1 Corinthians 8–13

1 Corinthians 8

Overview

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 420.*

Paul's challenge was to make the strong see how their behavior could affect those with weak consciences (*συνείδησις ἀσθενής*, *syneidēsis asthenēs*)—that is, those lacking a keen sense of right and wrong so far as Church doctrine was concerned. The Greek adjective *asthenēs*, translated "weak," designated that which had limited capacity. It may be that those with weak consciences were those who had a limited capability of understanding the full ramifications and nuances of the gospel because of lack of education or other avenues of training. Therefore, they lacked critical thinking skills, which allowed them to easily misread what others did. Further, these had believed in and were accustomed (*τῇ συνηθείᾳ*, *tē synētheia*) to worshipping idols, and they had not totally abandoned their belief in them (1 Corinthians 8:7). As a result, the actions of those who knew that an idol was nothing could prove a stumbling block to those yet weak in the faith (8:9).

8:4–7

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 421–423.*

One of the problems with Paul's counsel that it is all right to eat meat offered to idols under certain circumstances is that it appears to go against direct Church order. Church leadership, at the Jerusalem

Council in AD 49, had already determined that much of the Mosaic law did not pertain to gentile converts but that certain restrictions were necessary (Acts 15:6–29). These prohibitions were clearly spelled out: "Abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication" (Acts 15:29). Since Paul was a member of the council that dictated these prohibitions, he clearly understood them. Because the Apostle advocated that gentile converts were free to eat idol meat, albeit under certain conditions, some scholars have felt that Paul's stance was nothing short of rebellion.

An overriding concern for both Paul and the Jerusalem Council was *πορνεία* (*porneia*)—that is, sexual immorality. The prohibitions of Acts 15 all look to one activity during which immorality often occurred. That activity can be determined by ascertaining where all four prohibitions came together: where meat was prepared by strangling the animal and not draining the blood, where priests offered its meat as sacrifice to the god, where a ritual feast was held during which the meat was eaten, and where sexual dalliance, *porneia*, often resulted. That activity was cultic feasts held in pagan temples. All this suggests that the prohibition of the council was not concerned with eating idol meat per se but with the circumstances under which it was eaten.

Thus the concern, like that in 6:10, dealt with what was right vis-à-vis what was lawful. Paul readily agreed that the strong in knowledge had the *right* to eat wherever and whatever they pleased, especially since they understood that an idol was nothing. However, what they had as a *right* did not necessarily define what was *best* for them to do. The issue was not with the right to choose but with choosing the right. Paul stressed that "not everyone has this knowledge. And some having previously become accustomed to idols, still consider the food they eat as food offered to idols, and because their sense of right and wrong is weak, it is defiled" (8:7 BYU Rendition). So here Paul was concerned about the weak when the context of eating meats within the precincts of a pagan temple, or in any other way, could be construed as validating idolatry. On the other hand, he took the side of the strong when it came to purchasing meat that is then eaten at home.

8:7–10

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 422.*

Paul definitely felt that the Church's position recognized a difference in certain behavioral activities between Jewish and gentile converts based on their varied cultures. Was that the case with eating meat? Under Jewish law, meat was rendered unfit for consumption if there was an explicit connection between it and idolatrous sacrifices. Otherwise, it was fine. For Jewish members, then, eating meat was one activity in which the situation governed the response. What Paul advocated was the same pattern for Gentiles. The Apostle's concern was with the brother whose knowledge of the gospel was shallow and, therefore, upon seeing someone he viewed as an authority participating in a pagan temple feast, he might conclude

that idolatry had something going for it. But if this condition did not exist, Paul saw no reason not to eat the meat. Thus, the issue was not the meat and whether it was kosher but rather with the idolatry itself (see 1 Corinthians 10:8–9).

8:11–12

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 421, 423–424.*

The result of expressing such liberty (eating meat offered to idols) would be annulling the power of Christ's Atonement in the lives of the weak. What the strong could not seem to grasp was the lesson housed in the Savior's Atonement. The Savior did it not by way of self-assertion or an expression of His rights but as an act of self-sacrifice and self-giving on behalf of the weak (in this case, everyone). Paul's point, and the real warning that stood behind his position, was that to sin against a brother or sister for whom Christ died was to sin against Christ Himself (1 Corinthians 8:12).

Paul clearly taught that the spiritual life of each member counted more than one's rights; therefore, those with knowledge had to practice a self-abrogation of those rights for the sake of others (8:11–12). Right from the start, Paul stated the foundation on which his counsel stood: "Knowledge makes people conceited, but love builds them up" (8:1 BYU Rendition). That was the sum of it. Neither God nor Jesus nor Paul would tolerate anything that smacked of validating idolatry, nor would they put up with anyone's grumbling about not being able to participate in pagan feasts. If they had love—that powerful Christlike love—any Saint should clearly see how to apply doctrine correctly. Paul understood where true knowledge lay: "But if someone loves God, that person is acknowledged by him" (8:3 BYU Rendition).

So the situation that governed whether one should eat meat boiled down to this: how visibly was the act connected to idolatry? If the connection were explicit, then, for a brother's sake, one should not eat the meat. If, however, the connection were oblique or nonexistent, then one should freely eat it (10:25). The final decision had to be made through that kind of love that would sacrifice one's right for what would be another's good.

1 Corinthians 9

9:1–2

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 429.*

There was no question in Paul's mind that he was an Apostle. The issue Paul addresses was not, therefore, one of Church authority but of Christology. He based his power not on being a member of the original

Twelve but on the fact that he had been chosen and empowered by the Savior Himself to carry out a specific mission (1 Corinthians 9:17). His witness was, then, not only in his words but also in his way of life—a life that reflected the self-sacrifice modeled by the Lord.

Paul concluded this portion of his defense by appealing to one fact that all should have agreed on: namely, that by his power they had become one with Christ. The basis of his argument reached back to a previous event. He with his companion Barnabas went to Jerusalem to report on their success. He met with the Church authorities and, according to his own word, "when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter. . . . And when James, Cephas [that is, Peter], and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision" (Galatians 2:7–9). Thus, Paul became *the* Apostle to the Gentiles, and those members at Corinth were the certification, or proof, that he was fulfilling that charge.

9:3–5

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 433–434.*

One Latter-day-Saint authority noted that "in his epistle to the Corinthians, Paul mentions how Peter traveled about accompanied by his wife, and that both were supported by contributions of the Church. (I Cor. 9:5.) He may have visited Corinth as Paul lists the faction of Cephas (or Peter) there together with the Pauline and Apollos groups of saints. This may indicate that he became a symbol of the Jewish Christian party which opposed Paul upon so many occasions during the latter's missionary work in Asia Minor and Greece."[1]

Peter was not alone in having his wife with him as he traveled. Other Apostles seem to have been supported by the Church. Paul chose not to, or if he was indeed widowed, he no longer had a wife. That he emphasized ministering without charge may have been part of his effort to make a connection with that element of the Church that came from the lower classes. As they were menial laborers when they accepted the gospel, so, too, was he when he preached it.

9:7

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 434.*

In his defense of the right for Apostles, including himself, to have Church support, Paul used three analogies: that of soldier, farmer, and shepherd. He did so not as mere illustrations but as a buttress for his argument that what was true in these varied fields was also true for Barnabas and him, and he recognized

that fact. His examples made it perfectly clear that he knew what his rights were, and therefore, Paul's choosing not to take advantage of these came not out of ignorance but out of his sincere desire to be neither a burden on Church members nor beholden to anyone. On the other hand, he had no problem if other general authorities wanted to exercise these rights. Even so, there were members of the Corinthian church that used this as evidence that he was not an Apostle.

9:9–10

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 437–438.*

To give his argument clarity and force, Paul appealed to the scriptures. According to the Mosaic law, oxen were not to be muzzled while threshing grain, thus allowing them to eat as they worked. Though the law evidenced God's concern for animals, the lesson behind it was that no labor should be performed either for self or for others without reward. One of the many problems with slavery was that it contradicted this order. Too many slaves worked without hope of sharing in the bounty of the harvest. To militate against this, the Deuteronomic law demanded that when a man was freed, the master was to "not let him go away empty." Indeed, the Lord commanded that "thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee" (Deuteronomy 15:12–15).

Paul's phrase *ἐπ' ἐλπίδι* (*ep' elpidi*), "with hope," emphasized the idea that a person's work should be in the hope or confidence that benefit would come. The law was designed to protect this right.

9:11–12

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 438, 441.*

In order to give real punch to the fact that he voluntarily relinquished rights or influence (*ἐξουσία*, *exousia*) that were clearly his, Paul had to define what those rights were, prove that he understood them, show that he qualified for and could have insisted on them, and that others had, indeed, done so. In short, it was crucial to Paul's case that he clearly establish the difference between accepting certain benefits and the authority or right to do so.

First Corinthians 9:5 suggests that other leaders took advantage of offers of assistance. Likely, Paul received offers as well. If so, his refusal could have been seen as a rebuff and have caused hurt feelings and even anger among some very influential people. Given the social conditions in Corinth, such offers may have been motivated to win over a leader to one side or the other, if not to obligate him directly. That Paul refused offers from certain Corinthian Saints while other Apostles accepted them could have been a reason his detractors raged against him. One important outcome of Paul's voluntary restraint on exercising his

rights was that it safeguarded him against the potentially vulnerable position of becoming indebted to and likely dictated to by a patron. Paul was a servant of but one master, and that was the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Paul's willingness to put up with all that was necessary in order to not hinder the cause of the gospel was precisely what the Corinthian strong were not willing to do (compare 8:8–9). Among both Gentiles and Jews, the Christian message continued to be hindered by the "foolishness of the cross." Indeed, this doctrine was the chief *σκάνδαλον* (*skandalon*), "offense" or "stumbling block," to the work. Because of this concern, every effort had to be made to illuminate all false stumbling blocks that would have exacerbated the problem. Thus, Paul felt that certain rights which could act as *skandalon* had to be forfeited to promote others accepting and living the gospel.

9:13

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 441–442.*

After his brief digression in 1 Corinthians 9:12, Paul continued to legitimize the right some had of receiving benefit from the Church. His proof text this time did not involve an analogy as with the law of the ox. He referred to both pagan and Jewish practices in which those who served at the temple received their livelihood therefrom.

Many Christian denominations take Paul's counsel as the basis for paying their ministers. There is tension in the New Testament on this subject. During the early portion of his ministry, the Lord instructed those He sent to preach the gospel to go without purse or scrip.[2] In today's vernacular that would mean to travel without a wallet or suitcase. Later on, as conditions changed, the Lord reversed His instructions, telling the missionaries to carry both wallet and suitcase (Luke 22:35–37). This change gives evidence for the need of continual revelation for guidance dictated by changing circumstances. Even so, the Lord's instructions were to missionaries, not local leaders. The same is true with Paul. The people he was referring to in chapter 9 were those engaged in full-time missionary service. He does not address the issue of the local ministry.

9:15–18

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 447–449.*

It would appear that Paul, to the chagrin of certain Corinthians, had refused to take advantage of his rights (*ἐξουσία*, *exousia*). In this part of his epistle, he explained why. He did not want anything to take away his reason for glorying. That reason was being able to preach the gospel freely and thus eliminate one obstacle that might cause some to reject it. Nothing could get in the way of the message. Though

Paul never used the term, there was a real danger that conditions were ripe for the introduction of priestcraft among the people. This condition is realized when "men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they might get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not for the welfare of Zion. . . . But the laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion; for if they labor for money they shall perish" (2 Nephi 26:29, 31). Due to the status-hungry nature of the Corinthian Saints, perverting the gospel and turning its preaching into a profitable vocation could have been a real temptation. Paul's lifestyle militated against that.

Though Paul was willing to glory in his ability to preach about Christ freely, he was not willing to glory in his own missionary and administrative efforts (1 Corinthians 9:16). Indeed, he felt compelled to serve. As he stated elsewhere, he was "overpowered" (*κατελήμφθην*, *katelēmphthēn*) and under compulsion (*ἀνάγκη*, *anankē*) due to his commission from the Lord Himself (Philippians 3:12; 1 Corinthians 9:16). Paul, like Jeremiah, was foreordained to lifelong service (Jeremiah 1:4–10; Galatians 1:15), and this ordination, once revealed by the Savior, pressed upon the Apostle. He well knew what the consequences of shirking his duty would be (1 Corinthians 9:16). Indeed, even today, those whom God calls to service must respond. The Lord has clearly stated to those who "embark in the service of God, [that they must] serve him with all [their] heart, might, mind and strength, that [they] may stand blameless before God at the last day" (Doctrine and Covenants 4:2). The Savior has warned that all leaders must learn their duty "and to act in the office in which [they are] appointed, in all diligence. He that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand, and he that learns not his duty and shows himself not approved shall not be counted worthy to stand" (Doctrine and Covenants 107:99–100).

The ancient Apostle's choice of the word *οὐαί* (*ouai*), "woe" (1 Corinthians 9:16), to describe his concern emphasized the point. The word used alone denoted displeasure or pain, but with the copula *ἐστίν* (*estin*), "is" (as in this verse), it meant "misfortune, trouble, even agony." Thus, what motivated Paul, in part, was concern about the agony that threatened him if he did not fulfill his obligation to his Lord.

Paul preached the gospel, then, not because he was compelled to—he still had his freedom to choose—but because he felt duty bound to do so since God had commissioned him. He felt no need either for boasting or for a reward. In short, there was no prize for doing one's duty. He accepted the Lord's assignment as a sacred trust from which, no matter how much he might wish otherwise, he would not back away. In this, he once again modeled his Savior's example.[3]

When Paul gave up his right to Church assistance, he went beyond any call of duty. By doing menial labor, something he was not obligated to do, he both had grounds for boasting and merited a reward. Indeed, Paul did *this*—surrendered his rights—in order to receive that reward (9:17).

What then was Paul's reward? He could do that which had not been imposed upon him; he could preach the gospel without pay. This was the center of his boasting. He was fortunate enough not to have to demand that to which he and other Apostles had a full right—being taken care of by the congregations. His pay was, as it were, to be in a position not to have to receive any pay. He could give freely. His toil as

a leatherworker, tentmaker, or sail weaver in the agora (Acts 18:1–3) was his free gift so that others were not burdened with his care. Further, his ability to work made him fully independent.

9:19–23

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 453–455.*

Verses 9:19–23 united this part of the epistle with chapter 8 and allowed Paul to tie his argument together. Here Paul summarized the point made in that chapter of the need to give up certain rights. He went further and explained why he was so willing to relinquish the right of assistance. At the heart of Paul's argument stands one very important idea: that being in oneness with "the other," as opposed to insisting on autonomy or self-affirmation, is the very heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"Paul adapted to the circumstances of each situation he came across and incorporated aspects of each people's culture to teach them," noted one Latter-day Saint scholar. "In a spirit of accommodation but not compromise, Paul worked hard to establish common ground with those he taught."[4] The Church does the same thing today. For example, worship services of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are held on the holy day of the country in which the Saints find themselves. In Israel, sacrament meetings are held on Saturday, but in Muslim countries, they are held on Friday. In the islands of the Pacific, Latter-day Saint men wear skirts (*sulus*) to church. Thus, accommodations are made for the culture, but no compromise is made so far as worship service is concerned.

In making his accommodations, Paul subtly but emphatically redefined what it meant for Christians to be free. Theirs is a freedom that willingly submits to a voluntary slavery to the Lord such that they become spiritually free from sin and the second death. Their slavery is based on Christlike love and obedience that generates a *wholesome* relationship with others that opens the way to their salvation.

It is of note that the once very Jewish Paul would state that he made himself a Jew in order to win the Jews (Acts 22:3; Romans 11:1). His words, however, betray the depth of his understanding about the nature of conversion to the Lord. He knew that the convert belonged to something much greater than any ethnic group or social strata. The convert was, as the Apostle insisted, a new creature whose loyalties to Christ transcended that of all cultural allegiances (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15). For Paul, this condition freed him from having to conform to fulfilled religious requirements, pagan rituals, or Corinthian social norms. Being free of the law of Moses, however, did not mean he could run wild with self-indulgence, as some of the Corinthian Saints seemed to have interpreted the gospel message. No, the Apostle lived with a profound sense of his obligation both to his God and Savior as now defined by the law of Christ. As the Apostle to the Gentiles, even though many aspects of gentile society were contrary to his own cultural background and traditions, Paul seems to have understood the need for restraint, sensitivity, and the measure of accommodation that his assignment and station demanded.

Thus, he was careful to observe conventions. In this way he defined and illustrated his radical yet creative call to freedom in the Lord.

The single passion of Paul's life was the gospel and bringing others under its saving power. He very clearly stated, "I do all these things on account of the gospel, so that I might share in its blessings" (1 Corinthians 9:23 BYU Rendition). The context of the phrase suggests that Paul had in mind neither bringing gospel benefits to others nor sharing in those benefits. On the contrary, he meant something far deeper, as revealed in his choice of the nominal adjective *συγκοινωνός* (*synkoinōnos*). The word referred to one who participates with another in some relationship, enterprise, or matter of joint concern; thus, the word designated "a partner or associate." The word differed from *κοινωνός* (*koinōnos*), "companion," in emphasizing, first, the joint nature of the participation and, second, that which the partners held in common. The pronominal prefix *συν-* (*syn-*) here includes the various forms of Christian solidarity. What Paul was saying was that he did what he did on account of the *nature* of the gospel that he might be a co-sharer in that nature.

9:24–27

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 460-462.*

The Isthmian Games, sponsored by the city of Corinth, were second only in popularity to the Olympic Games in ancient Greece. One was held during the time Paul labored there. Whether he attended is unknown, but given his Jewish background that eschewed pagan festivals, it is unlikely that he did. One Latter-day Saint scholar noted, "This competition might have been the source for Paul's use of athletic imagery (foot races). The prize for the winner of the Isthmian games was a perishable crown of celery. The gospel race, however, which everyone could win, promises an everlasting crown of glory (see Mosiah 4:27)."[5] Given the popularity of the games, it is not surprising that Paul would appeal to such imagery to make his points.

The use of sports analogies allowed Paul to continue his theme that a voluntary renunciation of rights was needed to achieve a greater good. The athlete was, indeed, an excellent example. Because he had his eye on the prize, he was willing to forego privileges and abstain from pleasures and even endure pain and exhaustion. This condition, Paul insisted, was the model all Christians should follow. Sacrifice to win the prize was how the gospel game was played and won.

Paul's analogy does have a danger if pushed in the wrong direction. That danger is allowing his emphasis on *only* one person winning a race as proof for some kind of spiritual exclusivity or elitism. Such an attitude, unfortunately common among a segment of the Corinthian Saints (as will be shown), could promote a "holier than thou" attitude. The truth of the matter is that in the gospel race, all who cross the finish line are winners.

Paul's reference in 1 Corinthians 9:25 to the self-discipline (*ἐγκρατεύομαι*, *engkrateuomai*) that runners must exercise to compete successfully in a foot race hit the central issue in these verses—namely,

self-mastery. On more than one occasion, the Savior described the cost of discipleship. He said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke (9:23). Self-denial is the key to spiritual success.

The word *ἐγκράτεια* (*engkrateia*) meant, literally, "power within." Based on Paul's teachings in Galatians 5:22–23, it was a gift of the Spirit. Therefore, the idea that a person could have total self-control all by him- or herself is misleading. To overcome the flesh, God's assistance is necessary. His Spirit augments and strengthens one's determination to do all that the Father requires. Therefore, the power within is, at least in part, the Holy Spirit.

Paul's use of the term *ὁ ἀγωνιζόμενος* (*ho agōnizomenos*) works well. In a limited sense, it referred, either literally or symbolically, to one engaged in an athletic contest. But it also connoted fighting or struggling toward a goal and, especially, the exertion it took to overcome all obstacles in order to achieve that goal. The word emphasized restraint from indulgence and overcoming passions.

1 Corinthians 10

10:1–5

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 471–472.*

Paul speaks of the Savior as being the spiritual meat, drink, and rock of Israel. In each case, the Apostle was using a metaphor or type. Though he could be prefiguring baptism and the sacrament, his images should not be pressed too far. It is more likely that he was referring to the shared events of which all Israel partook and that the Lord stood behind.

To make his point, Paul lists the experience *all* Israel shared with Moses (he uses the word *πάντες* [*pantes*], "all," five times in the first four verses). They *all* enjoyed Jehovah's redemptive act in bringing them out from bondage by the power of God; they *all* enjoyed the guidance and protection of the cloud; they *all* passed through the Red Sea; *all* enjoyed the manna, quail, and water that God provided; and *all* entered into the covenant with their God. This covenant is unique in that it was communal rather than individual in nature.

Paul used the Exodus story as a paradigm for what God was doing for the Corinthian Saints. The Lord was bringing those who would hear out of sin and bondage to a new life in Christ.

10:6–13

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 481–485.*

Without hesitation, Paul applied the Exodus story to the situation in which the Corinthian Saints found themselves. In doing so, he acknowledged that the God of the Old Testament was the same as that of the New. That being the case, the Corinthian Saints could expect a similar action in response to a similar sin.

Paul emphasized those events in which all Israel had a share. Among these were partaking of the same meat and drink. Likewise, the Corinthian Saints had shared together the joy and benefits of the same baptism and the sacrament that renewed their covenant. This experience should have brought them into a unity of the faith, but due to factions, it did not. Paul, therefore, gave them a stiff warning. It was couched in Jehovah's actions toward wayward Israel. The Christians, through Christ, enjoyed the same sort of benefits the ancient Hebrews did. But these benefits did not secure a single Israelite from losing his or her blessings and perishing in the wilderness. Paul's moral corollary was that the Corinthian Saints must follow God's way or lose their blessings as well.

For Paul, rebellion was a special and abhorrent kind of sin. It constituted Christians returning to their precovenantal ways. The Apostle's reference in 1 Corinthians10:6 to "evil things" (*κακά*, *kak*α) meant more than eating idol meats but looked to an inordinate desire (*ἐπιθυμέω*, *epithymeō*) for former activities and associations forbidden by gospel covenant. Some in Paul's audience seem to have felt that election allowed them total freedom to do as they pleased. The Apostle shows clearly that though all Israel became an elected people and shared in great blessings and promises, some—indeed, most—rebelled and stepped outside the protection of the covenant and thereby lost their divine status, as evidenced by their dying in the wilderness. That principle was still applicable in Paul's day (and in ours). The Corinthian Saints could not count on their election as a preventative against judgment. Indeed, yielding to the enticing of evil things would result in their rejection and spiritual death. The lesson was clear: God can guarantee a corporate reward, but a rebellious subgroup or individual therein can fall.

Paul's warning came in large part because of the cravings of the Corinthian strong to participate in temple sacral feasts. Such participation, however, amounted to nothing short of idolatry. For the Apostle, there is a strong correlation between *ἐπιθυμία* (*epithymia*), "inordinate desire" or "craving," and the kind of sin that alienates a person from God. This kind of sin does not include acts that fail to conform to a moral code or to religious or social norms, though these can be serious. Rather, they reflect a distrust in God resulting in an ill reverence toward Him. Such persons seek not to do God's will but to please their peers and betters, often hoping for one of two results: either being held in high esteem by those individuals or gaining greater power over them. The whole intent is driven by a craving to be at the center of all that happens. That craving carries with it a willingness to use all the means necessary to get there.

Paul nullified the possible excuse of the strong that they were in an unusually difficult position that other members did not face by assuring them that "no temptation has come upon you except that which is common to all mankind. But God can be trusted—he will not let you be tempted beyond that which you are able to overcome" (10:13 BYU Rendition). Thus, the strong could not claim special privilege or play the victim game. He assured them that God, who has ever been faithful in His assistance to His children,

will continue to be so. God never leaves His people to face impossible odds. Though He does not remove temptations, He does provide a means of overcoming them. Faithfulness on the part of the Saint is not to expect trials to be eliminated but to take advantage of the escape God provides.

10:14

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 496.*

In 1 Corinthians 10:14, speaking of the sin of idolatry, Paul used the command "flee," *φεύγετε* (*pheugete*). He did not say to depart or even to leave. Rather, the Saints were to move with all speed away from that which would spiritually injure if not kill them and others. He explained his reason: gentile sacrifices are to devils, "and I don't want you to be partners with demons" (10:20 BYU Rendition).

10:16

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 497.*

The Apostle's use of sacramental imagery acted as a foil against any Christian participating in pagan temple rites. Paul was using implications of the meaning of the sacrament to stress his point. Both Christian and pagan worship included participation in the religious ordinances that were designed to bring the worshipper and the object of worship into closer association. What the Corinthian strong did not seem to see was the incompatibility of the two systems. Paul understood that the Christian victory was centered in "Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). The sacramental meal symbolically united the Saints with the Lord and brought them under the power of that victory.

By participating in the covenantal meal, the Saints acknowledged that they remembered what the Lord had done so that they could have His Spirit with them.[6] But receiving His Spirit was not an end in itself. Its purpose was to help the Saints translate the Lord's work into their own lives. Indeed, the covenant was a pledge to transform the Lord's example into actions of service that worked toward the salvation of others. It defined a way of life that centered on selfless giving. On the other hand, those who shared the table of demons manifested another kind of life, one centered on self-edification, self-fulfillment, self-enjoyment, or self-advancement. The two lifestyles were simply incompatible.

10:17

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 498.*

When the Lord appeared to Paul, He asked him, "Why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:1–4 BYU Rendition). In doing so, He identified Himself with the Christian community, which at the time, was feeling the brunt of Paul's efforts. The Apostle in this chapter reverses the imagery and identifies the Church with the body of Christ, a single body though composed of many organs (1 Corinthians 10:16–17; 12:14–22). The problem at Corinth was that factionalism was in the process of destroying the unity of that body and, in the process, the body itself. Paul had already taught that Christ could not be divided or apportioned out (1:13). Likewise, His Church could not be divided and still live. But there was more to Paul's imagery than that. *Κοινωνία* (*koinōnia*), "fellowship, association, or sharing" in the "one body" denoted solidarity within the community that forbade any outside cultic associations. To participate in these, therefore, was to destroy the unity and threaten the demise of the Church. On the personal level, those who participated in those rites set themselves outside the power of the blood of Christ, which according to Romans 3:25 and 5:9, mediated to the Saint the blessings of the Atonement—namely, the justification and reconciliation necessary for salvation. To be outside the power of Christ's blood was to be damned.

10:20

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 498.*

Understanding what the Savior did through His victory on the cross should have weakened the appeal of false gods and the satanic influence behind them and liberated His people from them. The problem with some of the Corinthian Saints was that they were putting themselves in places and situations where these false gods were still considered potent. Indeed, the pagan temples were pockets of power where these evil forces operated. There, these swayed, influenced, and promoted the ways of the natural man. Carnality, sensuality, and devilishness could be the results (compare Moses 6:49). It was imperative, therefore, that Christians stay clear of such places.

10:22

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 498–499.*

The center stage of the new covenant is the care for "the other" in which the Christian follows the example of the Lord, who gave His body and His blood in service to others. One way the believer transmits the covenant into action is to take care of those "for whom Christ died" (1 Corinthians 8:11)—that is, those in the community of the Saints. To "always remember him" includes remembering how He acted and responding appropriately (Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79). In that way, the participants' life and lifestyle are one with the Lord. To act otherwise is to break covenant and run the risk of provoking

God's jealousy (1 Corinthians 10:22; compare Deuteronomy 32:15–38). Nothing is to supersede God in the Christian lifestyle or value system. The imperative is to set a proper example. In the case of the Corinthian Saints, that would include, among other things, not attending pagan temple rites no matter the social cost.

10:25–29

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 508–510.*

In 1 Corinthians 10:25–29, the Apostle returned to the issue of the *εἰδωλόθυτον* (*eidōlothyton*), which was how to respond when presented with a choice of eating or not eating sacrificial meats. The first deals with purchasing meat from a butcher's shop. Paul's counsel was simply don't ask where the meat came from, just enjoy eating it.

His second example deals with a situation in which some of the branch members were invited to a private dinner in a nonmember's home. The Apostle's counsel was to eat what was placed before them unless another Christian guest identified a certain dish as being leftovers from a sacrificial offering. Then, the Apostle stated, "Don't eat it" (10:28 BYU Rendition).

The decision to eat or not, Paul notes, must be based on *συνείδησις* (*syneidēsis*), "conscience." The word here does not reference the consciousness of one who has a genuine understanding of the inherent moral goodness or badness of a given action. In this case it pointed to the conscience of a person who either misunderstood or did not understand a gospel principle. This condition resulted in an overly fussy attention to details that were really of no consequence. Paul's counsel was, therefore, based not on matters of true conscience but on what was best for the welfare of another Saint.

It must be kept in mind that the Apostle uses the two examples of eating meat only as illustrations that allow him to address the greater issue of freedoms and rights when it comes to nonessentials. He set for himself two tasks. First, he ensconced the fact that when it comes to nonessentials, the Christian is truly free to do as he or she wishes. Paul is forthright in standing up for the freedom of choice each Saint has in such matters (10:29–30). Such freedom, however, is not the soul of the Christian life, and this creates the need for Paul's second task: to show that caring for the physical and spiritual welfare of others is the true soul of Christianity. Each Saint's freedom, therefore, must be bound by both love and care. The binding agent included three conditions: that which "benefited" others (*συμφέρω*, *sympherō*), "edified" them (*οἰκοδομέω*, *oikodomeō*), *and* brought glory to God (*δόξα*, *doxa*).[7] That balance is all important. Paul summarized his counsel very nicely with his words in 10:24: "Don't seek to benefit yourself, but to benefit others."

10:30

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 511.*

The rhetorical question Paul proposes in 10:30, "If I eat with gratitude, why should I be condemned for food that I have given thanks for?" is a good one and could easily be raised by "the strong." The question asks, in essence, "Why should another person's overly scrupulous conscience dictate what I do when I know their concern is a nonissue?"

Paul's counsel is that when another, weak in the faith, points out a problem, one must act or not act for "conscience sake . . . not thine *own,* but of the other" (10:28–29). Paul's point is that "the Saints should act with consideration of the sensibilities of others."[8]

1 Corinthians 11

11:1–16

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 530–538.*

In the Greco-Roman world, due to a woman's potential of bringing great shame to her family through improper behavior and especially sexual misconduct, "women were controlled, enclosed, and guarded."[9] That dictated not only how they were to act in public but also what they wore. Further, in this society few, either man or woman, would have raised the question of equality. The social boundaries were not to be crossed without censure. Therefore, many in society were sensitive to the breaking of social strictures in attitude, decorum, or dress. To step outside of these was considered shameful, a condition no family or social group wanted its members to be in.

Within the Christian circle, from the time of the Savior's ministry, women had a remarkable participatory role. That Christian women could participate directly in worship service shows how far Christianity had moved from Judaism. For example, during the formal worship at the synagogue, though wives likely sat with their husbands, other than saying "amen" to prayers, blessings, and invocations, they played no direct role. They did not pray aloud, read or comment on scripture, give talks, or teach. Thus, Christianity, having women do all of these, gave women not only a greater participatory role unknown within Jewish culture but also more responsibility with its accompanying recognition of their importance. It also brought with it the possibility to push religious opportunities beyond their bounds. This epistle suggests some women did so by discarding their head coverings during worship service.

In Roman and Hellenistic culture, the veil or hood was important because it gave a clear indication that the wearer was a person of status and respectability. There was a direct correlation between proper

dress and personal success, enjoyment of public honor, and esteem by women within the general society. Most importantly, women's apparel acted as a defense, showing that the woman was neither potentially nor actually available for sexual advances.

But there was more going on that likely concerned Paul far more than such social mores. In the Christian circle, as with the man's attire, the woman's dress could give a very distracting signal in public worship. It was especially important that it not have any sexual overtones. For a woman to go with head uncovered made a bold statement that pushed beyond Jewish protocols, and at its core, was self-advertising. The act was dishonoring, at least in part, because it took the attention of the worshipper away from where it belonged—that is, on the Lord.

Because the issues Paul addresses here, unlike those in most of this letter, are based so heavily on customs and attitudes of his day rather than on more universal norms, this portion of his epistle has little application for today. This point becomes especially evident when one understands precisely the matter Paul is addressing in this pericope. Otherwise, as the breadth of scholarship shows, one can easily get sidetracked or read into it issues that are not there. Paul's concern is with "any woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered."

Some have argued, based on Paul's statement in chapter 14 that women should be silent in church, that his counsel here does not pertain to worship service. The context clearly shows, however, that that is exactly the circumstance he is referring to. He states plainly that what some of the women were doing—participating in worship services with unveiled heads—was certainly not in any of the "the churches of God" (1 Corinthians 11:16), or their assemblies.

It is clear from 11:5 that the issue is not about women participating in worship services. There is no objection to their offering prayers, teaching, or bearing testimony. Indeed, they have the right to speak under inspiration.

The head covering served a very important function in that society by protecting vulnerable women from undue and unwanted attention and avoiding the licentious Roman practices of women wanting to "see and be seen." Certainly the covering was not to be discarded as some sign of freedom, and especially not of defiance, of the culture and of Church norms.

It is more likely, however, that it was not just infringements on either local or general culture that were driving Paul's concerns. As we look at Paul's argument, his appeal rests less on societal and cultural issues and more on the application of gospel principles that promote modesty and proper decorum. Paul bases his argument on Church discipline and doctrinal understanding. Specifically, he looks to the order of Creation and the witness of nature as well as angels and Church practice. All of these transcend social culture. Therefore, he may not have been overly concerned that by not wearing a head covering these women could be mistaken for prostitutes. Women covering their heads, he clearly states, was part of official Church practice for long enough that it had become a broad-based tradition (*παράδοσις*, *paradosis*;

11:2, 16). The point is that the local situation in Corinth cannot explain Paul's concerns, but going against Church policy can.

Paul's statement that a man is the "glory of God" (11:7) is instructive. It means that his very existence is a means by which God can receive praise and honor. In the Apostle's view this is because by creating a man in His own image, God placed His own glory upon him. The reception of that glory gave a man additional value. Due to that value, a man can return glory to God.

Yet man, by himself, as Paul teaches, was incomplete and therefore lacked the ability to bring full glory to the Father. He needed a companion—one who was like him but different from him; one who corresponded to him as he did to God and who could bring him glory as he brought God glory. Thus, "the woman is the glory of the man" as a man is the "glory of God" (11:7). When men honor women, these women receive additional value. The more honor he gives her, the greater is her value. The greater her value, the more glory she can bestow upon him through her honoring him. In sum, Paul seems to be saying that as with God and a man, so it is with a man and a woman. He finds his glory through her creation and the honor she brings to him.

Genesis is clear that the woman completes and complements the man and brings to him an incomparably richer life. Paul, therefore, does not hint of feminine inferiority. Further, as humankind, woman and man together manifest the fullness of divine attributes as expressions of God's creative being. Even so, this does not bring precise symmetry, for she is different from man. As Adam noted, she is "bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh," but she was also "woman, because she was taken out of man" (Genesis 2:23). Her genesis was different from his. Thus, her glory comes in a different way: by distinguishing herself from man in her own unique role to which the Creator assigned her, not in imitating man. And in this she finds greatness and glory, not inferiority.

Because the idea of submission is definitely part of Paul's system, his view must be thoroughly understood in order to get the point. In the vocabulary the Apostle chooses, there is no hint of coercion, compulsion, intimidation, or duress. There is, however, order and hierarchy. God is at the head, and Christ is subject to Him; in turn, man is subject to Christ; and finally, woman is subject to man (children are subject to the woman, but because Paul does not address that issue here, it is saved for another discussion).

It must be kept in mind that with the exception of 11:11, Paul is talking here about Church order, not family or civil order.

11:17–22

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 550–555.*

Paul had already addressed the problem of divisions among the Saints (see 1 Corinthians 1:10–16), but here his tone takes on an additional edge and urgency. Before, he was concerned with divisions created by

parties; here he is concerned with something much deeper and far more threatening to both the physical and spiritual life of the Church. Whether they realize it or not, certain Christians, by their actions, are despising the Church of God and humiliating the people who have nothing (11:22). Paul's strong language is warranted. All were invited to the Lord's Supper, but by the time the have-nots got off work, the idle rich had already consumed both food and drink, some even overindulging (11:21). The sacramental service, designed to show unity and love and to sustain oneness and remember the Savior's sacrifice, had become nothing more than a corrupt social gathering in which the rich gloated over and humiliated the poor. The worst part, however, was that the offenders did not even care. Such a lack of feeling could spread like cancer and, if not remedied, would eventually contribute to the death of the Church of God.

A meal in the Mediterranean world was designed for fellowship and reconciliation and served as a solemn and binding act between participants. This sentiment would have served as the basis of the sacramental service. Part of the service was to remember—the word *re-member* connoting the idea of becoming a member again. Thus, an important part of the service was for reuniting the participants.

The meeting had two other major purposes: the commemoration and celebration of God's grace-filled act to save humankind in giving the gift of His Son and the acknowledgment of the Atonement, which the Savior so graciously effected for all.

But there was another aspect that was important. The meeting served as messianic anticipation. Echoing the Passover, as it did, the feast looked to the time when earth would rest under the Messiah's blessed reign.

It becomes apparent that in at least some of the *ekklēsia* (house churches) during the first century, the practice was not working as designed. The problem was likely exacerbated due to the nature of the homes in which they were meeting. Common features in a Greco-Roman villa included a vestibule and a formal dining area called a *triclinium*. The *triclinium* could hold no more than about a dozen guests while the courtyard and vestibule could hold considerably more. This layout could allow grades among attendees with only the most favored in the *triclinium*, forcing others to find a place as best they could. Those Saints not of the upper class could well ask just who was hosting the meal. Was it the Lord's Supper or that of the homeowner and his circle of friends and associates?

The heart of the problem was two-fold: first, disrupting the order of the community and, second, pulling attention away from the Lord "by self-affirming insistence on individual or group 'freedoms,' and 'rights.'"[10] Those who held positions of honor or prestige were very willing to take advantage of their station during the worship service. That allowed them to ignore, if not dismiss, those whom they saw as lesser individuals during the celebration of the sacrament. Unfortunately, they, like most Gentiles during this time, treated them as social inferiors. The result was that the meals focused more on those who belonged to the inner group rather than on the Lord. Under such conditions, among those who were left out, feelings of resentment, bitterness, and even anger were apparently generated.

In 11:22, Paul forces his readers to consider their reason for assembling. He does this through two rhetorical questions. First, he asks them if they are acting thus because they have no houses in which to eat

and drink. His implication is that they are using the Church merely to satisfy their appetites. Since lacking accommodations is not the reason, he poses a second question, asking them if the reason is so that they can heap indignity on the poor (*τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντας, tous mē echontas,* literally, "the have-nots") as a means of making themselves feel superior. This question suggests, to his readers' shame, a yes answer. Because this was likely the cause of their actions, Paul declares, in stinging rebuke, "I praise you not!" (11:22).

11:23–24

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 561.*

Because 1 Corinthians 11:23 and 24, which relate the institution of the sacrament, have a number of non-Pauline idioms, it is likely that Paul is closely paraphrasing or even quoting material that has come down to him. That would mean that he was relating a long-established tradition known to his readers and was using it as an authoritative proof text. That the story became part of the Synoptic Gospels supports its historical nature. It is of note that Paul closely follows the account given in Luke 22:19–20. Though the Joseph Smith Translation makes a number of changes to the accounts given in Matthew 26:26–29 and especially Mark 14:22–25, it does not do so to Luke's brief account, suggesting these verses are accurate as far as they go.

11:27–29

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 570.*

In 11:29, Paul uses a wordplay on the words containing the root *κριν-* (*krin-*), that is, words dealing with making judgments. That he does this can best be seen by paraphrasing his words so that they read: "If we were discerning [*dia**krin**ō*] ourselves, we would not be coming under judgment [*ek**krin**ō*]; but, when we are being judged [***krin**ō*], it is to correct us by discipline so that we will not be condemned [*kata**krin**ō*] with the world."[11] The wordplay, looking as it does toward divine displeasure and its results, puts emphasis on the seriousness of the sacrament and the need to properly partake of it.

11:30

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 571.*

Paul's warning in 1 Corinthians 11:30 should cause serious reflection. Those who partake of the sacrament with no intent in carrying out its responsibilities commit grievous sin. The sacrament—which God

designed, at least in part, as a healing balm for the wounded soul—could prove toxic to one who hypocritically partook. Such an idea is in keeping with Paul's beliefs. He clearly saw a double-sided effect of spiritual things. For example, in his second epistle to these same people, he testified, concerning the teaching of his fellow Apostles, that to some members it was a "savour of life unto life," but for others, it was the "savour of death unto death" (2 Corinthians 2:16). The sacrament is the same.

1 Corinthians 12

12:1–11

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 580–582, 592–593.*

Paul's objective in this pericope is twofold: first, to establish a general criterion for the working of the Holy Spirit in the Church (12:3), and second, to show the wide and varied manifestations of its gifts (12:4–11).

Paul begins by explaining the role of the Spirit in its epistemological aspect (12:1–3). Without its directing power, the gentile Corinthians had been seduced over and over to follow this or that dumb idol. With the Spirit, however, they can now say that Jesus is Lord.

Paul undercuts the idea of a greater holiness and, therefore, a superior divine favor somehow evidenced by certain spiritual manifestations. A specific gift, he clarifies, determines neither the depth of spirituality nor the amount of divine favor a person has. Instead, he shows that all who know that Jesus is Lord, are spiritual—in fact, deeply spiritual—because such knowledge comes only to those who enjoy that endowment. By redefining what constitutes spirituality, the Apostle brings equality and parity back into the Church.

"We preach . . . Christ Jesus the Lord [*κύριος*, *kyrios*]," Paul proclaims (2 Corinthians 4:5). That he uses the term *kyrios* as *the* title for the Savior shows his understanding of exactly who and what Jesus was and is: the divine Son of God who is also the Messiah and Redeemer (1 Corinthians 12:3; he uses the title some 220 times). "We preach" expressed the belief that Jesus, the one who lived and died, was also the Lord over the Church by virtue of His resurrection from the dead. But behind Paul's preachment stands a commitment to give service to Him as the supreme authority in one's life.

The title *kyrios* also expresses the recognition by the Saint that he or she belongs to Christ as His purchased slave (*δοῦλος*, *doulos*; 6:20; 7:23). In this context, the title Lord carries the idea of "Master," and emphasizes that the Christian is under the Lord's authority and must do His bidding (compare Luke 6:46; Matthew 7:21). That bidding dictates his or her lifestyle and ethics. The title also carries the idea that the one holding it is responsible for the care and keeping of his people and stands as a warning against any who might in any way deign to humiliate, abuse, or hurt them.

This pericope deals with both diversity and unity, with unity being the major thrust. The diversity consists of the various manifestations of the Spirit found among the Corinthian Saints. The unity consists in

the one power that lies behind and allocates the manifold expressions of those manifestations. They are all governed by "the same Spirit . . . the same Lord . . . the same God" (12:4–6). In short, it is the Godhead that is the one and only source of the diversity of gifts, and therefore, multiplicity does not negate unity. By putting stress where he does, Paul overcomes the divisiveness that has grown out of the various valuations some of the Saints have assigned to spiritual gifts, with tongues seeming to be of the highest status. By stressing the unity that stands behind *χαρίσματα* (*charismata*)—those "spiritual gifts" that God freely pours upon all the Saints—Paul undercuts the position of the elitist group. He shows that their belief that they have somehow achieved a higher degree of spirituality is mistaken.

12:12–26

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 609–613.*

In this pericope, Paul continues to push his point for the need of diversity in unity. To make his point more easily understood, he compares the Church to a human body. His development here is quite Aristotelian, following classical models, and therefore, it would carry considerable weight with the Apostle's educated gentile readers. Such development gives evidence that Paul was adept at teaching and writing to Gentiles.

He develops his argument in four parts. In the first part, he shows that the Church is like a body that is a single entity but composed of various limbs and organs (*μέλη*, *melē*; 1 Corinthians 12:12–14). In the second part, he emphasizes the importance of diversity (12:15–20). In the third part, he emphasizes the need for unity (12:21–26), and in the fourth part, he defines his use of the term Christ, showing he is referring to the Church (12:27–30).

The body is a perfect example of unity in diversity. The body cannot be a fully functioning organism if it is but one organ. The point is that Church members do not all have to have the same talents and abilities, social status, financial state, or spiritual endowments in order to be necessary in getting the whole unit to function as God designed. Everyone is necessary to bring about His purposes.

Paul's point is that, because God has set the order of His Church, no one can be considered as dishonorable or nonessential to the work. On the extreme end, even those who fall to human weakness or are overtaken by physical ailments or suffer from spiritual problems cannot be counted out, for they give others the chance to serve.

In 12:25–26, Paul teaches his readers how Church members should apply the Atonement in the real world. By toppling the notion current in his day that some parts of the body were more honorable than others, Paul shows that the scheme of a body hierarchy is wrong, being based only on a superficial worldly philosophy. Paul's position validates the idea of status reversals found in the scriptures. It is best stated by the Savior, who observed that the "greatest among you shall be your servant" and that whoever desires

to "be first, the same shall be last of all" (Matthew 23:11; Mark 9:35). The Lord taught firmly that the "first shall be last; and the last shall be first" (Matthew 19:30; compare Matthew 20:16). Status in the Lord's kingdom is not based on educational opportunity, social privilege, or economic advantage but on sacrifice for the kingdom expressed primarily as sincere service to others. Gospel life is such that though many are called, few will prove themselves chosen (Matthew 19:29; 20:16).

As Paul understood, within the community of Christ there is, strictly speaking, no private suffering (12:26). Everyone shares in the life of the whole. A wrong done to one member, therefore, is a wrong done to all, and since the Savior identifies Himself with the community of the Saints, it is done to Him. But much suffering could be avoided if members would remember Paul's point in 12:15–18. Saints must not compare themselves with others. Among other problems, it leads to discouragement, jealousy, and blindness to the blessing of what one has (compare 1:10–12; 3:1–4). Often this results in unnecessary feelings of inferiority that lead to loss of joy in service and the hope of eternal life. Too much time is spent grumbling because one person sees himself as the foot having to bear all the weight or another wishes she were the eye that oversees all or yet another wants to be the mouth that directs everything. It must never be forgotten that God knows each one of His children and how to maximize their potential in the one body that is Christ.

Paul's doctrine centers on an equality of status brought about through a correct understanding of the Atonement and what it means to be "in Christ" and share in the various gifts of the Spirit so graciously given by the Father. In 12:21, we see his delineation of an attitude of self-sufficiency in which certain people feel they have no need for others. Feelings of superiority, self-sufficiency, autonomy, even of a right to do as one wishes are precisely the sin Paul finds so contrary to the attitude true Christians should have in a Church that exists for the mutual benefit of all.

This pericope is, therefore, a strong polemic against factionalism. Some postmodern commentators have insisted that Paul's words promote the idea "that within certain boundaries everyone 'does one's own thing.'"[12] That is absolutely *not* the case. The precise, coordinated, and proper function of all the organs in the body contributes to its overall capacity, ability, and wellness. They do not do their own thing but their assigned thing. If each did not do its indispensable part, the organism would cease to function and likely die. Paul's analogy is, then, an assurance of the absolute necessity of those in his audience who were either devalued by others or felt inferior to them in either status or gifts. All were indeed a part of the body; and moreover, they played an indispensable role in giving that body the strength, ability, and coherent unity it needed to carry out its divinely appointed destiny.

12:28

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 619–621.*

It is of note that the first three offices that Paul lists—Apostle, prophet, teacher—are all concerned primarily with bearing witness of the Lord and promoting His ministry (1 Corinthians 12:28). All other powers and assistants, as Paul shows, must stand behind these. "The overall point is that Christ's Church must be governed by inspired officials," notes one Latter-day Saint scholar.[13]

Paul made sure his readers understood that God is the one who set in order the Church, with Apostles at the head (12:28). These men, as the title of their office denotes, constituted the traveling council—that is, those who were "sent out" to see that Church order was kept everywhere. "The Church of Christ is not perfect without Apostles," noted Elder George Q. Cannon. "But the wicked would not allow Apostles to live, for Apostles were men who had revelation, Apostles were inspired of God; they became, as it were, the oracles of Jehovah to the inhabitants of the earth."[14] The disappearance of the apostolic office is one of the major signs that an apostasy took place, and its reappearance in the last days is a major sign that the gospel has been restored.

Paul's list of powers in 12:28 is a bit more extensive than the one found in the Doctrine and Covenants. He mentions the ability to do impressive deeds, healings, charitable acts, govern, and finally, speak in various tongues. It is of note that Paul lists tongues last, likely because it was a major source of contention among the Corinthian branches and he did not want it to have any more cachet than the other gifts.

12:29–31

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 621.*

In 1 Corinthians 12:29–30, Paul emphasizes that the Lord set up the Church such that no one person exercises all the gifts or fills all the roles. This fact includes every unit from the smallest branch to the general level of the Church. Though it is true that the current prophet holds all the keys of the priesthood, he does not fill all the offices or exercise all the gifts. That limitation assures each Saint that his or her gifts and talents are sorely needed in the kingdom. The questions Paul asks in these verses point to the fact that no one holds all the offices or has all the gifts of the Spirit and, therefore, the Church needs everyone.

Paul admonished his readers to "earnestly strive for the greatest spiritual gifts" (12:31 BYU Rendition). His counsel put the burden on his readers.

1 Corinthians 13

13:1–3

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 633–634.*

Paul previously promised his readers that he would show them "a more excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31), which he does in 13:4–7. First, however, he must prove its necessity. He does this in the first three verses of this chapter by using five parallel hypotheses respecting tongues, prophecy, mystery, knowledge, and the devotion of goods or persons to God. He explains that the use of any of these impressive gifts and sacrifices when unmotivated by love is worthless.

Paul's first thrust is against those who insisted that the gift of tongues is the highest expression and endorsement of superior spirituality (13:1). Indeed, from the Saints' point of view, the gift evidenced that they had spiritually arrived because they could speak by divine power both the languages of men and of angels. With cutting irony, Paul compares the gift if unmotivated by love to incomprehensible and highly annoying clanging, gonging, and wailing. Paul's Corinthian audience would have easily responded to the imagery of bronze or brass instruments since vessels made by Corinthian coppersmiths were prized throughout the Mediterranean basin, resulting in a brisk trade.

It must be emphasized that Paul is not attacking any of the spiritual gifts as either unimportant or unnecessary. He is emphasizing their valueless character on an eternal scale when exercised without proper motivation. The case is more particular with tongues, which has relevance only to mortality. His point is that when unmotivated by love, this gift is little more than senseless, irritating noise.

Paul's second thrust is against those who are overly taken with knowledge, both human and divine (13:2). His focus is on a profound prophetic ability grounded (impossibly for mortals) on possessing an understanding of all mysteries and all knowledge. His metaphor combines the intellect of the philosopher with the inspiration of the seer. In sum, he makes the possessor nearly omniscient. He shows that these gifts when expressed without love make the gifts worthless, for they will not last into eternity.

His next thrust seems to be against those who put emphasis on "mighty deeds" (2 Corinthians 12:12) generated by faith (1 Corinthians 13:2 in light of verses 12:9, 28). Certainly, moving mountains—if any of them had ever done so—would have evidenced tremendous spiritual power that none could question. It would also confirm the supreme height of their spirituality. And yet Paul insists that not only is the deed worth nothing, so is the Saint who did the miracle. Again, the reason is that it was done neither to benefit others nor to serve God but to bring glory to oneself.

He finalizes this portion of his message with two examples of self-sacrifice exaggerated to such an extent that they would catch his readers' attention (13:3). The first is that of parceling out *all* of one's property for the good of others. The end result could mean living homeless and in poverty. The second is that of giving one's life through the horrible method of immolation. In creating these images, Paul was deliberately using the power of shock to force upon his readers a reappraisal of their beliefs—compelling them to see, as it were, with new eyes so that they could come to a new understanding.

13:4–8a

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 641–643.*

The list of the qualities of *ἀγάπη* (*agapē*), "love," likely stung some of Paul's readers. His clear and pointed exposition, however, was greatly needed in those house churches where self-interest and impropriety marked even the most sacred of moments. His sting would have rested hardest on those whose actions were motivated by self-interest. This would include those who insisted on having things their way; who came early to sacrament service in order to get the best seats; who refused to share their bounty; who interrupted the services by speaking in tongues; who, in an effort to show spiritual superiority, paraded their gifts and blessings; or who, in an effort to raise their own self-importance, treated those whom they felt were inferior rudely and with great disrespect. That sting, however, would not have missed those who were the objects of rudeness and who also allowed themselves to feel irritated, piqued, or angered by ill treatment. Among this group, it would have hit particularly hard those who were nursing their wounds and planning to pay the offending party back in their own coin. Paul shows that if any of these people truly loved, they would have been incapable of self-serving, abusive, or unforgiving actions. They would have, rather, put others before themselves. Indeed, love nips the problem in the bud on the one hand by never giving offense and on the other by not keeping track of any personal hurt.

Verses 13:6–7 reveal the limitlessness and all-encompassing nature of love. The Apostle is not, however, saying that love is content with absolutely everything just the way it is. He is not opening the door to "servile mediocrity" as some modern antagonists insist. We must remember it was the Corinthians who coined the phrase "all things are lawful." Paul, however, insists on differentiation and discrimination, more especially in worship and prophecy. In no way is *agapē* docile or conformist. It seeks for neither the quiet life nor settles for mediocre performance. Because it lacks any self-interest, it pushes for creativity, innovation, transformation, and reaching for the ideal. We must never confuse *agapē* with sentimentality, which takes the easy way out by refusing firm action, refusing to do the distasteful, or not looking at the long-term good. In the process, it leaves the loved one uncorrected in his or her sin, thus reinforcing the very flaw that true love would never tolerate. Indeed, *agapē* has its tough side. Nonetheless, though love expects growth, it also allows for time.

13:8b–13

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 650–651.*

Paul's discussion should not be seen as demeaning spiritual gifts but in recognizing that most are but partial and temporal. Since the ultimate object of every endowment is to assist both the recipient and

benefactor in becoming more godlike, when these souls come into eternal life, the major purpose of the gifts will have been realized. They will, therefore, pass away because the fragmentary must always give way to the complete, the partial subsumed into the whole. Since love (along with hope and faith) requires no transformation or metamorphosis into some higher form, it can ever remain as it is. Even knowledge, wisdom, and prophecy do not possess this characteristic and, therefore, must give way to omniscience.

In 13:11, Paul's analogy to speaking, thinking, and reasoning as a child does more than simply allude to "the experience of spiritual gifts, but to how they are expressed . . . , what opinions are held about them . . . and how they are valued or evaluated."[15] The child's world is self-centered, with drives for gratification in the immediate. It is motivated by dreams and wishes. On the other hand, the mature are able to sacrifice immediate gratification for a greater good. They are motivated by eternal realities. More especially, the spiritually mature include and are influenced by the needs of others, and this sets their priorities. Paul's words would have stung many in the Corinthian branches. They had either forgotten or never understood the present versus the future and the temporal versus the eternal dimensions that stood behind Paul's preaching. They were hindered by perceptions and spatial categories that consisted only of "above" and "below" and of social relations that consisted of "them" versus "us." Paul's words dictate a complete change of perception that reaches beyond the narrow and limited understanding of childhood to that of the spiritually mature who saw special categories as "across" and social relations in terms of "them *and* us."

In 13:12 Paul uses an analogy to make his point more clearly. In 13:8 he noted that love, unlike the other *χαρίσματα* (*charismata*), "spiritual gifts," will never end. It is precisely because the other spiritual gifts have an ending point that makes love of a different order. That does not make the other gifts inferior or unimportant. What it makes them is relative. Throughout 13:9–12, Paul's stress is strictly on the temporal, "present age" nature of the *charismata*. They shall "pass away" (13:8 BYU Rendition) because they are only *ἐκ μέρους* (*ek merous*) "in part" (13:9). Their place is strictly in the here and now (13:10–12). Therefore, an insistence by any one of the Corinthian Saints that one or another gift (especially tongues) somehow marks him or her as more highly spiritual simply is not true. The marks of true spirituality are possessing and expressing love. Only there does anyone find the "more excellent way" (12:31) that leads to a fullness of life in both the present and eternal worlds.

Notes

1 Russel B. Swensen, *The New Testament: The Acts and the Epistles* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Sunday School Union Board, 1955), 34–35, 65–66.

2 Matthew 10:5–10; Mark 6:8; Luke 9:3; 10:4.

3 Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42.

4 D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, *Verse by Verse: The New* Testament, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2006), 2:138.

5 Ogden and Skinner, *Verse by Verse*, 2:138.

6 See 3 Nephi 18:3–11; 20:6–9; Doctrine and Covenants 20:76–79.

7 1 Corinthians 10:23–24, 31–33.

8 Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment, *Making Sense of the New Testament: Timely Insights and Timeless Messages* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2010), 357.

9 Carolyn A. Osiek and David L. Blach, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churche*s (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 40–41.

10 Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 850.

11 Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 566n40.

12 Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1002.

13 Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Understanding Paul* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2007), 116.

14 George Q. Cannon, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London, UK: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854–1886), 22:265.

15 Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1067; italics and boldface in original not reproduced.

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