes ... the skeleton is gone ... there is no trace of it. Decomposed rubbish! What kind of body can arise from a heap of decomposed rubbish? What will the resurrection body be like? That's what he now tackles, at some length. Verses 37 – 49.

If we look carefully at what Paul has to say. And we will do this verse, by verse, shortly. You will see that there are two errors to avoid: The first error is to believe that your resurrection body, will be exactly like your present body. It won't be. The second error is to believe that your resurrection body will be completely different from your present body. It won't be. The new body won't be exactly alike and nor will it be completely different. Paul tells us that there is a continuity between the present body and the future one. That there is an identity between the present body and the future one. While there is a difference between the present and the future one.

Does that seem complicated? Well it isn't complicated at all as we shall see as we go through verse 37- 49, verse by verse.

Verse 37: What lies in the ground when you plant that seed is really nothing like what grows out of it afterwards. What do you put in the ground? There it is, a little bare seed. It could be wheat, some other grain or some other plant. A bare little brown thing. But what grows? Beautiful plants! Marvellous. The decomposition into the ground is only the preparation for what is to follow. The breaking up of that seed is not an obstacle of what is to follow. The breaking up of that seed is the preparation for what is to follow. Verse 37.

How come then, when the seed grows, it is so very different? Verse 38. <sup>38</sup> *But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.* That seed doesn't become a plant, just by saying, "Hay ho! Here I am I'm planted. I will now become a plant." But God gives it a body! One sort of seed produces one sort of flowering plant. Another sort of seed produces another. To those who are amateurs to the details of Botany and you get all your seeds mixed up, you may be unable to determine what will grow from which seed. So you put it in the ground to find out --- what God will do.

Every seed has its own body. It doesn't happen by chance. That's the way God makes it to work. He's planned it that way. That's what God does. That's the way it is with the resurrection. As we will see shortly.

Verse 39: "You see," says, Paul, "There are all sorts of different kinds of body. There are humans, animals, fish, birds. All of them living here on this same planet. But there bodies are completely different from each type of life. Diversity is part of the 'order of things'!"

"Besides those," verse 40, "there are celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies." In other words, besides earthly creatures there are heavenly creatures. Here Paul is talking about angels, the archangel, thrones, dominions, principalities and powers. "But," he says, "the glory of one and the glory of the other are two different things." It's the same, in English, as we describe heavenly bodies. There's the sun here's the moon, the stars. You can tell that star from another. They are different in glory, one from the other. Verse 41

When we follow that, we have a clear principle, from the Apostle. Different types of bodies – different degrees of glory. That's what Paul is saying. That's what we must master. Different kinds of bodies on earth. Different kinds of heavenly bodies. Different kinds of bodies in the universe. Different kinds of bodies – different degrees of glory. That's the way it is, now. Once we are clear on that, there is no difficulty with resurrection.

Verse 42: Having told us all that he says. <sup>42</sup> *So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.* So the corpse is reverently and respectfully laid in the ground. But we know that it is sown – like the seed – in corruption. Very often even before the body has been laid in the ground. You will find part

of that body decaying and decomposing. But when it is raised from the dead there will be nothing corruptible about it at all.

What comes out and what goes in: there is a continuity – an identity – but also a difference. There are different sorts of bodies and there are different degrees of glory.

Verse 43: <sup>43</sup> *It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory.* A corpse has no rights! There is nothing more dishonourable than a corpse. A corpse is something that has to be discarded. Nobody wants a corpse around. But it's raised in glory! Filled with honour. <sup>43</sup> *... It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.* This person died because they became ill, frail, aged or killed in an accident. Nothing proves human weakness more than the fact of death. The ancient Greeks put great pride and trust in the development of the body – health and fitness. Nevertheless they are all dead! No matter how well you serve it, the body is still weak. There it is in the ground. But it's raised in Power! There will be nothing of that frailty. No infirmity. No likelihood – no possibility – of being killed. In the resurrection body.

<sup>44</sup> *It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.* What Paul means there is that this body that you and I have can only operate in this realm. When our Lord was raised from the dead, although he had a real body that could be touched and felt. It was capable of operating in a different realm. That's why our Lord could ascend. That's why he could go quickly from one place to another. Transversing many miles very quickly, without any form of transport. Why he could enter into 'locked rooms'. It was a spiritual body. It was still a body! Not a human body but a spiritual body. It wasn't a ghost. But it was a body capable of operating in a different dimension.

Our Lord is still in a body. But He is in the spiritual realm. There He is with His Father – who has never taken upon Himself human flesh. There He is with the Holy Spirit – who has never taken upon Himself human flesh. But Christ is there enjoying the presence and company of the Holy Trinity in his physical body that He has. Our human nature has been exalted to heaven. Our Lord operates in the realm where the angels and archangel are found. He communes with them. He sees them. They see Him, while His body is invisible to our eyes, though he is not feet and inches from us. Marvellous!

When we are raised from the dead. We shall have such a body. <sup>44</sup> *...If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.*

Verses 45 onward: "You see," says, Paul, "There are two races in the world. Because there are two Adam's. There are two races and each race has its own head and the head of each race is called Adam. There is a 'first' Adam and – lets get the following clear – there is a 'last' Adam. Jesus Christ is never described as a 'second' Adam! That phrase is an invention of Cardinal Newman. Used in His Hymn: "Praise to the Holiest in the Height".

Of course, Jesus isn't the second Adam. Because that might lead us to think that there is going to be a third 'representative' head who was born without a human father. Je-

sus is the LAST Adam. He is the second 'man', because he is the second sort of man that the world has seen. But He is not the second Adam. There is a first Adam and a Last Adam.

The first Adam is the head of this race and all who are united to him. While the Last Adam is the head of a race and all who are united to Him. In this case by Faith, not by human birth. That's what Paul's point is here: What was that first Adam like? He was made – he was made a living soul. He owed his life to another. The first Adam became a living soul. The Last Adam is – a quickening Spirit. [The word, 'became', you will find in your NKJV Bible is in italics, when referring to the Last Adam, meaning that the word wasn't actually in the Greek at that point, because the Last Adam wasn't made. He is a life-giving Spirit.]

The first Adam was made of the dust of the earth, but nobody made the Last Adam. The first Adam owed his life to somebody else. But the Last Adam didn't owe His life to anybody, except Himself! He's the fountain of His own being.

Verse 46: However which one came to this Planet first? Not the spiritual One, but the natural one. And then afterwards the spiritual One. Verse 47: The first one is of the earth – earthy! That's how he was made. God formed him out of the dust of the ground – breathed into him the 'breathe of life' – to become a living soul. But nevertheless he is made of dust. So when you bury him – to dust he returns. That's the constitution of the first Adam and all his race – that's our constitution.

The second Man, however, is the Lord from heaven. He's the Lord and he doesn't have an earthly origin. He comes from heaven. Now as is the 'earthy', verse 48, such are they also, who are of the 'earthy'. If you are joined to Adam by being born a member of the human race. You also are earthy – you have the same constitution as Adam. Then as of the heavenly, such are they also who are of the heavenly. When you are 'born again' and you come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and your are spiritually united to Him. You become a member of the 'new' race. You still have the body of the first race (while on earth), but you are now a member of the new race – a citizen of heaven! You still have an Adamic body. But you are actually, 'born again'. You are a new creature. You are now a member of Christ's race and seen to be in Christ.

Here comes the 'crunch' in verse 49: <sup>49</sup> *Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.* When Paul gets to that point. He's answered the second question: what kind of body can arise from a heap of decomposed rubbish? You have the body of Adam – from dust you are and to dust you return. But you will never be raised from the dead in that sort of body. The sort of body that you will be raised from the dead in, is the body which belongs to this race – the body that the Lord of Glory Himself has, since His Resurrection. Just as surely has you have borne the image of the first Adam. You will bear the image of the Last Adam. "So we shall be like Him", says John, "for we see Him as He is." (1 John 3:2) We shall have bodies like Christ's!

So Paul says in Philippians, (3:21) <sup>21</sup> *who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.* That answers the second question: the future prospect of the Christian is not just to be with Christ, but to be raised from the dead, in a body which is like Christ's.

Next week we will ask a Third Question.

[2875]

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we, may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today. Amen.**

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

**The Resurrection of the Christian – Part 2**

per S Olyott

**1 Corinthians 15:58**

***<sup>58</sup> Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.***

In Chapter 15, Paul is concerned with the proper understanding of 'life after death'. Up to verse 34, he has concentrated on the Greek inspired belief – held by many in the Corinthian church that 'dead men do not rise. He uses the fact of Christ's Resurrection as his starting and finish point. Then from verse 35 to the end of the Chapter he answers the three questions that are still being asked.

The first is (verse 36): How can men and women, who are dead, possibly rise, when their bodies have disintegrated?

Then in verse 37-49 he answers the second question: what kind of body can arise from a heap of decomposed rubbish?

So, now we come to the third question:

We know from elsewhere in the New Testament that when the Lord comes back, there will still be Christians alive, who haven't died. If we understand Revelation correctly. The institutional church won't exist, when Christ comes back. But the Church will exist. There will be Christians on earth. So they won't go through the process of death. They won't be sown and raised. They won't go into the ground like seeds, and be raised up like plants. What will happen to them, at the last day? Are they going to miss out?

Paul answers that in verse 50-57: What happens to Christians who don't die?

The first thing he tells us (verse 50), is that 'flesh and blood', can't inherit the kingdom of God. When Christ comes again, as the Universal king – as we have seen earlier in the Chapter – when all His enemies are conquered and there is no rule anywhere – except Christ's rule. When the new heavens and the new earth – in which dwells righteousness – are set up. No 'flesh and blood' will enter there!

Paul doesn't say, "No bodies, will enter there." He says, "No flesh and blood." He's talking about this present Adamic body. "This body can't live there!" Well that's alright for those who have died and who have been raised with a body like Christ's glorious body. We can understand how they can live there. But what about us if we happen to be alive when Christ comes back. And we have this body when He comes back? <sup>50</sup>  
*... nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.*

Well he tells us. Verse 51, <sup>51</sup> *Behold! I tell you a mystery.* Of course everywhere in the Bible when 'mystery' is used, it means something that has always been true, but is

now being revealed. *We shall not all sleep, ... Not everyone will sleep in the grave. ... but we shall all be changed,...* So don't be discouraged if you are alive when the Lord comes back. Don't need to say, "Oh. The Lord's come and I can't go into the new kingdom, because I've still got my old body. A corruptible body like that can't exist in the incorruptible realm." *Because we will all be changed.*

How long will it take, Paul? <sup>52</sup> *in a moment,...* The Greeks have a word, *atomo*, which means the smallest part of a thing which can't be split any further.<sup>1</sup> "Well," he says, "in an atom of time – in the shortest possible measure of time – we shall be changed." Then he qualifies that further, by saying, ... *in the twinkling of an eye,...* Perhaps we could also translate that as, '*in the flutter of an eyelid*'. How long are you conscious of, when you blink? "That's how long it will take for this body to be changed into that body. Even those who are alive at the time.

When will it be? ... *at the last trumpet.* The sounding of a trumpet figures often in the Old Testament. Usually to announce a festival. The end of the world for Christians will be sounded by a trumpet – the beginning of a festival. Trumpets in the Old Testament also sound for triumph. Fitting because the last day will be a triumph, because everything that has been against Christ has been conquered. And even death itself will be destroyed.

<sup>52</sup> ... *For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.* [We pause for moment to consider an 'aside': Some people believe that when the Lord comes back, He will raise the Christian dead and then for 7 years the world will go on and then later the Lord will raise the rest. You can be freed from this corruption of Scripture, by recognising the explanation of Hywel Griffiths – a 'spirit filled' preacher commended by Olyott in his book: *Preaching – Pure and Simple: A 'secret' rapture* means that there must be a 'muted' trumpet.

The point in our passage is that the trumpet will sound and will announce the Day of triumph and festivity. The trumpet will accompany the Christian dead being raised, as well as the moment when we who are alive, will be changed. The great finale! Nothing after that.

To believe that the Christians alive will be snatched up into the air and the Christian dead will be raised and the Christian bus driver will suddenly be missing and the bus will career of the road. People will wake up in the morning and find that Christians are missing all over the place. As far as the world is concerned: The trumpet must have been muted! But that is not what the Scripture says here.]

"So the dead will be raised incorruptible (*imperishable*) that's when the incorruptible body will take place, for the Christian dead, and we," because Paul puts himself in the shoes of those who would be still alive, "we shall be changed." So when the trumpet

1 In the early days of scientific Chemistry it was found that you could break substances down chemically to particular elements. It was then surmised that if you could break a sample of an element down to the smallest amount that would still be that element – this 'concept' was called an atom of that element. Using the Greek word *atomo*. Incidentally verse 52 is the only time this word is used in the New Testament.

sounds, two things take place: the Christian dead ‘leap’ out of their graves in their incorruptible bodies and the Christians still living, in the fluttering of an eyelid will be changed. Immediately the Christian dead and the Christian alive, both, find themselves changed in the likeness of Christ. That’s what Scripture is teaching here.

Because look at verse 53: <sup>53</sup> *For this perishable body (talking about the dead) must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body (talking about the Christian living) must put on immortality.* (As long as you are alive, you are mortal – you’re prone to die. Once you’re dead you’re not prone to die – you’re already dead. When you are dead you become perishable.) So Paul continues to talk about the Christian dead and the Christian living. The perishable must put on the imperishable and the mortal, immortality. Both will be changed together!

“So,” he says, verse 54, “when this perishable has put on imperishable and this mortal has put on immortality, everything that God has planned and everything that God announced by Isaiah (Chapter 25) will have happened. That will be the Day of the complete destruction of death. The day of the death of death.

Now we come to verses 55 and onwards: Imagine two people having a conflict. They are locked together in mortal battle. One is a malicious and dangerous enemy. It looks like he has all power. Suddenly he’s robbed of all his power and the other gains the ascendancy and the victory. He stands over his defeated enemy and he mocks him. We will do that with death. Death is a tyrant. At present, death tyrannises every person here. But one day we will mock death: where is your power now? Death has a ‘sting’ – it hurts. But where is its sting? It’s lost all its weapons and all its power. Totally devastated and defeated. We will stand with our feet upon it and mock it.

*“Death is swallowed up in victory.”*

<sup>55</sup> *“O death, where is your victory?*

*O death, where is your sting?”*

The grave looked like a winner. Because unless Christ comes back we will all go into the grave. And it looks like the grave has won the victory – because everybody who has ever lived is in the grave – except for Christ (and Enoch and Elijah). Everyone who has gone to the grave is still in the grave. It looks like the grave has won the victory. But we will see at the ‘Last’ that the grave has no victory at all. We shall mock it! We shall dance on the grave of the grave.

“Now.” says Paul, “where does death get its power to hurt from?” Verse 56. “From sin. We only die because we are a sinful race. Where does sin get its strength from? The Law: because when God says, ‘Thou shall not’, a sinful heart says that I am very well going to do so! But Christ perfectly kept the Law and Christ died in our place. He’s robbed death of its sting. He’s defeated the grave, because He’s in the power of an endless life.” Paul has explained that, earlier in the Chapter, and that alone is the reason, and the guarantee of our own resurrection.”

<sup>57</sup> *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

“We’ve got victory over death. But the victory that we have is a ‘given’ victory. We didn’t earn it. Who gave us the victory? God. How did God give us the victory over death? Through the Lord Jesus Christ. So thanks be to God!” That’s the future which awaits us. Either from the grave and being changed into the likeness of Christ at resurrection or being still alive and being changed into the likeness of Christ in the *twinkling of an eye!* That’s what awaits us. A future. An eternity in resurrected bodies, like Christ’s glorious body. It is truly ‘the sky’ and not the grave which is our goal.” That’s why the Apostle there is so filled with triumph and victory. As he has answered the third question about what happens to Christians who don’t die.

Now look at the last verse, because somebody says, “All this talk is about the future. So what! I’ve got to live a Christian life today. It might be a long way off. I might live another 20 years. Or for some much more. It’s all a long way off! How does that affect me today? What’s the relevance of it all?”

He tells us in verse 58. <sup>58</sup> *Therefore*, (in the light of what I’ve had to say), *my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, ...* Here he is telling them that they have lost the grip on the truth. They had forgotten what the truth was. It was about the future. They were saying that dead men don’t rise. Are you tempted to think like that? Are you tempted to think like the world does? That life after death is some fluttery substance ... somewhere ... maybe ... perhaps. “Don’t be moved off what the truth is,” says the Apostle Paul. “be steadfast, immovable. Don’t be so easily swayed. Don’t budge. Don’t be gullible. Get a grip on the truth. Understand what the future of a Christian really is.

“Once you understand what the future of a Christian really is. Then the effect it must have on you,” says the Apostle, Paul, “is to get on with the Gospel work. Isn’t it? If redeemed men end up in glory. And if people in these bodies end up in glorious bodies. All through the Lord Jesus Christ. And if unredeemed men end up in damnation – not even mentioned in this Chapter, as far as their bodies are concerned. If the good news of the Gospel is not just something for this present life, but for the resurrection day and all eternity. Then the truth of resurrection must have an effect on you right now.”

“The thing that it must do, is to move you to get on with the work of the Gospel.” If that really is the future of the Christian. Then we can’t go to Gospel work stingingly. We must go to Gospel work, abundantly. If that really is the future of the Christian. We can’t go to Gospel work on and off. Keen one day and not so keen the next. Fit one day and ‘down in the dumps’ the next. We have to be *always abounding in the work of the Lord*. For when we have that truth in our mind, we then know that the Christian life isn’t a waste of time. We know that we are not spreading ‘fairy tales’. We know that our trials are worth it, because of what is to follow. We know that this life isn’t the only one, for we will be with Christ for ever and ever. It’s worth spending this life for Him.

We know that whatever joys we miss out on, in this life. There are eternal joys to follow. So the Doctrine of the Future, when rightly understood, effects, urgently the living

of the present. <sup>58</sup> *Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.*

[2172]

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we, may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today. Amen.**

**1 Corinthians 16:1-24**

**Paul's Final Requests & Greetings**

per S Olyott

**1 Corinthians 16:10**

***<sup>10</sup> When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am.***

For a considerable time we have been studying 1 Corinthians. We have all been very patient considering that there have been over 50 consecutive Sermons. Today and next week we come to the last Chapter.

We recall that Paul was writing to a city church. The city of Corinth was an immoral city. An incredible place. Things had gone very seriously wrong in the church after Paul, who had established the church initially, had left. It's alright for the ship to be in the sea, but it is never alright for the sea to be in the ship – because then you are sunk. (Is a pithy phrase which has had common use.)

That's precisely what had happened in Corinth. The Corinthian church was in the world, but a good deal of the thinking of the world, was in the church.

So Paul has to write. Remember that this is taking place within 20 years of the Cross! He writes this marvellous, practical letter. We have surely learned a great deal from it.

Let's be reminded of some of the themes that have been presented:

- By now we should be clear about how God saves people. This is vitally important to all who are engaged in Christian work.
- How to grow as a Christian.
- The principles of Christian work. (6 weeks on that!)
- What excommunication is and when it is necessary and how it is to be done.
- Why sin matters.
- What the Bible teaches about marriage and singleness.
- What is a question of Christian Liberty and what isn't and how to treat people who differ with us in those areas.
- The peril of apostasy.
- Men and women praying and prophesying.
- Being clear on the Lord's Supper.
- The Baptism of the Spirit and the Gifts of the Spirit.
- Lastly, the subject of resurrection. First Christ's and consequently ours.

Now we come to the last Chapter. Perhaps we should carefully read again the previous 15 Chapters to remind ourselves of the themes presented there.

The last Chapter is quite different from all the other Chapters. All the others take one or two great themes and Paul authoritatively teaches about them. But the last Chapter

is really quite chatty. So we are reminded that it is a personal letter that Paul has been writing, as he is signing off. We identify six themes in this last Chapter. Paul deals with each one very briefly. Because there are still a number of things that he must talk to the Corinthian church about, before he finishes.

So we will plan to expound each of themes as delivered to the Corinthians and after each draw a lesson that is appropriate to us at the present time:

Verses 1-4, deal with the subject of a collection. “As I sign the letter off,” says Paul, “the very first thing I want to talk to you about, in these closing matters, is the subject of a collection.” This was something that mattered a great deal to Paul. As you find in the other references to it in the New Testament.

Over there in Jerusalem, the Christians were very poor. In any event, Jerusalem was a poor place, but most of the people who lived there received gifts from richer Jews in different parts of the world. So they, generally, could ‘keep the wolf from the door’ in that way. Now it was mainly Jews there who had become Christian in Jerusalem. The extra funds from outside were not available to Jews who had become Christian. In addition they were hounded and persecuted by the establishment Jews, which added to the financial pressure. They were very, very poor indeed!

Paul was concerned that the remainder of the churches, make a collection and provide it to the Jerusalem Christians to alleviate their severe poverty. He was very concerned indeed. Of course they needed the help, but another point was that if the ‘world’ can send gifts to its poor, it would be a shaming example, if the Church of Christ could not choose to send gifts to its poor. Not only this, but they, in Jerusalem were almost completely Jewish converts. Whereas most of the other Christian churches were composed of Gentile converts. Rightly or wrongly there had been an element of suspicion between these differing groups of churches. Paul realised that if the Gentile churches collected an immense sum of money, and sent it to that Jewish church, to alleviate its distress, then there would be more fellowship and more unity and understanding – less suspicion – between the two church groups.

So he is very concerned and he tells them in verse 1, that the instructions that he has given to the other churches in Galatia, should also be observed in Corinth.

These instructions he repeats in verse two. “The day for giving will be the Lord’s Day.” The people who are to give are ‘everyone’! “Everybody in the church is to give money on the Lord’s Day. Everyone of you is to make a contribution. The money which comes: it, – this regular contribution –” he says, verse 2, “is to be stored up.” Presumably in the church ‘treasury’. So that when he comes there will be no collecting. Interesting that the Apostle Paul was not in favour of special-effort bulk collection. Rather the building up of regular sustainable offerings. “Everyone of you, no exceptions, put something aside each Sunday.” And he adds “As God has prospered you.”

In other words, those who have received the most are to give the most. It’s a sort of spiritual income tax! Those that God has prospered the most in material things. God has put on them the greatest responsibility to provide for the needs of others. Paul doesn’t actually lay down the ‘tithe’ – which is the giving of 1/10th. But as we remember from the Old Testament, believers gave the tithe, even before the Ceremonial Law.

While Our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 23 also underlined the importance of the tithe. It seems unthinkable that New Testament believers – with their superior privileges – would give less than 1/10th of their income to the work of the gospel.

Verse 3: <sup>3</sup> *And when I arrive, I will send, those whom you accredit by letter, to carry your gift to Jerusalem.* In other words the Corinthians were to choose men from the church. Paul would then commend them with letters to go to Jerusalem. So that he himself, although he was inspiring the collection. Would not 'lay a finger' on a 'penny piece'. The Apostle was incredibly discrete and wise when it came to handling of the money. The church would raise the money. The church would elect its own representatives to accompany the money. And Paul would give them letters of commendation. So that they were received, and trusted when they arrived at the other end.

Then he tells them, verse 4, that if it seemed appropriate, he in fact would go with them.

That's the end of the first theme. At once there are important lessons for us.

(Although this Chapter is very 'chatty', it still has much of relevance to us.)

There is a great deal of talk these days, for instance, about inter church relationships. How should church relate to church? As you study the New Testament. One thing that surprises you is that you never see one church doing one thing together with another church. Interesting. They don't do things together!

But what you do find, is the sort of thing that we find here. When one church is in need, then the other churches recognise that that church is a member of the same Christian 'family', so they do everything in their power to satisfy that need. Also when a person travels to another church, he is accompanied by a letter of commendation, so that he is trusted when he gets to his destination. So two things occur in the New Testament model: communication between the churches – by means of members who were visiting – and the satisfying of needs as they arose. That's where inter-church relationships start, in the New Testament. It's encouraging when such things occur in more modern times.

Verses 5-9: Where Paul talks about his plans. "Now," he says, in verse 5, "I intend to visit you. I plan to pass through Macedonia." Which was the northern part of Greece. When I do. I will come to you In Corinth.",

"None the less." he says in verse 6, "there is some uncertainty in my plans. Maybe I'll spend some time with you – perhaps even pass the winter with you. Then you can *help me on my journey, wherever I go.*" That expectation throws an interesting light on a practice of the New Testament. If a travelling Christian preacher – with proper credentials – came to a church. Then the church took responsibility to supply all his needs, while he was amongst them, and took responsibility to see that he arrived safely at the next church, which he was visiting.

So should we. All part of New Testament relationships.

“But,” he says at verse 7, “I don’t want my visit at Corinth to be a passing visit. I want to spend some time with you. But I’m the Lord’s servant and must do as the Lord wills! Any plans which I make. Must be made subject to the condition that God may intervene and direct me otherwise.”

There are two important lessons there: You can see sensible planning is part of Christian guidance. Paul is planning out the future months. In fact the plans he makes here, which were provisional, actually came to pass. If you read the Book of Acts, you see that he left Ephesus, from which he was writing. He went through Macedonia and came into Greece where he stayed three months. (Acts 20:3)

So he makes sensible plans, but always with the proviso – if the Lord permits.

We may think that the plans we make are sensible and apt, but we must always keep in mind that God in His providence may make it impossible or may direct our mind or thoughts elsewhere. Sensible planning is not nonspiritual.

Because, look at verse 8 & 9. “I’ll stay at Ephesus,” he says, “until Pentecost.” Why stay at Ephesus, Paul. “Well, I’m enjoying great opportunities for the Gospel here. The door is wide open for effectual work.” And there is another reason why he should stay at Ephesus. “There are many adversaries.” Even when things are going well in Christian work there is plenty that could discourage us. Even when we have the greatest of opportunities. <sup>9</sup>... *there are many adversaries*. Christian work is always a combination of encouragement and discouragement. The only thing that alters is the balance. Sometimes the discouragement is the greater and vice versa – you never have one without the other. That’s the circumstance which is effecting Paul.

Having talked about Christian work, he now talks about Christian workers: Timothy and Apollos. The third section of this ‘chatty’ Chapter is verses 10-12.

Earlier, we can remember, in Chapter 4, Paul said that he was going to send Timothy to Corinth. In the Acts (19:22) of the Apostles we see that Timothy set off with a friend called Erastus. But there is still some doubt in Paul’s mind whether Timothy will arrive at Corinth. Of course, all plans are made: if the Lord permits!

Nonetheless he seems reasonably sure that Timothy will get to Corinth so he smooths the way for him in verse 10. <sup>10</sup> *When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, ...* Isn’t that interesting. Timothy was a very young man – he was still quite a young man years later when Paul wrote to him in the letters addressed to Timothy. Not only was he a very young, but he was a timid young man. That doesn’t tie in with some modern notions of great Christian leadership.

Timothy was a timid young man! “But,” says Paul, verse 10, “he’s as much a Gospel Minister as I am myself. Because of that, nobody is to despise him!” That means nobody is to look down on him. That’s what can happen. A young man comes who is timid – quiet in his disposition. Immediately there is somebody who grunts. “No,” says Paul, “He’s as much a Gospel Minister as I am myself! Therefore nobody is to despise him. You’re to conduct him in peace. (KJV) In other words you’re to send him off to his next destination, just like you would send me. Going with peace – that is without anybody ‘getting at’ him.”

“I’m looking for him to come back to me.” He says, in verse 11, “Just like I’m looking for the other brethren’

There are lessons here to be learnt. Olyott reports:

He was brought up in a sort of Christianity, which gave you the impression that unless you were a Cambridge ‘blue’ at Rugged. You had no chance whatever of doing anything at all in the Lord’s work. A myth! That you had to be some sort of Charismatic figure (in the correct meaning of Charisma). Someone with a sort of overwhelming charm, which conquers people. Or with a super-powered personality so that at a suggestion everybody jumps to it. If you weren’t that sort of overpowering personality, the impression was given that you would never succeed in doing anything for God.

Therefore if anyone was like how Timothy is described, or just plain scared, he can be ‘written off’.

That sort of thinking would have written off a ‘Timothy’ long ago. But Paul says, “Such a man is a Gospel Minister. He has the proper graces – the correct gifts. He’s been commended by the churches. He is to be received as an Apostle would have been received.” Because he is to be respected for his work sake. The fact that you can see certain defects, as you may see them, in his personality. Means that you are not to detract from the authority of his Ministry.

Next week we will return to Chapter 16 at verse 12, where we will have the fourth point theme expounded.

[2371]

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we, may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today.  
Amen.**

1 Corinthians 16:1-24

## Paul's Final Requests & Greetings – Part 2

per S Olyott

**1 Corinthians 16:23,24**

***<sup>23</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. <sup>24</sup> My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.***

We continue with the six themes identified in Paul's last Chapter

Apollos is mentioned in verse 12. <sup>12</sup> *Now concerning our brother Apollos<sup>2</sup>, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brothers,* “So when Timothy, Erastus and the others all set off to their various ‘ports of call’, I put my arm around Apollos and said to him, ‘Do go down to Corinth and sort them all out.’ “ But what did Apollos say? Did he hold both arms up into the air and wave them, and say, “I haven’t been led.” They didn’t talk like that in the early church. All this ‘waiting to be led’! We can’t imagine where that came from, but you don’t find it in the New Testament. Apollos weighed up all the ‘pros and cons’ of going to Corinth and the other needs that had to be satisfied in the early churches. Then using his judgement he came to the conclusion, saying to Paul, “Yes, Paul – but not yet. There are other things that have to be done first.” So he made his decision on the basis of his Christian judgement<sup>3</sup>.

That’s a very useful lesson, also. As far as guidance is concerned. Young people particularly, come to a point of having to make decisions about their future. Unfortunately some appear totally passive. It’s as if they would lie on a bed and wait for a part of the ceiling paper to fall down, with a word being spelt out in the fragments, telling them what they should do next! A waiting for omens<sup>4</sup>. Or feelings – some overwhelming emotion.

You don’t find that in the New Testament. More appropriately: people weighed up the pros and cons and use their Christian mind. They prayed to God for wisdom and used their Christian mind, coming to a conclusion. Then proceeded in good faith, believing that God had given them the wisdom which they required. That’s guidance! God has made you a reasoning man or a woman – not a passive automaton or puppet.

Verses 13 & 14. Where he bursts into a list of short instructions. It’s not clear why he has done that. He’s been talking about collections, his own plans and about Timothy and Apollos. Then he suddenly stops and issues a few instructions to Christians –

<sup>2</sup> It is suggested by the Reformation Study Bible, that this reference by Paul is related to the requests the Corinthians had put to him in their earlier letters to him. In this case a request for Apollos to return to them (having been there earlier).

<sup>3</sup> In view of Olyott’s interpretation one might consider the footnote (or *God’s will for him*) in the ESV to be more interpretation (conditioned by current attitudes) than translation.

<sup>4</sup> Omens. An event regarded as a portent of good or evil.

with a few 'spurs' towards Christian living. But it is clear, nonetheless that what he says in these verses is what we need to hear very, very often.

*Be watchfull.* The same word Jesus used in his parable of the 'second coming'<sup>5</sup> (Matthew 25:13). About being alert, unless the 'Son of Man' comes and you are not ready for Him. Paul takes that entreaty: "Be watchful," he says, "be on the alert. The Lord's coming again. Never forget it. Be always watching!"

Then he says, *stand firm in the faith*, ... How immature they had been there in Corinth. So easily swayed. Always agreeing with the last person to speak. When people came up with the idea of denying the resurrection – they were even carried away with that. So he says, "No! Don't budge from the Christian faith."

Next: *act like men, be strong* ... "Prove to the world that you are men." God bless the churches with a restoration of Christian manliness. Isn't it awful that many of the advocates of the Christian faith of this day are so meek. "No! Be manly about your faith." he says, "Away with that immaturity, which I've spoken about earlier in this letter. Stand up and be counted, be mature, filled with understanding, and be strong!" Or as it is in the Greek, which is very interesting – to be made strong! Because we none of us are any intrinsically stronger today than when we were first Christians. If any of us have any strength to resist temptation – or any strength to stand up and witness for Christ, ever – it's because we have been made strong.

"So call out for strength. To be made strong. And everything," he says, in verse 14, "everything, be done in love!" Everything to be done in love! Every personal conversation; everything done at work; everything done in the home; everything done in the church. It's all to be done with the desire for the other person's good.

Self esteem. Your point of view. Don't come into it. Your burning desire in life. Whoever you're amongst, is to desire their good. Their profit. Their benefit. Their progress. Let everything be done that way.

A good set of instructions! If you find a Christian looking for the 'Second Coming'. Never budging from the Apostolic faith. Willing to stand up and be counted for Christ. Praying to God for strength and always seeking the benefit of everybody that he mixes with. Then you've found a Christian in deed!

Verse 15-18: Where he gives us an example to follow. There are some people, who however much you exhort them and give them precepts, it never seems to reach them. But give them an example and things are different. Our job is to teach people, not only by precept, but also by example. So Paul does it in verses 15-18.

5 Γρηγορεύετε Grēgoreite to be awake, to watch Also at Matthew 25:13

The example which he gives. Is the example of Stephanas and his household. These were the very first persons to be converted in that part of the world where Corinth was situated. They were addicts! Hear what was said: <sup>5</sup> *Now I urge you, brothers<sup>[3]</sup>—you know that the household<sup>[4]</sup> of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints—* (Olyott's description of the family being 'addicts' comes from the KJV where 'addicted' was used where the ESV uses 'devoted'.)

When Stephanas and his family were converted. They didn't seek leadership in the church. They didn't seek prominence in the church. They didn't gather around each other and ask if they were called to the Ministry, even. What they did was they gathered as a family and they said, "In what way can we do the Lord's people good. How can we benefit and help the Lord's people. Then everything, which occurred to them, they went and did it. They addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.

"Now," says Paul, "Now that you've got such people in the church who are the servants of the church: submit to them! That's Christ's way. Christ's way is that we submit to those who are servants. The world's way is that we submit to those who are masters. But Jesus said in effect, "It shall not be so among you." Christ's way is that we submit to those who are servants. So Paul tells us in verse 16. "Let the leadership of the church be in the hands of such people as that and anybody else, who labours to the point of weariness." In other words the leadership of the church is to be in the hands of those who work – in such a way that they will work themselves 'to the bone' – for the good of other Christians. That's what he is saying.

Then he goes on, in verse 17, to talk about others who are servants of the church.

Three men had come to visit him: Stephanus, Fortunatus and Achaicus. (It was the Stephanus that he has just been talking about.) Everything that he was missing on his absence from Corinth. They made it up to him. Refreshing Paul's spirit as they refreshed their own. "Give due credit to such people. Assign to them their true worth," says the Apostle. In other words: "These people have done a humble task. They have left Corinth. They have come to visit me and they have done you back at Corinth good, because it's done good to have sent them. And done me good having them."

We could spend much more time on verses 15-18, but in short summary we could ask: who does Paul regard as spiritually great? Servants. Where does he tell a church to look for its leadership? Amongst the servants. How is he and the church refreshed spiritually? By servants.

That surely speaks to our times. There are too many people looking for some great thing to do for God. The people who look for some great thing to do for God. Almost always end up doing nothing for God. The man that God uses, is the man who says, "I will do anything for God. However humble. However mundane. However unnoticed. However undramatic. However insignificant ... I will do anything for God.

When they are faithful in little, very often God will permit them to be faithful in much. (Luke 16:10) That's why it is an awful thing to hear a Christian say, "I can't do anything. There's nothing I can do." Little tasks around the church. Perhaps not even noticed when they are done. Start there! But as long as you say, "I want some great thing to do for God." You'll do precisely nothing. But the day you'll say, "I'll do anything for God – however mundane it is – especially if it will benefit the fellowship and you start doing it. You will suddenly find that God has put more work in your hand. You can be sure that anybody who has true leadership in churches is somebody who started as, and still is, a servant of the church.

You see, in that way, God guarantees that His servants work for His glory and not for their own self esteem!

Last of all let's look at verse 19-24: Where we come to final greetings from Paul.

As he is writing, Paul is in Ephesus in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). In verse 19 he sends greetings from there to that church in Corinth and by extension to all others, who in due course are to read his letter. He mentions Aquila and Priscilla (Prisca), who used to live in Corinth. They now live in Ephesus where Paul is with them. "They send their hearty greetings. They salute you much in the Lord. So does the church which is in their house." They are still as hospitable as ever. Just as they were in Corinth.

Then verse 20: All the Apostolic band, who is with Paul. They send their greetings! "And," says Paul, "greetings, isn't just something that goes from people that don't see each other. They're not something that just goes on from absent Christians. Greet you one another (in person). With a holy kiss." Well at least we should transfer the principle to modern times, even if we are not too keen on an unhygienic (especially in 'pandemic times') practice.

It would be so sad when fellow Christians can come into a church and miss out on being greeted by the other Christians in that church. That can't happen if the Apostle's injunction, given here, is obeyed. It's seems to be easy to greet an 'absent' church, but it can appear difficult to greet Christians all around us. The church should be a mutually welcoming body. Therefore we should make a point of welcoming one another. And the person who sits waiting to be welcomed is as guilty as those who don't welcome. Because we are all required to welcome one another. We are a fellowship!

Now at verse 20, the amanuenses – the man who has been writing everything down, while Paul has walked up and down the room, dictating the letter. He put's down his pen. And Paul, as he does in all his letters, (as he tells us in 2 Thessalonians) takes up the pen and the last few words of his letter are written in his own handwriting. That's what happens from verse 21. This could be a sermon all on it's own! *I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.* There's a little space left on the paper so he decides to fill it up. First of all he fills it up with his test of fellowship: <sup>22</sup> *If anyone has no*

*love for the Lord, let him be accursed.* That's Paul's test on fellowship. If someone doesn't love Christ – he's not even to be considered as a Christian. (In the KJV the word used is Anathema<sup>6</sup> - meaning to be ex-communicated, not to be regarded as a Christian.)

“No matter how sound they are in doctrine in general. Or what Confession they subscribe to. Which preacher they have been under or what fellowship they belong to: if they don't love Christ, I can't recognise them as fellow Christians.” That's the first thing he says as he signs off.

Then he talks about his fondest hope. Marana tha!<sup>7</sup> It's an Aramaic term – a language our Lord spoke. It means, “Lord come!” (As used in the ESV translation) His greatest hope: the coming of Christ. He was talking about it in Chapter 15.

Then he writes down his continuing prayer: <sup>23</sup> *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.* He longs for spiritual grace and strength to be in the hearts of them all. Then he finishes with his tender conclusion: <sup>24</sup> *My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.* He says some hard words in this letter. But he won't put his pen down without assuring all who have read it, that he loves them.

It's in those last few words where you see finally what Paul's really like. Paul's not just a wise counsellor. Not just a trusted pastor. Not just a profound theologian. Paul is still, at heart, a simple Christian. That's the way it is with every true man of God.

We thank you Father for the Apostle Paul and his burning love for the Lord Jesus Christ. Bless our hearts with such a love. We thank you for his longing for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Bless our hearts, in this world, with such a longing. We thank you for his loving concern for fellow Christians. He longed to see your grace in their lives. Fill us, we pray, with concern for each other's spiritual progress. We thank you for his tender love as he concludes this letter to us. Which has often rebuked and hurt our hearts. We thank you that that love is a reflection of your own. We pray that the practical lessons, the doctrinal lessons that we have learned today and in all the previous weeks may now find a lodging place in our memories. Praying that something of the simplicity of the Godly life shall return to all of us. Hear our prayer for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

[2433]

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we, may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today. Amen.**

6 Which is also the transliteration of the Greek word: **ἀνάθεμα** which Paul uses.

7 The transliteration of the Greek text for a phrase of two words

