

1 CORINTHIANS 14–16

1 Corinthians 14

14:1–12

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 682–683.

Having shown his readers “the more excellent way,” Paul returns to the topic of spiritual gifts. The text suggests that the reason he brings up the subject again is that certain manifestations of the Spirit have gotten out of hand. Therefore, he no longer speaks of these gifts in general but narrows his focus to just three, all having to do with inspired speaking: tongues, their interpretation, and prophecy. His discourse is an invitation to his readers to join with him in the prophetic call (see Galatians 1:15–16). Like Moses (see Numbers 11:29), he does not see the gift of inspired speaking as something peculiar to any office. It should be, rather, a general gift that permeates the whole of the Christian assemblage. As he admonished them earlier (1 Corinthians 4:16), he wanted them to be his imitators (*μίμηταί μου γίνεσθε, mimētai mou ginesthe*), and that included sharing in prophetic power. His concern is for the welfare of others, especially for their edification (*οικοδομή, oikodomē*) during worship service.

14:3–6

Adapted from Richard D. Draper, and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 683–684.

The Apostle's thrust, as expressed in 1 Corinthians 14:3, is on his preference of prophecy over tongues for specific reasons. Inspired speaking, as noted by one scholar, accomplishes three tasks: first, it acts

to further build up the Christian life (*οικοδομή, oikodomē*); second, it stimulates the Christian will (*παράκλησις, paraklēsis*); and third, it strengthens the Christian spirit (*παραμυθία, paramythia*).¹ As the Apostle shows in 14:6, this gift can benefit the people in four ways: (1) by disclosing the mind and will of God (*ἀποκάλυψις, apokalypsis*), (2) by teaching the breadth and depth of what God has revealed (*γνώσις, gnōsis*), (3) by inspired witnessing (*προφητεία, prophēteia*), and (4) by keeping the Church anchored to correct instruction (*διδασχῆ, didachē*). Each of these, as Paul can see, will contribute to Christian meetings bringing a deeper understanding of and commitment to the faith in Christ. It is of note that both of the above lists provide services that the gift of tongues cannot.

In 14:6, Paul lists four categories of such speaking: disclosure of the word and will of God (*apokalypsis*); a pronouncement of the mysteries of the kingdom (*gnōsis*); dynamic, effective, and hortatory preaching (*prophēteia*); and finally, an effective explanation of doctrine (*didachē*). He insists that a person cannot be edified by what he does not understand and, therefore, speaking in tongues is of little worth in building up the Church. There is, however, an exception. If the person translates what he has said in the unknown tongue, edification can take place (14:5).

14:7–11

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 684–685.

To drive home the importance and usefulness of inspired speech over speaking in tongues, Paul uses three examples: first, the need for a performer to play each note of his or her musical instrument clearly and distinctly so that the melody may be recognized (14:7); second, the need for a bugler to clearly sound instructions so that soldiers are properly prepared for battle (14:8); and third, the need for two individuals to speak the same language if they are to view each other as something other than unwelcome foreigners (1 Corinthians 14:7–8, 11).

Using a musical instrument for his example allows Paul to make a striking point—no matter how clearly or how carefully the notes are played, if the timing, rhythm, tone, and pitch are off, the piece cannot be recognized. The same is true of language. Though the sounds may convey profound thoughts to those who speak that tongue, to those who do not, it is just so much frustrating noise. Because such expression will have no edifying effect, it is no better than speaking into the air (14:9). To have the effect Paul desires, speech must be articulate, ordered, and conform to usage. At Corinth, glossolalia did none of those things.

Paul's example of the reaction of two individuals who do not know one another's language really helped him push his point. Corinth was a multinational city, and though Latin would have been prominent, many other languages would have been spoken, especially among the enslaved class. Because people were not well versed in all these languages, problems resulting from miscommunication were, likely, a daily challenge. Further, people tend to live in enclaves where the same language and culture are shared and where

others are often shut out. As a result, the Corinthian Saints would have been well aware of the divisive power that language had. Paul played on this to show that such could (and probably was) happening in the Church. The results were feelings of mutual discomfort and, on the part of some, of being deliberately excluded (14:10–11). Paul here illustrates that there is a built-in wrongness with anything that would cause such a feeling to exist in the Church. Speaking in tongues does that and thereby sets up, even if unconsciously, artificial barriers that cause some to feel unwelcome and, therefore, unwanted. Such should not happen in a community composed of brothers and sisters. The issue is whether worship is a case of “God and me” or of “God and us.” Paul argues for the latter.

14:12

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 686.

With 1 Corinthians 14:12, Paul brings his argument full circle. In 14:1, he admonished his readers to “strive [ζηλοῦτε, *zēloute*] for spiritual gifts,” more especially for prophecy. In 14:12, he admonishes them to “seek [ζητεῖτε, *zēteite*] for” an abundance of these gifts, the force of the imperative stressing the serious effort readers should put into obtaining them. His earnest appeal came from his conviction that these gifts—properly used when channeled by love—would be a uniting force among these divisive branches.

Verse 14:12 also highlights the difference between Paul’s humility and his detractors’ pride, shown in their boast of deep spirituality. The display of the gift of tongues was, apparently, too often a childish and thoughtless exhibition of self-centeredness. Paul in no way intimates that the display of this gift is childish, but its use to show off is. Such self-advertising evidences a lack of appreciation for oneself and of concern for others.

The Apostle shows the Corinthians that their premise is wrong. Speaking in tongues is not a sign of a great spiritual endowment. They have been striving for the wrong thing and should, rather, reach for true higher spiritual powers. Those powers are anchored in having the Spirit and its fruits in their lives. That Spirit is derived from Christ and is meant to testify of His works. True spirituality is manifest by doing what the Lord did: serving and edifying others, neither of which the gift of tongues does. Paul explains to these Christians that like their Lord, they should be zealous in building up all within the community of the Saints. Thus, they are to forget about parading their gift and to communicate intelligibly and sincerely during public worship services.

14:13–16

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 700–701.

With 1 Corinthians 14:13, Paul launches into the second part of his discussion dealing with the superiority of inspired speaking over the speaking in unknown tongues. Paul makes an important point in 14:15–16 when he stresses the need for both mind and spirit to be engaged in the process. In English parlance, the spirit is the seat of emotion and can be equated with the heart. Thus, speaking of the process of revelation, the Lord says, “I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart” (Doctrine and Covenants 8:2). Such revelations are, as Joseph Smith taught, adapted to the circumstances, capacity, and language of the person or persons who receive them and are experienced independent of the body.

14:22–25

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 702–703.

In 1 Corinthians 14:22–25, to further bolster his point, Paul paints a hypothetical picture of the reaction of a nonmember attending a general meeting of the Saints in which he or she finds all gibbering in various unknown tongues. Paul states that this person would likely conclude that the whole assemblage was raving mad and even socially depraved. On the other hand, if she or he attended a meeting filled with order and inspired speaking and testimony bearing—that is, prophecy—they would be not only edified but also moved toward conversion (14:25). By having his readers focus on the *effect* that an abundant outpouring of the gift of tongues or of prophecy would have on an observer, Paul ably shows the superiority of the latter gift.

Paul testified that, touched by the spiritual power that stands behind proper teaching and witnessing (*προφητεία, prophēteia*), the attendee receives a profound and new grasp of truth. He or she becomes convinced of one thing: that God is unmistakably with these people. That conviction is so strong that it erupts in a spontaneous outburst of testimony, “Truly God is among you!” (14:25). In so doing, the prophetic gift acts as a *σημεῖον (sēmeion)*, “sign,” that is, a divine witness to truth, for it touches and “builds up” (*οἰκοδομέω, oikodomeō*) everyone (14:22). Further, this Spirit-driven conviction stands in contrast to the confusion the gift of tongues brings. That being the case, the insistence by some of Paul’s detractors that speaking in tongues is the sure evidence of superior spirituality is grossly mistaken. Paul tells them, therefore, that the gift of inspired speech should be highly respected and sought for by all (14:39). Further, it should hold sway over tongues in all meetings.

14:26

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 710.

Paul concluded his long discussion on the proper use of tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophecy by insisting that inspired speaking (*προφητεία, prophēteia*), no matter what form it takes, must take priority over tongues and their interpretation. He now turns to the need for due order in using any of the gifts in a Church setting.

He uses the example of a meeting in which the Spirit manifests itself in five ways—in singing, teaching, revelation, speaking in an unknown tongue, and its interpretation (1 Corinthians 14:26). Proper use of all of these gifts, Paul insists, should be but for one thing: the building up and edification (*οικοδομή, oikodomē*) of the community. Properly executed order would ensure that the correct use of all these gifts would be met and the necessary unity and peace prevail.

In his directive, Paul begins with what he considers to be the least useful and the most troubling of the gifts: that of speaking in another language (*γλῶσσα, glōssa*). He then turns to inspired speech (*προφητεία, prophēteia*), a gift he considers of high value. He instructs those possessing each of these gifts. Paul’s statement in 14:26–27 about limiting the use of tongues in church suggests he would like to completely avoid speaking in tongues during church services, but he realizes, given the present condition, that would be impossible.

14:26–33

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 711, 713.

It is of note that in his whole discussion on how a meeting should be run, Paul mentions neither priesthood leadership nor the sacrament. The latter is not too surprising since he has addressed that earlier, but not addressing what role the priesthood leaders should play in all this is a bit striking. It may be that it was among these that the trouble brewed and, therefore, they were his target audience. It seems more likely, however, that he sought to first take care of the spontaneity that was disrupting the meetings and creating chaos. Only after everyone was on the same page could he then focus his counsel on the presiding officers.

The freewheeling nature of the meetings, which the text reveals, suggests that the Church in general was not yet ordered. Meetings during this period seem to have followed the pattern described in the Book of Mormon, for “their meetings were conducted by the church after the manner of the workings of the Spirit, and by the power of the Holy Ghost; for as the power of the Holy Ghost led them whether to preach, or to exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so it was done” (Moroni 6:9).

Paul’s concern in 1 Corinthians 14:31–32 seems to be with whether those, while exercising the gift of prophecy, have the critical self-awareness, self-control, and concern for others that allows them to yield to others. When this power is exercised in a Church meeting, Paul insists, the spirits of the prophets must yield to the prophets (14:32). Nothing that is said is exempt from scrutiny, clarification, or expansion. God reveals His will line upon line, and following Church order is one way of allowing this to happen.

That means that prophecy is not without its checks and balances. Because God is dealing with human beings, such is necessary. Thus, even today checks are in place, and these reach the highest levels of the Church. All decisions by the First Presidency of the Church and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles must be unanimous (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:27, 29).

14:34–36

In 1 Corinthians 14:34–36, Paul addresses yet another problem that was causing disruptions during worship services in Corinth. In this case, it was women going beyond propriety at meetings. Since the action of these women seems to have been challenging proper authority and thereby disrupting not only the proper order in meetings but also their purpose (“all things be done unto edifying,” 14:26), it is not surprising that Paul addresses it here. His counsel is also connected with what he has said—first, about others being silent during meetings and thereby showing respect and, second, about the importance of learning in church (14:28, 30–31).

It would be nice to know if Paul were issuing a universal directive or giving a necessary corrective to a unique problem. Based on his counsel in 1 Timothy 2:9–15 (a woman should learn in silence and not “usurp authority over the man”), it would appear that the problem of women not being reverent in church was not unique to the Corinthian branches. For example, Paul’s statement in this chapter should not negate what he said in chapter 11. Here he is correcting a specific problem—women speaking out in meetings—there he was confirming a general right—women and men speaking through inspiration in Church.

The background in which this issue was being played out can be helpful. Among the Greeks, it was not customary to allow women to participate in public deliberations. That, however, was not the case in certain pagan religious practices, especially those honoring Aphrodite (the chief goddess of Corinth), Demeter, and Dionysius. An ecstatic endowment and outpouring of utterance assured women respect and prophetic rank as sibyls. Likewise, in Jewish tradition, though women did not preside at the altar or in the temple, they were admitted to the lower offices at the entrance to the tabernacle, God’s house of revelation (Exodus 38:8). Those who particularly expressed the gift of prophecy (for example, Miriam, Huldah, and Noadiah) obtained respect and status almost equivalent to that of men.

With the restoration of the gospel in Paul’s day, women were again allowed to teach, preach, and testify in Church. Unfortunately, as with other Church-related matters, the Corinthian Saints were pushing the envelope and that included certain women.

What was the condition that Paul addressed? The structure yields a number of possibilities. Taking Paul’s counsel in chapters 11 and 14, one could be certain that women worshippers were not teaching, bearing testimony, or praying but rather were disrespectfully speaking in Church. Paul uses the verb *λαλέω* (*laleō*), “to speak,” to describe what these women were doing. One nuance of the word is “to make

small talk or chat.” The problem with this view is that Paul never uses the word *laleo* with this nuance anywhere else in his writings. His use suggests more ordered and deliberate speaking.

Another possibility is that the sentiment actually reflects an attitude among certain men. Certainly some Jewish converts likely wanted all women to hold their tongues during worship services. Thus, these verses are a paraphrase of an inappropriate attitude by some men that was reported to Paul. He clearly did not hold this view. The problem with this view is that unlike other instances where Paul was responding to slogans coming out of Corinth, there is no clear indication that he is doing so here.

Yet another possibility, and the most prominent, is that Paul is trying to save women from shaming themselves. Paul’s use of the adjective *αἰσχρός* (*aischros*), “shameful, disgraceful,” shows that some people were deeply offended by these women’s actions. Once again, the Joseph Smith Translation provides insight into why this was the case. It changes the word “speak” to “rule” in 14:34–35, thus stating that it is a shame for women to rule in the Church.

The two rhetorical questions Paul asks in 14:36 expose the heart of the Corinthian problem. It was one of arrogance. Paul is asking them if they think that they somehow have some special divine authority that allows them to reject both Paul’s teachings and the general practices of the Church. In 14:33, he noted that peace prevails *ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις* (*en pasais tais ekklesiiais*), “in all the congregations.” The operative words are “in all,” for it shows he is appealing to general Church protocols. Here he contrasts that situation with what is happening in Corinth, asking if the gospel came *εἰς ὑμᾶς μόνους* (*eis hymas monous*), “to only you,” since they are setting their own standards. In essence he is asking, “Are you the starting point of the gospel? Or are you its only destination?” Thus, this summary statement, couched as a question, directs all the guilty parties in Corinth, both men and women, to conform.

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 719–722, 727–728.

14:39–40

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 728.

In 1 Corinthians 14:39–40, Paul succinctly brings his whole argument to a close: the gift of speaking by inspiration should be sought for with zeal (*ζηλόω*, *zēloō*), and the gift of speaking in other languages should not be suppressed, only controlled. Every meeting should be conducted so that both proper form and sequence are followed. The result would bring edification to all who attended, both those of high and low rank as well as members and nonmembers. Such harmony and orderliness among the Saints would go a long way in commending respect from those outside the Church (see 1 Thessalonians 4:12).

1 Corinthians 15

15:1–11

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 746–747, 749, 752–754.

Paul introduces this section by reminding, or perhaps even chiding, his readers about what he and others have already taught them. Paul's introductory argument in these verses is based on the central teachings of the nascent Church that salvation is found only in and through Christ Jesus. The Apostle stresses that this was the message from the beginning that he, as founder of the Corinthian branches, and other missionaries taught.² He insists that he teaches only the core doctrine that is both traditionally and scripturally based and that all should respect (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). He then lists those elements of the doctrine that fall to history. In chronological order, they are “Christ died for our sins, . . . he was buried, . . . he was raised up on the third day, . . . he appeared to Cephas [that is, Peter], then to the Twelve [and then] to more than five hundred brothers and sisters.” After that, he appeared to James, then other Apostles, and lastly, to Paul (15:3–8 BYU Rendition). Though he admits that he is the least and last of those who hold this apostolic office, he nonetheless appeals to it as a reason that his teaching should hold force.

The phrase in 15:3 that “Christ died for our sins” was the first element in the primitive Christians’ “articles of faith” that Paul and the other missionaries proclaimed.³ Paul's words show that the nascent Church viewed the Savior's death as a vicarious act. Paul restated the idea in Romans 4:25 and tied it to the Resurrection, stating that Jesus “was handed over [to death] for our sins and was raised for our justification” (authors' translation). Thus, Paul affirmed not only the salvific nature of the Redeemer's death but also the end result of both aspects of the Atonement—death and resurrection. That result was justification—that is, becoming sin free—a necessary step in returning to God's presence. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:3 that Christ died “for our sins” must be seen to include the notion of expiation. Paul's usage of these terms reinforces the doctrine that the Savior's death was a propitiation or expiation for sin.

The phrase “he was buried” in 15:4 expresses the second element in the early Christian expression of faith. Its inclusion is important because it both affirms the reality of the Savior's suffering and death and, in addition, undergirds the reality of His Resurrection. It also countered the insistence by some of the Church's detractors that the Savior's body was never buried but stolen (Matthew 28:13).

Also, in that verse, we find the third “article of faith” that Christ was “raised the third day.” Paul expressed the historical reality of the event through the force of the perfect passive verb *ἐγέρθη* (*egēgertai*), literally “he has been raised,” coupled with the explanatory frame of reference, *τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ* (*tē hēmera tē tritē*), “on the third day.” The verb, being a divine passive, stresses the idea that God was behind this action and, therefore, that the event was miraculous in nature. That being the case, it needs neither logical nor scientific explanation. Paul again appeals to the authority of the scriptures to substantiate that the whole event was foreknown *and* foretold.

The fourth element in the early Church’s “articles of faith” is found in 15:5: that Jesus was “seen of Cephas,” that is, Peter. Luke 24:34 also preserves the tradition of an independent appearance to the chief Apostle. Such makes sense given Peter’s position as both the senior Apostle and head of the Church.

Though Paul may have been able to mention more appearances of the Lord, he lists enough to defuse any idea that only a scattered few witnessed the event. It is of note that Paul lists Peter as the first witness and himself as the last. In doing so, he ties both men together. The appearance to more than five hundred Saints at one time—most of whom were still alive and could, therefore, verify the experience—was a tremendous witness to the reality of the Resurrection.

Paul’s description of himself in 1 Corinthians 15:8 as a prematurely born babe (*ἐκτρομα*, *ektrōma*), either dead or nearly so, emphasizes his understanding of how the grace of God operates in behalf of His children. As he traveled toward Damascus, the Apostle was “yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord” (Acts 9:1). Spiritually he was dead and, therefore, in no position or condition to contribute anything to his salvation. But that did not prevent Christ from reaching out to him. In doing so, the Savior brought vitality to one whose spiritual life was humanly beyond hope. Thus, the nature of Paul’s conversion acts as a perfect type of the Resurrection, an act in which God’s sovereign grace alone gives life to *all* the dead, even those who yet physically live.

1 Corinthians 15:10 contains the very heart of Paul’s argument as he witnesses to the power of divine grace. This argument rests on his understanding of the free and independent nature of that grace as it springs from the love of God and becomes operative in the lives of the Saints. This empowering force is the center of Paul’s apostolic vocation and also at the seat of any Christian’s call to the work. It is fully expressed in the universal nature of the Resurrection. Paul stresses that it is God’s empowering grace alone that has enabled and does enable the Apostle to do the exhausting toil required by his calling. It is of note that God does not take the toil away. Rather, He extends His grace, making it possible for the Saint to accomplish it.

In 15:11, Paul stresses that the doctrine of the Resurrection was taught by every single missionary. Further, it was in responding to that doctrine (that is, by acting in faith) that these Corinthians initially became Saints. Paul again appeals to their faith in the truthfulness of the Resurrection to hear him out. His affirmation, as he ends this section of his epistle, sets the ground for the argument he will develop as he responds to the most pressing questions and objections concerning the doctrine posed by the anti-resurrection party.

15:12–19

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 759–761.

It is unlikely that Paul mentions all the concerns and objections of the anti-resurrection party; thus, just what they were is unknown. Given developments later in Church history, however, four broad possibilities

exist: (1) a belief following some teachings of the Epicureans and the Jewish Sadducees that there was no postmortal existence; (2) a belief that the Resurrection was an inner or spiritual awakening that had occurred and was occurring at the time; (3) a belief that denied, or at best questioned, a corporeal resurrection and the immortal nature of the soul (*ψύχη*, *psychē*); and (4) a belief that combined some or all of these elements in some way.

Given Paul's acquaintance with Greek and Roman ideas, he likely knew that many of the Corinthians held vague notions about the existence of the Elysium, or Isle of the Blessed, where the soul (*psychē*) enjoyed some form of immortal life and that his detractors were likely feeding off these. He, however, through personal experience, knew full well the concrete nature of the afterlife with the joy that awaited the righteous who endured to the end (2 Corinthians 12:1–4).

Paul's method of attack was to assume for the sake of argument his antagonists' views on the Resurrection and then show the consequences of their belief. In that way they could see that when pointed out, they very likely did not want to accept those consequences.

In 1 Corinthians 15:14, Paul clearly articulates the various unimaginable consequences if Christ had not been resurrected. His words reveal his understanding that the reality of this event is the linchpin of Christian belief.

Remove that linchpin and a multitude of dependent derivatives instantly collapse. Among these are several serious issues: "(i) the content and currency of the gospel; (ii) the authenticity of Christian faith; (iii) the truthfulness of testimony to the acts of God (verse 15); (iv) liberation from the destructive and damaging power of sin (verse 17); and (v) the irretrievable loss of believers who have died (verse 18)."⁴ In sum, the result of disbelief is a discrediting not only of the veracity of the Apostles but also of the entire theology.

The result, as Paul notes (15:19), would place the Christians in a position more to be pitied than any among humankind. As one scholar noted, Paul is saying that "if our hope in Christ is limited only to what we may share with him in this life, with no prospect of a share in his glorious and resurrected life, then we are to be pitied indeed."⁵ And why? Because everything the Christian believes in falls apart. It is because the promises and expectations are so high that their lack of realization places the Christians in this position.

15:20–28

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 769, 7761–772.

Having forcefully refuted the erroneous beliefs of some of the Corinthian Saints by exposing the unacceptable consequences of their position, Paul reverses his argument (1 Corinthians 15:20). Now he emphasizes the wonderful results because there was a Resurrection. The series he lists accents the tie between this doctrine and that of the gospel as a whole.

Paul described the Savior as *ἀπαρχή* (*aparchē*), “first” or “firstfruits.” The word is important because it shows that God never intended Jesus to be the only person resurrected. Because of the number of connotations of the word *aparchē*, Paul used it as the pivot of his argument. The first connotation is temporal, showing that Christ is the first one raised from the dead. The second is representative, showing He represents all those who would follow. It also suggests that they will share in the same quality and character.

The third connotation points to the order of the events. Where there is a first, there must be either a second or a last. The Apostle already noted that all things must be done “in an orderly manner” (*κατὰ τάξιν, kata taxin*; 14:40). So, too, the Resurrection will proceed in God’s way according to His time table.

In 15:24, Paul explains that the end will not come until the Savior has accomplished two final tasks. The first is to hand over (*παραδίδομι, paradidōmi*) his kingdom to the Father. The second is to annihilate (*καταργέω, katargeō*) all opposing forces. In 15:25, Paul adapts Psalm 110:1 to bolster the point he is making. This scripture, though speaking about God’s subjugating all the enemies for the future Davidic king, was seen by the early Christians as a reference to all things—especially death—being overcome by Christ through the Resurrection.⁶ In 15:26, Paul notes that death will be the last enemy overcome. Once it has been vanquished nothing will remain that can oppose God.

As Paul notes in 15:25–28, God granted full sovereignty over the earth to the Son during its celestial and terrestrial periods. He did this for a definite purpose. It was so that the Son would have full power to assist Him in bringing “to pass the immortality and eternal life” of all those who would follow His commandments.⁷ Even when the Savior had been raised by the Father unto life, His work was not yet finished. He had to see through to the very end the full extent of His vicarious, victorious, and atoning work. That meant He had to not only overcome mortal corruption and sin through the Resurrection but also annihilate the very vast structural and corporate evil that had dominated the world since it turned from the love and ways of God. Therefore, he had to destroy all dominions, authorities, and powers that undergirded and supported it.

In 15:27, Paul picks up another scripture used by the Christians to support the doctrine of the Resurrection. This is Psalm 8:7 from the Septuagint: “He has put all things in subjugation under his feet.” Paul’s commentary shows that it is God who placed all things, including death, in subjugation to Christ. Paul’s commentary counters a primary position of the anti-resurrection party. In doing so, it sheds light on their misinterpretation of the scriptures. It appears that they believed that the phrase “For he hath put all things under his feet” included the flesh. From that they extrapolated that there would be no corporeal resurrection. Paul counters the argument by insisting that there was no exception to Christ’s powers of subjugation and that included physical death.

Paul ends this section of his epistle explaining why God needed to put all things in subjugation (*ὑποτάσσω, hypotassō*) to the Savior. It was so that the Father could be “all things in all things” (15:28 BYU Rendition). It was through the subjugation of all rule, authority, and power that the Savior allowed this to happen. He prepared the way by first subjugating *Himself* to both physical and spiritual death. By doing that, He “ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all

things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:6). The Son experienced both the heights of exaltation and the depths of hell. With His condescension to become mortal, with all that that entailed, as well as His yielding to all the forces of an ignoble death (1 Nephi 11:16–33) and placing Himself in the powers of spiritual death, He gained total comprehension of the full range of mortal and postmortal experience.

It also made it possible for the spiritual aspect of His divine nature (that is, “the light of truth” or Light of Christ) to permeate all things everywhere. Thus, he is “in all . . . and is through all things,” both animate and inanimate (Doctrine and Covenants 88:41).

15:29–34

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 784–787.

Debate over whether some of these passages should be taken literally or figuratively—like Paul’s life being in danger daily and baptism for the dead—has raged from the beginning of the second century into the present. But the solution, largely overlooked, is found in the function of these verses. Paul is countering not simply the notion of those who reject the idea of a corporeal Resurrection but the implication that his witness and that of other missionaries is a lie. He is particularly upset by the implication that vicarious work for the dead is, therefore, a useless exercise. Since the heart of Christianity—the reality of its history, doctrine, ordinances, and message—all center on the reality of the Resurrection, to deny that reality is to deny the truth of the gospel message.

Verse 15:29 serves as a rejoinder in which Paul looks to the practice of vicarious baptism for the dead. His point is that the practice makes no sense at all if there is no resurrection. The third-person plural “they” suggests that the practice was not being done at that time in Corinth. That Paul briefly mentions it shows, however, that it was well-known to them.

To further push his point, Paul mentions the dangers he was in “daily” (*καθ’ ἡμέραν, kath’ hēmeran*) but which the hope of the Resurrection gives him boldness to face (15:30–31). “If there is no resurrection,” pointed out a Latter-day Saint scholar, “there is no purpose or sense to the sufferings or persecutions endured by the Apostles and saints in this life.”⁸

In 15:33–34, Paul reaches the theological center not only of the whole chapter but of the entire epistle. Here we find the hinge of his argument. It swings on one word: *ἀγνοσία (agnōsia)*, “ignorance.” As noted above, the Corinthian strong had prided themselves in having a superior spirituality (*πνευματικός, pneumatikos*) and knowledge (*γνώσις, gnōsis*). Here Paul attacks that attitude by using a wordplay with *agnosia*. The noun connotes the darkened state in which all the Saints lived before finding Christianity, but he hints that some never left it. Therefore, rather than having superior spirituality and knowledge, these people were no better than the heathens. Paul knows that knowing God and comprehending His

purpose and power holds the key to meeting all the objections concerning the Resurrection. Further, he understands that acceptance of this doctrine promotes a high moral lifestyle, a way of life some of the Saints desperately needed to follow.

The key to the unity so lacking among the Corinthian Saints and the answer to nearly all the questions they asked and arguments they raised was a true knowledge of God. If they had only known His character, attributes, sovereignty, power, grace, purposes, and methods, the whole mess would never have occurred. The anti-resurrection party did not seem to understand that God is the one who has the power to organize, orchestrate, give life—both mortal and immortal, both physical and spiritual—and bring exaltation. That Paul calls shame upon them shows the enormity of their position and undercuts their notions of superiority in either spirituality or knowledge.

The Savior had made it abundantly clear that “this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). For both the Savior and Paul, the linchpin of the gospel is an accurate knowledge of God. The verb *γινώσκω* (*ginōskō*), “to know,” often indicates a relationship between the person and object and suggests that the thing known has value or importance to the knower. Therefore, the verb connotes not knowing *about* something but actually having a relationship with it. In this instance, it is the person who, in order to have eternal life, must have a personal relationship with God that he or she highly values. The road to this relationship and true knowledge begins with faith in Christ. The Greek word *πίστις* (*pistis*) implies not just believing in Him but doing His will, a will that reflects that of the Father as well. “If any man will do his [God’s] will, he shall know of the doctrine,” pointed out the Savior, “whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:17).

15:35

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 806–807.

With 1 Corinthians 15:35, Paul begins another round of argument. It addresses the issue with which the anti-resurrection party had the most trouble: the nature of the resurrected body. In essence they are saying, “We cannot conceive of such a thing. No one should be expected to believe what is inconceivable and illogical.” Their objection may have been influenced by beliefs held by certain Jews that the body will come out of the grave exactly as it went in with all the frailties and deformities it had in life. It is also possible they rejected the idea that the body would come out of the grave zombie-like—that is, as an animated rotting corpse.

15:36–39

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 807.

Through 1 Corinthians 15:36–39, the Apostle exposes as a fallacy the argument that a corporeal resurrection is illogical and unintelligible. He does this with two refutations. With the first, he stresses that the body that goes into the grave is not the same one that comes out of the grave any more than a bulb is the tulip or an apple seed the whole tree (15:35–37). He does insist, however, that identity somehow remains. With the second, he emphasizes that the heart of the problem is the false understanding of God that is held by the members of the anti-resurrection party. Paul’s witness is that God, as creation itself testifies, is totally capable of creating the exact type of body for whatever conditions call for (15:38). Paul’s point is that each person is given a new life with a new body. Both of these are gifts bestowed according to the will or intent (*θέλω, theō*) of God.

15:40–41

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 807–808.

In 1 Corinthians 15:40–41, Paul uses yet another example to illustrate the vast differences between mortal and resurrected bodies. He uses the word *δόξα (doxa)*, “glory.” The word became associated with magnificence and carried the idea of greatness. From there it was an easy step to denote that which was bright, radiant, and shining. Since the English word *splendor* catches the idea of both brilliance or luster and grandeur or magnificence, it nicely catches the range of Paul’s meaning. Paul’s point in using the word is that there is a stark contrast between the splendor one finds on the earth and that in the sky. Nonetheless, earthly objects and persons of rank do, indeed, have their own splendor. The source of all this glory, however, is God. It is He who gave bodies not only to animals and man but also to suns and planets. Paul’s point is that if He can do all of that, why should anyone be concerned about His ability to fashion a body fit for resurrected souls?

But there is another nuance of *doxa* that needs to be mentioned. At its root, it denotes the respect, honor, or esteem held by an individual who has exhibited great concern for others. Thus, in the Old Testament, it is not Jehovah’s brute force, overwhelming power, and majesty that constitutes His glory but the selfless and gracious love that He bestows upon His people. One of the highest expressions of that love is the Resurrection.

15:42–44

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 809.

In a series of parallel couplets, Paul contrasts mortal and immortal bodies (1 Corinthians 15:42–44). The earthly body is perishable, without honor, weak, and worldly, while the heavenly is imperishable, radiant,

powerful, and spiritual. He does not distinguish between what glories the resurrected bodies will have but lists their common properties. It is important to note, however, that they all have a *σῶμα* (*sōma*), “body.” Paul at times identifies the earthbound and weak part of the human as *σάρξ* (*sarx*), “flesh” (15:39). At the Resurrection, however, the *sōma* is more than reconstituted *sarx*, for that is left behind. God, through the power of the Resurrection, will completely renovate the physical body such that it will be able to dwell in a new, completely different, and glorious mode of existence.

15:45

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 809–811.

That Paul describes the Lord as *πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν* (*pneuma zōopoion*), “a life-giving spirit” (15:45 BYU Rendition), does not preclude His having a corporeal body. Indeed, he describes Adam as a *ψυχὴν ζῶσαν* (*psychēn zōsan*), “a living soul,” but there is no question he had a body at the time (see Genesis 2:7).

The central objection to the Resurrection held by some of Paul’s detractors was that they believed more in a bodily resuscitation than in a resurrection. They did not understand that “the soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame” (Alma 40:23; compare 11:42–44). Paul understood that God would “change our lowly body to be like [Christ’s] glorious body” (Philippians 3:21, authors’ translation).

In this verse, Paul continues to stress the vast differences between mortal and resurrected bodies. In doing so, he contrasts the first Adam with the last—that is, Jesus. The Apostle focuses on their respective differences so far as life is concerned. The first Adam had to receive it while the last Adam gives it. There was a reason the Savior could do so. In speaking of the mission of the Lord, John testified, “In him was life; and the life was the light of men” and, therefore, “as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons [and daughters] of God” (John 1:4, 12; compare 10:10). To do this, the Father endowed the Son with life independent of His own. Jesus testified that “as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself” (John 5:26).

15:50

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 812–813.

Paul further showed why a resurrected body was necessary by noting that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 15:50). The belief of those who use this scripture, as well as the one that states “It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body” (15:44), to prove that there is no physical

resurrection actually corresponds very closely to the Corinthian heresy. The metaphor “flesh and blood,” however, refers to mortality. Jesus noted that Peter received his witness not from “flesh and blood,” and Paul noted that after his conversion, he did not confer “with flesh and blood” but went to Arabia, likely for contemplation and study (Matthew 16:17; Galatians 1:16).

Paul does agree with his detractors on one point: the mortal body “cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 15:50). That does not mean, however, that there is no physical component to a resurrected body. Jesus’s appearance to the ten and later eleven Apostles clearly demonstrates that a spiritual body has a physical component (Luke 24:36–42; John 20:26–27).

15:49–50

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 814.

The instruction in 1 Corinthians 15:49–50 seems to show that Paul fully understood that nothing mortals possess can go as it is into the heavenly realm. Not only must the lowest and bestial be shunted off, but the best and most noble will be purified and enlarged. Everything must move from *φθορά* (*phthora*), “corruption,” to *ἀφθαρσία* (*aphtharsia*), “incorruption,” from that which can be destroyed to that which never can. It is not so much that the body, with its appetites and passions, is too rank but more that it is too weak. It is the power of the Resurrection that makes the body and its passions and appetites pure, strong, powerful, and eternal.

15:51

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 826.

To both bolster his position and assure the Saints that he knows what he is talking about, Paul affirms that what he is telling them is a “mystery” (1 Corinthians 15:51). Since the word connotes a revelation from God, it appears that Paul is referencing a revelation he has had. It informed him that at the time of the Second Coming, the righteous dead will be instantly transformed from mortal to immortal. In the Millennium, when the living approach death, the same will also happen to them.

15:56

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 827.

Deep sin is not just the deliberate turning away from God. It is also the attempt to turn everything toward oneself. It manifests itself in those who seek to be a law unto themselves and disallows any sanctification

by law, mercy, judgment, or justice (D&C 88:35). The price of such rebellion is death. Paul could therefore declare, “The sting of death is sin” (1 Corinthians 15:56).

15:57

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 828.

Though law acts as a moral indicator pointing out both sin and its gravity, it also acts as a principle of rule sustained by cause and effect that applies to everyone. It thereby ties everyone to the consequences of their past actions from which they have no power on their own to escape (Alma 42:12, 14). This is what arms death with its lethal sting. It can claim the creature and impose the horrible penalty of eternal death (Alma 42:9–11). Christ’s Atonement frees individuals not only from their past deeds but also from the consequences (Alma 42:15; 2 Nephi 9:10–12). The Atonement, then, allows the individual to live free and fearless so far as the future is concerned. Therefore, Paul could admonish his readers to “thank God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57 BYU Rendition).

15:58

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 828.

Paul understood that to enjoy the benefits of Christ’s victory in their behalf, the Saints must do something. He could have ended this section by admonishing them to wait in patient endurance for the end by placing full confidence in the assurance of their reward to come—a reward guaranteed through the victory of Christ. But he does not. Rather, he admonishes them to let the future promise energize them to be proactive and labor hard in the present. Theirs was not to be a movement that quietly waited for the end. There was to be nothing passive about it. Because of what was coming—the imminent Apostasy and the future Resurrection—all efforts needed to be directed toward the now. The kingdom of God on earth had to be protected and its stay lengthened. Therefore, the Saints had to be ever steadfast in adhering to righteousness and unmovable in their witness, and they also must excel in their good works (1 Corinthians 15:58).

1 Corinthians 16

16:1–4

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 835.

This pericope refers to the practice of almsgiving or making freewill offerings for the benefit of the poor and distressed among God’s people. It was established as a principal doctrine and practice of the Church during the Jerusalem Council in AD 49. It connoted a tangible recognition of the mutual caring and sharing that befell those of all economic classes and ethnicities that made up the Church as a whole (Galatians 2:10). Therefore, the collection of these offerings was, for Paul, far more than a mundane task imposed upon him. The offerings were meant to maintain the Church, not just in some mechanical or routine way but in the sense of nourishing and sustaining its members. It was, more importantly, a matter and tangible means of passing on the grace (*χάρις, charis*) that God and Christ had bestowed upon these later Saints through the efforts and sacrifices of the earliest ones. Through the donations of their means—a token of time and, therefore, of life—these later Christians reciprocated and, thereby, strengthened the overall “fellowship” (*κοινωνία, koinōnía*) by serving (*διακονέω, diakoneō*) in the Savior’s own way. The end result was a double blessing (*εὐλογία, eulogía*) as one gave and the other received and both were lifted by God.

In 16:1–4, Paul gives a concrete example of how the Saints can fulfill his admonition to “always [do] your best in the work of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58 BYU Rendition). The verb *περισεύω (perisseuō)*, “to abound more and more” or “to overflow,” indicates a growth in ability, means, and power. A nuance behind the word is that of doing one’s best—of putting effort into one’s service to the Lord and to one’s fellow Saints. Such effort opens the doors to assistance from the Father. The Apostle’s point is that it is God who bestows grace, expressed in divinely inspired motives as well as the bequeathing of spiritual gifts and increased abilities and powers. He does so in part to allow the Saints to reciprocate that grace to others with the result that all abound more and more. The Savior, as expressed in His life and ministry, is the embodiment of this process.

16:5–12

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 844–845.

It is difficult to determine with certainty how many visits Paul made to Corinth. Luke mentions only two, while Paul’s writings suggest three. Second Corinthians 13:1 is, however, very helpful: “This is the third time I am coming to you.” It indicates that Paul is planning on a third visit as soon as he can make arrangements. Thus, Luke’s account does not mention this hurried visit.

Conditions that warranted this swift visit were likely generated after Paul had written 1 Corinthians and Timothy had arrived with his delegation. There are a couple of clues in 1 Corinthians that may explain what happened. First, the Apostle mentions that he sent Timothy, a young emissary, to bear witness of Paul’s integrity and Christian lifestyle (1 Corinthians 4:17). Second, Paul was very concerned about how the young man would be treated and made it very clear that if things did not go well, he would personally come to set things straight (4:18–19; 16:10). Apparently things did not go well, so Paul made good on his

threat with the quick visit. He apparently did not stay a long time, thus not realizing his goal at that time for an extended visit (16:6).

By repetition, Paul emphasized his need to visit the Saints in Macedonia (16:5). It appears that he sensed or learned that they were in spiritual danger and, therefore, he felt the need for a personal visit. The problem most likely had arisen due to the work of the Judaizers who had arrived in the area. These were Jews who were only partly converted to Christianity. They believed and forcefully taught that the Mosaic law had not been fulfilled and therefore had to be practiced with all its rites and ordinances. They accepted Jesus as the Messiah and saw His role as showing how the law was to be properly interpreted and adapted to life. Salvation, they insisted, came only through obedience to the law. Because they did not appreciate the greatness of Christ nor understand His mission, Paul knew that their beliefs were heresy and that would lead people away from the truth. Therefore, he felt it was paramount that these people be stopped and that only a personal visit would do that.

Paul had no intention of letting events in Corinth go unchecked. He put pressure on (*παρακαλέω*, *parakaleō*) his fellow missionary Apollos to head a delegation to oversee matters there. For reasons unknown, the missionary refused to go until he felt the time more suitable (16:12). It is likely that he felt disgust toward some of the Corinthian Saints for using and probably abusing his teachings to promote their personal agendas and pitting him against Paul. He, too, would have been well aware of the *αἵρέσεις* (*haireseis*), “parties, factions,” and like Paul, disapproved of them (see 11:19 BYU Rendition). His refusal to come could therefore have been his means of emphasizing his contempt and irritation for their actions. Paul was careful to point out that the decision was Apollos’s alone, thus undermining any suggestion from his detractors that the Apostle was somehow responsible for it.

Paul then turned to his concerns for Timothy. The young man’s mission was twofold: to disabuse the Saints of the notion promoted by some that the Apostle was neither living nor teaching what he should (4:17) and to report conditions back to Paul (16:10–11).

The Apostle was deeply concerned about how some of the Saints might treat this young man. Since he was Paul’s delegate, the Apostle’s detractors would likely be hostile to the missionary. To bolster his representative’s position, Paul reminded his readers that Timothy was “doing the Lord’s work just as I do” (16:10 Rendition). To see that Timothy was accorded proper respect while visiting the Saints, Paul laid three charges upon them: (1) to see that Timothy could accomplish his mission free from anxiety and worry, (2) to neither despise nor undervalue him, and (3) to give him all that was necessary in support and provisions so that he could accomplish his assignment and return to Paul (16:10–11).

16:13–16

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 850.

Paul followed Roman epistolary conventions in the opening of his epistles but gave them a decidedly Christian twist. He followed the same practice in his closings. Often letters of this period ended with some kind of admonition or wish in behalf of the receivers, such as “prosper,” “be strong,” and so on. Paul follows suit with his list of five imperatives. It is Paul’s style to give terse and short admonitions at the end of his epistles.⁹

The four virtues Paul commands in 1 Corinthians 16:13 are directed against the vices of “heedlessness, fickleness, childishness, and moral enervation.”¹⁰ Each is conveyed with the use of a present imperative. Their force must not be overlooked. “He does *not* say *wake up, stand up on your feet*, but *stay watchful* [γρηγορεῖτε, grēgoreite] or *keep alert; stand firm* [στηκέτε, stēkete].”¹¹ The Saints are to have already gained these virtues and must keep them alive and active. And they are to grow in strength.

Spiritual maturity is the issue here. Paul has already shown that childishness expresses itself in self-centeredness and short-term gratification. It is a world in which love is weak, narcissistic, inward, and self-serving. The Apostle’s plea is for the Corinthian Saints to become mature through developing the greatest of the gifts of the Spirit, ἀγάπη (*agapē*), “the pure love of Christ” (Moroni 7:47).

16:17–20

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 854.

Stephanas, as noted previously, was one of the pioneers of the faith in Greece. It appears he had become a local Christian leader and was greatly admired by Paul. Other than the fact they were faithful Saints, nothing is known of Fortunatus and Achaicus.

Aquila and Priscilla were longtime friends and missionary companions of Paul, and he had labored in their shop while he stayed in Corinth (Acts 18:2–3). They apparently had relocated their business to Ephesus and used their home as one of the house churches in the area (Acts 18:18–26). At some point, in serious peril to themselves, they had defended the Apostle (Romans 16:3–4). Paul is careful to note that the salutation was not just from them but from all who were associated in that congregation, plus many more. The Apostle’s reason for noting the wide circle that sent their best wishes could have been motivated in part by the hope that Corinthian Saints would sense a bond and unity with the larger community of Christians and better identify with them and the traditions of the gospel they followed.

16:21–24

Adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 857–860.

The final portion of the letter was so important for Paul that although he dictated the bulk of the letter, he chose to personally write his name to guarantee the authenticity of the letter. There is a clear reason why,

but to see it one must expound the whole closing together, for only in that way can each of the separate elements be fully appreciated. As one does so, it becomes apparent that it reinforces his basic aims and strategy and acts as a perfect conclusion for the letter.

Already the Lord had taught, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). It is for this reason that Paul can say, “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8–9). The reason for the cursing, expressed in excommunication, is that preaching “any other gospel” would take the people away from God. Paul will have none of this. Any person doing so, therefore, must be anathematized. The imposition of the curse *ἀνάθεμα* (*anathema*), “anathema,” followed by the wish “Come, O Lord” suggests that the Messiah, at the time of the Final Judgment, would both sanction and reinforce it.

But the curse must not be seen as the major element in the close. That theme is reconciliation. The Apostle’s cry is for unity and oneness. These virtues are best evidenced in the last sentence of the epistle, “My love [*ἀγάπη*, *agape*] is with you all in Christ Jesus.” This epistle’s closing is unique among Paul’s letters in its stress on the importance of and need for love. That it is the predominant virtue mentioned evidences how necessary it was for the Corinthian Saints to express and feel love. In none of his other epistles does Paul assure his readers of his love with the sincerity, urgency, and solemnity that he does here. There were at least three reasons for this. First, the Apostle had a special sincerity and affection for these people. Second, he had been very hard on some of them, pulling few punches. It was necessary for them to understand that his reproofs were given in love. Third, it was their feeling of that love that would allow them to accept those reproofs and make the necessary changes. Paul’s use of the adjective *πάντων* (*pantōn*), “all,” shows that none were excluded from his love. Indeed, Paul brings *agapē* as it flows from the Messiah through him to them.

In his closing, Paul fulfills the purposes of a discourse, which this is. First, it summarizes very succinctly what has been said, and second, it closes with an emotional appeal. But to be complete, a peroration had to do one more task; it had to end on a high note. For the Christian, nothing could be higher than an apostolic appeal for the Lord to come. That coming promised the Saints joy, vindication, and reward. The plea shifts attention from station and status—and even deep spirituality with its attendant gifts—to a covenantal theme centered on the love of the Lord, His people, and the redemption that will come through Him. Thus, the final two verses emphasize Paul’s mutual themes of *χάρις* (*charis*), “grace,” and *ἀγάπη* (*agapē*), “love.” Indeed, grace has been a bright silver thread that has run through the tapestry of the whole epistle. It is from the grace of God that Christlike love flows, a love that is the golden thread that has bound the fabric of the whole piece together.

Notes

- 1 G. G. Findlay, *St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 902.
- 2 See 1:12; 3:10; 4:15.
- 3 Compare Galatians 1:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:10; Romans 4:25; 5:6, 8; 2 Corinthians 5:15.
- 4 Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 1218.
- 5 Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), 565.
- 6 See Acts 2:33–34; Romans 8:34; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42–44; 22:69; Colossians 3:1; Hebrew 1:13.
- 7 Moses 1:38–39; Romans 8:17; 2 Nephi 2:15; Alma 42:26; Doctrine and Covenants 29:43.
- 8 Sydney B. Sperry, *Paul's Life and Letters* (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1955), 129.
- 9 For example, see Romans 16:17–19; Philippians 4:8–9; 1 Thessalonians 5:12–22.
- 10 Findlay, *St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 949.
- 11 Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1336; italics in original, boldface changed to italics.

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