

First Corinthians

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¹This letter comes from Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ according to the will of God, and from Sosthenes, our brother. ² It is sent to the church of God in Corinth, those who are being made right in Christ Jesus, called to live holy lives—and to everyone who worships the Lord Jesus Christ everywhere, the Lord both of them and of us.

³May you have grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ I'm always thanking God for you because of the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus. ⁵ Through him you have been made rich in everything, in all that you say and every aspect of what you know. ⁶ In fact the testimony of Christ was proved valid in your experience, ⁷ so that you're not missing any spiritual gift as you wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸ He will also keep you strong to the very end, so you will be kept right until the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is trustworthy who called you to share together in fellowship with his son Jesus Christ our Lord.

¹⁰Brothers and sisters, I plead with you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you all agree and that you're not divided. Instead develop a united attitude and purpose. ¹¹ For I have been told things about you, my brothers and sisters, by some of Chloe's people—that you are quarreling among yourselves. ¹² Let

me explain what I mean. You're all making different claims: "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Peter," or "I follow Christ."

¹³ Is Christ divided? Did Paul die on a cross for you? Was it in the name of Paul that you were baptized?

¹⁴I'm grateful to God that I didn't baptize any of you, except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ so nobody can claim they were baptized in my name. ¹⁶

(Oh, and I also baptized the Stephanas family—I can't think of anyone else). ¹⁷ For Christ didn't send me out to baptize, but to spread the good news, and not with eloquent human wisdom, otherwise the cross of Christ would be made powerless. ¹

¹⁸For the message of the cross is nonsense to those who are lost, but it's the power of God to those of us who are saved. ¹⁹ As Scripture says, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and I will wipe out the cleverness of the clever." ²

²⁰So how about the wise, the writers, and the philosophers of this age? Hasn't God turned the wisdom of this world into foolishness? ²¹ Since God in his wisdom allowed the world in its wisdom not to know God, it was God's gracious plan that by the foolishness of the good news those who trusted in him would be saved. ²² The Jews ask for miraculous signs, and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³ but

¹ + 1:17. Or "ineffectual." Literally, "emptied."

² + 1:19. Probably referencing Isaiah 29:14.

our message is of Christ killed on a cross—offensive to the Jews, and foolishness to the foreigners. ²⁴

However for those who are called by God, both Jews and foreigners, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than we are; and the weakness of God is stronger than we are.

²⁶ Brothers and sisters, remember your calling—and that this did not include many who are wise, humanly speaking; not many who are powerful; not many who are important. ²⁷ Instead God chose the things the world considers foolish to humiliate those who think they are wise. He chose the things the world considers weak to humiliate those who think they are strong. ²⁸ He chose the things that are unimportant and despised by the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ³ ²⁹ so that nobody should boast in God's presence.

³⁰ It's because of him that you live in Christ Jesus, who God made to be wisdom for us. He sets us right, keeps us right, and frees us. ³¹ So as Scripture says, "Whoever wants to boast, let them boast in the Lord." ⁴

² Brothers and sisters, when I came to you I didn't try to impress you with wonderful words or great

wisdom when I told you what God had to say to you. ² I decided that while I was with you I didn't want to concentrate on anything except Jesus Christ, and that he was crucified. ³ I came to you in weakness, fearful and trembling. ⁴ I didn't speak to you with persuasive words of wisdom to convince you. I just explained it all to you through the evidence and power of the Spirit. ⁵ That way your trust in God wouldn't rely on human wisdom but on the power of God.

⁶ However we do use words of wisdom when we speak to those who are spiritually mature, but this isn't wisdom that comes from this world, or from the rulers of this world who soon fade from the scene. ⁷ On the contrary we explain God's wisdom in terms of a revealed mystery ⁵ that was previously hidden which God planned for our glory before the creation of the worlds.

⁸ None of the rulers of this world understood anything about this—for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ But as Scripture says, "No one has ever seen, and no one has ever heard, and no one has ever imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." ⁶ ¹⁰ But God has revealed this to us through the Spirit, because the Spirit delves into the depths of God. ¹¹ Who knows anyone's thoughts except

³ + **1:28.** This complicated verse is really saying that God uses things and people not viewed as important by this world to demonstrate what really is important.

⁴ + **1:31.** Referencing Jer. 9:23.

⁵ + **2:7.** When the word mystery is used in the New Testament it is normally referring to a 'revealed' mystery—particularly in reference to God becoming human in the person of Jesus Christ.

⁶ + **2:9.** From Is. 64 and 65.

the actual person? ⁷ In the same way no one knows God's thoughts except the Spirit of God. ¹² For we have received the Spirit from God, not the spirit of this world, so that we could understand what God so generously gave us. ¹³ That's what we speak about—not using words taught by human wisdom, but what the Spirit teaches. We explain what is spiritual using spiritual terms. ¹⁴ Of course people who are not spiritual don't accept what comes from God's Spirit. It's just foolish nonsense to them, and they can't understand it, because what is spiritual has to be properly examined. ¹⁵ People who are spiritual investigate everything, but are not placed under investigation themselves. ⁸ ¹⁶ For "Who understands the Lord's mind, and would think to instruct him?" ⁹ But we 'do' have Christ's mind!

³ My brothers and sisters, I couldn't talk ¹⁰ with you as spiritual believers, but as worldly people—like baby Christians. ² I gave you milk—I couldn't give you solid food to eat, because you weren't ready for it. ³ Even now you're not ready for it, because you're still worldly. Since you're still jealous and argumentative, doesn't that show you're worldly, behaving just like ordinary people do? ⁴ When one of you says, "I follow Paul," while another says, "I follow Apollos," doesn't that show you're being so

very human?

⁵ Who is Apollos, anyway? And who is Paul? We're just servants through whom you believed. Each of us does the work God gave us to do. ⁶ I did the planting, Apollos did the watering—but it was God who made you grow!

⁷ So the one who does the planting doesn't count for anything, any more than the one who does the watering. The only one who matters is God who is growing you! ⁸ The one planting and the one watering have the same goal, and both will be rewarded according to what they've done.

⁹ We are workers together with God—and you are God's field, his building. ¹⁰ Through the grace of God that he gave to me, I laid down the foundation like a skilled building supervisor. Now someone else is building on it. Whoever does the building needs to watch what they're doing. ¹¹ For no one can lay any other foundation than what's already laid—that is Jesus Christ. ¹² Those who build on that foundation may use gold, silver, precious stone, wood, hay, or straw— ¹³ but whatever is used to build with will be exposed. For on the Day of Judgment fire will reveal it and test it. Everyone's work will be shown for what it is. ¹⁴ Those whose building survives will be rewarded. ¹⁵ Those whose building

⁷ + 2:11. Literally, "who among men knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man that is in him?"

⁸ + 2:15. "Investigate/investigation"—the same word is used in the original, and can also mean to examine or to judge. It is also related to the word translated "examined" in verse 14. English does not capture the subtlety of the original.

⁹ + 2:16. Isaiah 40:13.

¹⁰ + 3:1. Presumably while he was visiting them previously.

is burned up will lose out. They will still be saved, but it will be like passing through fire! ¹⁶ Don't you know you are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? ¹⁷ Anyone who destroys God's temple will be destroyed by God, for God's temple is holy, and you are the temple.

¹⁸ Don't deceive yourselves. If there's anyone of you who thinks they're worldly wise, they should become fools so they can become truly wise! ¹⁹ This world's wisdom is plain foolishness to God. As Scripture says, "He uses the cleverness of the wise to catch them out," ¹¹ ²⁰ and "The Lord knows the arguments of the wise are pointless." ¹² ²¹ So don't boast about people. For you have everything, ²² whether it's Paul or Apollos or Peter—or the world, or life, or death, or the present, or the future. You have everything— ²³ and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

⁴ So think of us as Christ's servants given the responsibility for "the mysteries of God." ¹³ ² More than this, those who have such responsibilities are required to be trustworthy. ³ Personally it hardly matters to me if you or anyone else judges me—in fact I don't even judge myself. ⁴ I don't know of anything I've done wrong, but that doesn't make me right. It's the Lord who judges me. ⁵ So don't judge

anything before the right time—when the Lord comes. He will bring to light all the darkest secrets that are hidden, and he will reveal people's motives. God will give everyone whatever praise they deserve.

⁶ Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied this to Apollos and myself as an example for you. That way you will learn not to go beyond what has been written, and not in arrogance prefer one over the other. ¹⁴ ⁷ Who made you so special? What do you have that you weren't given? Since you were given it, why do you proudly claim you weren't? ⁸ You think you have all you need. You think you're so wealthy. You think you're kings already, and don't need us. ¹⁵ I wish you were really ruling as kings, so we could rule with you! ⁹ The way I see it, God has put us apostles on display as the last in the line, condemned to die. We have been made a public show before the entire universe, to angels and to human beings. ¹⁰ We're Christ's fools, but you are so wise in Christ! We're the weak ones, but you are so strong! You have the glory, but we are despised! ¹⁶ ¹¹ Right up till now we're hungry and thirsty. We have no clothes. We're badly beaten up, and we have no place to call home. ¹² We struggle on doing manual work. When people curse us, we bless them. When they persecute us, we put up with it. ¹³ When they

¹¹ + 3:19. Job 5:13.

¹² + 3:20. Psalm 94:11.

¹³ + 4:1. Again, in the NT mysteries are the revealed truths of God.

¹⁴ + 4:6. The meaning of original is debated. This is shown in the many differences in translations.

¹⁵ + 4:8. Literally, "without us."

¹⁶ + 4:10. From the context Paul appears to be speaking rather ironically.

insult us, we respond with kindness. Even now we are treated like dirt, the worst trash in the whole world.

14I'm not writing like this to make you feel ashamed, but to caution you as my children whom I love so much.

¹⁵ Even though you may have thousands of Christian instructors, you don't have many fathers—it was in Christ Jesus that I became your father when I shared the good news with you. ¹⁶ So I'm pleading with you to imitate me!

17That's why I sent Timothy to you, my trustworthy son in the Lord who I love so much. He will remind you about the way I follow Christ, just as I always teach in every church I visit. ¹⁸ Some among you have become arrogant, thinking I wouldn't bother coming to see you. ¹⁹ But I am coming to visit you soon, if that's what the Lord wants. Then I'll find out what these arrogant people are saying, and what kind of power they have. ²⁰ For the kingdom of God is not about mere words, but about power. ²¹ So what do you want? Shall I come with a stick to beat you, or in love and a gentle spirit?

5I hear reports that sexual immorality is happening among you, immorality that even the foreigners don't practice. A man is living with his father's wife! ² You are so proud of yourselves! Shouldn't you have

wept with sadness, and excluded the man who did this? ³ Even though I'm not physically present there, I am there in spirit and just as if I were there I've already made my judgment of the one who has done this. ⁴ When you meet together in the name of the Lord Jesus I'll be there with you in spirit and with the power of our Lord Jesus. ⁵ Hand over this man to Satan so his sinful nature may be destroyed and he himself be saved on the day of the Lord ¹⁷.

6You shouldn't be proud about this. Don't you know that it only takes a little yeast to make the whole batch of dough rise? ¹⁸ ⁷ Get rid of this old yeast so that you can be a new batch of dough to make bread without yeast. Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed. ⁸ So let us celebrate this festival ¹⁹, not with old yeast or the yeast of evil and wickedness, but with the bread made without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

9In my previous letter I wrote that you should not associate with immoral people. ¹⁰ I wasn't referring to the immoral people of this world, those who are greedy and cheat others, or those who worship idols, otherwise you'd have to leave this world! ¹¹ What I meant when I wrote was that you shouldn't associate with anyone who is called a Christian who is immoral or greedy

¹⁷ + 5:5. This is not to suggest that Satan "cooperates" in the salvation process. This "handing over to Satan" is figurative language that is meant to indicate that the one involved is allowed to experience the consequences of his sin so that he may choose to return and be saved.

¹⁸ + 5:6. In other words, it only takes a small amount of sin to infect the whole church.

¹⁹ + 5:7. At the time of the Passover the Jews ate bread made without yeast, and threw out all the yeast from their homes. Paul is using this imagery to say that the yeast of sin needs to be removed just as the symbol of sin (yeast) was removed at the time of the sacrifice of the Passover.

or worships idols; or who is abusive or a drunkard or who cheats others. Don't even share a meal with anyone like that! ¹² It's not my place to judge those outside the church. But shouldn't you judge those who are inside the church? ¹³ God judges those that are outside the church. "Expel the wicked from among you."

²⁰

⁶How dare any of you file a lawsuit before pagan judges if you have a dispute with your neighbor! Instead you should bring this before other believers. ² Don't you know that Christian believers will judge the world? If you're going to judge the world, are you not fit to judge in the most minor cases? ³ Don't you know we are going to judge angels? How much more those things that relate to this life! ⁴ So if you have to judge things that relate to this life, how can you go to judges that are not respected by the church? ²¹ ⁵ I'm trying to shame you by saying this. What? You can't find one wise person among you who can settle a dispute that you have? ⁶ Instead one believer takes another believer to court, and places the issue before unbelievers! ⁷ The very fact you have lawsuits against each other already is a complete disaster. Wouldn't it be better to accept the injustice? Why not let yourselves be defrauded? ⁸ But you would rather cause injustice and defraud even your fellow-believers in church.

²⁰ + **5:13.** This is a quotation from Deuteronomy, repeated in several places: Deut 13:5, 17:7, 19:19, 22:24, 24:7.

²¹ + **6:4.** Or "why not choose judges from the least respected members of the church?"

²² + **6:14.** Referring to raising up the body, continuing the subject of the discussion.

²³ + **6:16.** Gen. 2:24.

⁹Don't you know those who are unjust will not inherit the kingdom of God? Don't be fooled! People who are immoral, worship idols, commit adultery, sexual perverts, homosexuals, ¹⁰ thieves, greedy, drunkards, abusers, or cheats, will not inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ Some of you were once like that, but you have been made clean and holy. You have been made right in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

¹²People say, "I'm free to do anything"—but not everything is appropriate! "I'm free to do anything"—but I will not let anything control me! People say, ¹³ "Food for the stomach, and the stomach for food"—but God will destroy both of them. Also, the body is not meant to be used for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴ By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us up the same way ²² . ¹⁵ Don't you know your bodies are parts of Christ's body? Should I take the parts of Christ's body and join them to a prostitute? Absolutely not! ¹⁶ Don't you realize that anyone who has sex with a prostitute becomes "one body" with her? Remember that Scripture says, "The two will become one body." ²³ ¹⁷ But whoever is joined to the Lord is one with him in spirit! ¹⁸ Stay away from sexual immorality! All other sins that people commit are outside of the body, but sexual immorality is a sin against your own

body. ¹⁹ Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit that is within you, that you received from God? ²⁰ You don't belong to yourself—a price was paid for you! So glorify God in your body!

⁷Now about what you wrote to me: "It's good not to marry." ²⁴ ² However, because of the temptation to sexual immorality, it is better that each man have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. ³ The husband should meet his wife's sexual needs, and the wife her husband's. ⁴ The wife's body doesn't just belong to her, but her husband; and similarly the husband's body doesn't just belong to him but his wife. ⁵ So don't deprive each other, except by mutual consent for a while—for example because you want to spend time in prayer. Afterwards be together again so that Satan won't tempt you to sin because of your lack of self-control. ⁶ I'm telling you this not as a command, but as a concession. ⁷ However I wish that everyone was like me, but each person has their own gift from God—one has this gift, one has another. ⁸ To those who are not yet married, or who are widowed, I would say it is better if they remain like me. ⁹ But if they lack self-control, then they should get married—for it is better to marry

than burn with desire.

¹⁰These are my instructions to those who are married—in fact not from me but the Lord: The wife should not leave her husband ¹¹ (or if she does, she should not re-marry, or she should return to her husband); and the husband should not leave his wife ²⁵ . ¹² Now, to the rest of you, (and this is me speaking, not the Lord), I would say, "if a Christian man has a non-Christian wife and she is willing to stay with him, he should not leave her. ¹³ And if a Christian woman has a non-Christian husband, and he is willing to stay with her, she should not leave her husband."

¹⁴For a husband who is not a Christian, the marriage relationship is made holy by the Christian wife, and for a wife who is not a Christian, the marriage relationship is made holy by the Christian husband ²⁶ . Otherwise it would mean your children were impure, but now they are holy. ¹⁵ However if the non-Christian spouse leaves, let them leave. In such cases the Christian man or woman is not slavishly bound, for God has called us to live in peace. ¹⁶ Wives, who knows? You may save your husband! Husbands, who knows? You may save your wife!

²⁴ + 7:1. It seems that some in Corinth were single and the church was writing to ask if this was permissible.

²⁵ + 7:10. One particular problem in the early church was of one spouse becoming Christian, and how then to relate to the non-Christian spouse. This seems to be what is addressed here.

²⁶ + 7:14. Paul is not saying here that by being married to a Christian the non-Christian spouse therefore becomes a Christian or experiences salvation. He is concerned to address the issue that by being married to a non-Christian spouse in some way "defiles" the marriage or the Christian in the relationship. That this is the real issue is made clear concerning children of such a marriage—they are also not "impure" but they are "holy," and this is not any reference to the actual spiritual state of the children.

17 Apart from such cases, each of you should remain in the situation that the Lord has placed you, and continue to live the life to which God has called you. That's my instruction to all the churches. ¹⁸ Were you circumcised when you were converted? Don't become uncircumcised. Were you uncircumcised when you were converted? Don't become circumcised. ¹⁹ Circumcision doesn't mean anything, and uncircumcision doesn't mean anything. Keeping the commandments of God is what really matters. ²⁰ Everyone should remain in the position they were in when they were called ²⁷. ²¹ If you were a slave when you were called, don't worry—though if you have an opportunity to become free, take it. ²² If you were a slave when the Lord called you, you are now free, working for the Lord. In the same way if you were called when you were free, you are now Christ's slave! ²³ A price has been paid for you, so don't become a slave to anyone. ²⁴ Brothers and sisters, remain in the position you were in when you were called, living with God.

25 Now about "people who are not married," ²⁸ I don't have a specific instruction from the Lord, so let me give you my opinion as someone who by the Lord's mercy is considered trustworthy. ²⁶ Because of the present difficult situation we are in I

think it is best to just stay as you are.

²⁷ Are you already married? Don't try to get divorced. Are you unmarried? Don't look to get married. ²⁸ If you do get married, you haven't sinned. If an unmarried woman gets married, she hasn't sinned. But you will have many troubles in this current world and I would want to spare you these. ²⁹ I'm telling you, brothers and sisters, that time is short, and from now on for those who are married it may seem as if they are not married, ³⁰ and those who weep as if they did not weep, and those that celebrated as if they had not celebrated, and those that bought as if they did not own, ³¹ and those who are engaged with the world as if it is not fulfilling—for the present world order is passing away ²⁹.

³² I would prefer you to be free from such worries. A man who is not married pays attention to what is important to the Lord, and how he can please the Lord. ³³ But a man who is married pays attention to what is important in this world, and how he can please his wife. ³⁴ As a result his loyalties are divided. Similarly an unmarried woman or girl pays attention to what is important to the Lord, so she may live a life dedicated both in body and spirit. But a married woman pays attention to what is important in this world, and how she can please her husband. ³⁵ I'm telling you this for your

²⁷ + 7:20. "Called"—in other words, conversion.

²⁸ + 7:25. Literally, "virgins." Paul here continues discussing the issues that the Corinthian church has raised. See 7:1.

²⁹ + 7:31. In this long sentence Paul indicates that even marriage must be related to contemporary events ("time is short"). Living under persecution, expecting the end of all things, means that even marriage is viewed differently, along with everything else.