

1st Corinthians Chapter 15, Part 2 and Chapter 16 – John Karmelich

1. In this lesson, I'm going to finish Chapter 15, take on the final chapter, which is "16" and then give some final thoughts on the book, all in one lesson. No problem. ☺
2. Let's start by reviewing where we left off last time: In the middle of Chapter 15.
  - a) One of the issues Paul was dealing with is the fact that some Christians in Corinth had doubts about the resurrection of believers. As best we can tell, they still believe God the Father resurrected Jesus from the dead, but had doubts and misunderstandings about the concept of Christians being resurrected from the dead.
  - b) Paul lays out in Chapter 15 the purpose of Jesus' resurrection and what that means for all believers. Paul started by defining and giving the Gospel message about Jesus being Lord and Jesus dying for our sins. Paul discusses all the Christians still alive at that time who witnessed that event. Then Paul gets into a discussion of what that means for believers.
  - c) To sum up much of the last lesson, the main idea is that the purpose of Jesus dying for our sins is so that we can be eternally forgiven and we can be resurrected to spend eternity in heaven with God the Father and Jesus. The main point is that the death of Jesus was necessary for us to spend eternity in heaven. Now that it was accomplished, we as believers can have reassurance that we are saved and will live for eternity.
  - d) Paul does not spend a lot of time discussing what life is like for the believer in heaven. That is the topic of other sections of the bible.
3. This leads to a discussion of the rest of Chapter 15:
  - a) My title for the rest of this chapter is "how are we resurrected". Paul is going to shift from the "why" issue to the "how" issue of salvation. Since we are saved for eternity, the question arises of "how" we are separated from our bodies.
  - b) Chapter 15 gives examples that "we can relate to" about how the resurrection takes place.
  - c) Personally, the "how are we resurrected" question never bothered me. If I believe God can create the world, then I can easily believe God is capable of having me live forever.
  - d) Paul then concludes this chapter with a reminder of our inevitable victory in Jesus. There are some final statements to take pride in what God has accomplished and what God will accomplish through us.
4. Then there is Chapter 16. Before I discuss Chapter 16, let me give you my title for this chapter: It is "Evangelism and Encouragement". I use those two terms to summarize the Christian life as it relates to one another. It is the main theme of this final chapter.
  - a) Remember that the chapter breaks are not part of the original text. The last chapter gives Paul's "wrap up" comments as well as some greetings and "general comments".
  - b) Chapter 16 leads to some summary comments about what are the most important things to get out of this letter and what Paul wants us to focus on in our relationship with God and other believers.
  - c) OK, enough yapping, let's get back to Chapter 15. ☺
5. Chapter 15, Verse 35: But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?"
  - a) Paul is now going to talk about the "how" factor of resurrection. Again, my view is that if God is capable of creating the world, then He is capable of resurrecting people. With that said, Paul is going to compare the resurrection of people to an illustration that most people are familiar with: "Planting seeds and watching them grow".
6. Verse 36: How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.<sup>37</sup> When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else.
  - a) Paul is now starting to describe how we are resurrected. Paul compares the concept of being resurrected to "seeds" of plant life. For a seed to sprout, first it has to "die" in that it disconnects from its previous plant life.

- b) Let's use a flower seed as an example. Those flower seeds start off as just being a part of another flower. The seeds "old life" as part of that flower must die in order for it to be separated and start a new life as a new flower. Even the "seeds" (and sperm) of animals and humans has to "die" in the sense it is separated from its old life.
  - c) Paul is being both literal and "symbolic" at the same time in this example.
    - i) Paul is describing the literal aspect of seeds "dying" and then coming to life again.
    - ii) Paul is also being "symbolic" in that our life before we accepted Christ must die in order to start a new life with Christ. That does not mean we instantly become perfect people. It means we "instantly" become forgiven of our sins, past present and future. We are no longer on the way to hell because the price has been paid. In that sense, our old human nature dies when we become born-again Christians.
  - d) Getting back to the "literal" illustration of seeds, we have to plant "dead" seeds in order to spring up new life based on what we plant.
    - i) Even though we don't fully understand the "how" of how seeds grow, we accept the fact that there is enough information in that tiny seed to grow into a full plant.
    - ii) The point is when we plant "wheat" for example, we know what wheat grain will look like when it's fully grown, based on experience. One cannot tell what fully grown wheat looks like, just by staring at the seed. The same would apply for every type of seed (or sperm-seed) of animal and human life.
    - iii) Our salvation has similar concepts. When we are resurrected into heaven, God takes the "basic building blocks" that is in our bodies. When we get resurrected, we will be able to recognize each other, but at the same time, we will have better, "perfect" bodies that are suitable to live in heaven. For example, in order to walk on the moon, humans need a special spacesuit. For heaven, God has to redesign our bodies (or adapt our bodies) for the "atmosphere" that is heaven.
    - iv) Christian views vary how we are resurrected. Some believe it is the literal body as we know it now. For the sake of those who have lived with physical issues such as missing (or non-working) arms and legs, I hope this view is not true. To me, in heaven, each one of us gets a healthy, functioning "body". At the same time, I believe each of us will be distinct enough where we recognize each other.
7. Verse 38: But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. <sup>39</sup> All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. <sup>40</sup> There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. <sup>41</sup> The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.
- a) In these three verses, Paul describes "creation" similar to the way it is described in the book of Genesis. I don't know if this is important, but the description of each type of "thing" created is listed in reverse order from how it listed in the book of Genesis.
  - b) Paul's main point is that everything has a distinct body. Humans can only reproduce other humans. We can't make "monkeys" based on human seeds. If anyone every has seen attempts to cross one distinct specie with another, it is usually something very deformed and rarely lives very long.
  - c) Along the same line of thinking, an "eagle sperm" cannot produce a hawk or a dove. Each animal is unique. Some creatures (within the same specie can intermingle), but not go from one specie to another. These verses actually argue against "Darwin's" concept of life going from one specie to another specie. While I do believe specie can adapt and change within a specie, that is entirely different from one specie becoming another specie. There is yet to be any scientific proof of that false theory.
  - d) Paul takes it even farther and talks about the different types of "bodies" of the sun, the moon and the stars. Scientists will tell you that every star in the sky is unique.

- e) Without getting into a detailed discussion of either biology or astronomy, Paul's point is there is a "distinction" between different animals and different "things in the sky" that cannot be explained by "random selection". The more one studies these issues, the more one has to accept the idea of a creator of all things.
  - f) Does this mean God is also going to resurrect plants and animals? The bible is pretty silent on this issue. Remember that Paul is focusing on the issue of whether or not humans are resurrected for all eternity. The issue of the resurrection of animal life or plant life is "ignored" in the bible.
    - i) For those people who have a favorite pet, and "it wouldn't be heaven unless that favorite pet is there", I suspect that God can and would accommodate that.
    - ii) There is a great question I heard on this topic: "If your favorite pet and a human stranger were both drowning, and you could only save one, who would it be?" While it would be "instinctive" to save the loved pet, I would probably choose the human as I understand the sanctity and purpose of human life. I also saying this having two very beloved dogs and a lifetime of pet ownership.
  - g) Paul's point of this exercise is simply to state that God created "all things" including every star and the "seed" of every type of living thing. Those living things have adapted through the centuries and millenniums to survive, but never change their original species.
8. Verse 42: So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; <sup>43</sup> it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; <sup>44</sup> it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.
- a) If "heaven" is where God is, then it must be an "atmosphere" where one can live forever. Our bodies are designed to survive in an earth environment. Our bodies, on their own are not designed to survive in outer space (except inside a spaceship) or say, on another planet with the help of oxygen and food.
  - b) Using the same line of logic, when we are resurrected, it must be into some "bodily form" that is designed to exist and thrive in heaven. If we are going to live forever, then our new body must be "perfect" in the sense it cannot decay nor wear out. In other words, I'm not sure what our new body is like, but it will be designed to live forever.
  - c) The only clues we have about our resurrected bodies come from the descriptions of Jesus after He was resurrected. The bible says "we will be like Him" after we are resurrected. (1st John 1:32). With that said, every recorded instance of Jesus with his disciples after the resurrection records Jesus eating food. Which of course, makes me wonder if there is a "waste disposal system" in heaven or does the food just disappear within us? ☺ When Jesus appeared, he was in a human form that people could recognize, but at the same time he could just "appear" in a room with the doors and windows locked. (See John 20:19.)
  - d) This leads to the commonly held theory that in heaven we exist in more than three dimensions. We as humans can only "perceive" in three dimensions, which is why when people saw Jesus after the resurrection, they only saw the three dimensions. The fact that Jesus appeared all over the place in a short time span and the fact that Jesus instantly appeared in a locked room tells me that we will exist in more than three dimensions.
  - e) My view is that in heaven, we are each distinct enough that we each have our body and we can each recognize each other. At the same time, that physical body is designed for the "atmosphere" that is heaven. It is a body that is incapable of being worn out and yes, I believe it exists in more than three dimensions. Just as the disciples eventually realized the "person they saw" was the risen Jesus but at the same time didn't recognize Him, so we each will be distinct, but at the same time, we can realize who Jesus is.
  - f) All of this does relate back to the verses: Paul's point is that we die with "dishonor" in that we still die with the sin "disease" as part of our system, but we are raised from the dead with "sin" separated from our body. I'll argue that in heaven we are incapable of sinning as it is no longer part of our nature.

- g) Last point: Why is the Scripture so silent about our next life in heaven? Other than a few passages like this, we don't know a lot about what that next life is about! The bible does not give a lot of details about what heaven is like or what we do for eternity! It is almost as if God wants us to focus on the "here and now" and we are to let Him worry about the next life.
    - i) To me, the bible is a manual on "how to live life on earth". It explains the purpose of living and how we are to best live our lives. It explains the existence of God and what He expects for us. While there are some references to the next life, there is very little said about "what we do" when we get there or how we live in the next life. It is almost as if God is saying "You let me worry about the next life. Right now, I want you (us) to focus on this life." The bible tells us about the next life to know it is real and it exists. In terms of what we do there, the bible is relatively silent on that issue.
9. Verse 44 (cont.): If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.
- a) Paul is going to argue in the next five verses that just as there is a natural body, so there must also be a spiritual body (which is located within our "physical body").
  - b) For starters, it would not be "fair" of God to have this life as all there is. What does one say to a young child dying of cancer, "Tough luck kid? Sorry about that!" If there was no eternal life, then this world as we know it is a very unfair place to live!
  - c) Next, think of humans like "computer hardware and software". If one understands how a computer is assembled, that would not explain how the software (e.g., a word processing program) runs on the computer. In that sense, the "real us" is like the software. We are like the "software program" that makes the decisions that affect our bodies. Our bodies contain the "real us" and our physical bodies change over time.
  - d) If there is no eternal life, then over the long run, life truly has no purpose. We can live to make a better world or make ourselves better, but if there is no afterlife, then eventually this world will wear out and there is no long-term purpose for human life.
  - e) Paul is arguing for the existence of a spiritual body based on the fact that we accept the idea that God the Father exists and God the Son came to lead the way to eternal life. If one does not accept the idea of a single God existing, then one cannot accept the idea of a spiritual (human) body that lives forever. It has to be taught in that order!
    - i) If one does accept the idea that we are created by God and accept the idea that God has a purpose for us, then one has to accept the idea that we will continue to exist after the physical body has died. If one only believes that "this is it", then one has to accept the idea that life is unfair and ultimately life has no purpose other than to have pleasure in this life.
10. Verse 45: So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. <sup>46</sup> The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. <sup>47</sup> The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. <sup>48</sup> As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. <sup>49</sup> And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.
- a) In verses 45 to 49, we have a comparison of Adam and Jesus. The idea is that Adam was the first living being and whether we like it or not, we are all indebted to Adam for the "sin disease" that is passed on to the whole human race. When Adam and Eve ate the fruit, it was far more than sinning, it was the idea that their physical bodies would now experience decay and we would have to live with the consequences of "knowing" sin.
  - b) A purpose of Jesus becoming "fully human" was for us to experience spiritual life. The plan was to send Jesus was formed even before Adam sinned! God knew Adam was going to blow it. God had a plan in the works because He understood that we as humans would live forever and wanted to spend eternity with us.

- c) The reason God gave us free will is that in order to have an eternal love relationship, it has to be a free-will choice on both God's behalf and our behalf! We both have to choose to be with each other, if we want to share that love forever! We know God made that choice as our proof is Jesus coming to die for our sins. The "proof of our choice" is when we make the decision to accept Jesus payment for our sins so we can be with God forever.
  - d) This does lead back to the verses. The idea is the "natural" man has to come first, so we can make the decision whether or not to choose God and be with Him forever.
    - i) The first man Adam was "of the dust of the earth". That is both literal and a figurative illustration. God created Adam out of the elements of the earth. The same basic building blocks that make up human beings exist in the earth. It is a "spiritual" illustration in that God wants to teach us the world-based man (and woman) exist prior to our personal decision to accept Jesus and live forever.
  - e) This leads to the conclusion of Verse 49: "And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven."
    - i) We as humans physically resemble Adam and Eve. I don't know the color of their skin or hair or eyes, but I do know they are human like us and we resemble them far more than a bird or monkey! As long as we live on this world we bear the resemblance of a human being.
    - ii) When we get resurrected, somehow, we will bear the resemblance of Jesus. The idea is we will have a resurrected body suited for the "atmosphere" of heaven and our new bodies will be physically like Jesus' body. As Verse 49 says, "so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven".
    - iii) Will each of us be "distinct" from each other in heaven? Yes in the sense that each human is distinct from each other right now. We can each recognize each other as distinct looking, yet at the same time, we recognize that each of us is still a human being. The same will happen in heaven. We will each have a different type of body, but at the same time we will each be distinct creatures with distinct looks.
    - iv) With all of that said, I really don't spend a lot of time worrying about what I will look like in heaven. Again, the bible teaches us to focus on the "here and now". I have trust that the God I believe in will take care of all of those details!
    - v) The point of Verse 49 is that just as the "natural" human resembles Adam and Eve, so the "spiritual" human will bear resemblance to Jesus in His resurrected body!
11. Verse 50: I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.
- a) Paul's point in Verse 50 is that human "flesh and blood" cannot inherit eternal life. The idea is that our bodies are designed for this atmosphere. Unless God changes us after we die, our physical bodies are not suited for the next life. Our physical bodies are "perishable" in that they decay over time. They are not suited to live for eternity.
  - b) Therefore, unless God changes us, it is not physically possible to live forever!
  - c) Remember that God only spends eternity with those who want to spend eternity with Him! Eternal love is "two-way" and both parties must agree to the deal. This is why those who refuse to accept Jesus payment for our sins are ineligible for heaven.
    - i) OK, what about those who die young and those who never heard of Jesus? Again, a "fair" God will judge people fairly. Therefore, I don't worry about that aspect and my job and your job is to work out our own salvation and be witnesses as Jesus called us to be!
12. Verse 51: Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed –
- a) The word "mystery" in English has a different meaning than in the Greek. When we think of a mystery, we think of a something that is still unrevealed. When Paul says "mystery", it means something that is a secret "until right now". My point is what Paul is describing as a "mystery" is no longer a mystery as Paul will explain what it means.

- b) OK, on to the mystery itself: Remember the topic at hand, which is the fate of all Christians after we die. Also remember that Paul uses the term "asleep" to refer to Christians who have died.
- c) Paul says, "We will not all sleep". The key word is "all". In other words, some Christians will not experience death the same way all of us die at some point.
  - i) Paul's point is there will come a day when Jesus comes back. At that time, some Christians who are living then won't experience death the way Christians who have already died experienced death.
  - ii) Paul is talking about the concept of the "rapture of the church". The idea is that when Jesus comes back the Second Time, there will be some Christians still alive at that time. Such Christian believers will immediately go to heaven and no longer live on this earth. Those Christians living at that time get "raptured" to heaven.
- d) Again, Paul said, "We will not all sleep". Paul thought this rapture of the church would happen during his lifetime. I (John) hold the view that the rapture will happen in my lifetime. How can both be true? The answer is "That is the way God set it up". All Christians are to live with the expectation that Jesus could return at any moment. It is a motivational tool to keep us on our toes. Only God the Father knows the day and hour when the actual event is going to take place. (See Matthew 24:36).
  - i) It is just as likely that Jesus could return today as it was almost 2,000 years ago. Jesus promised that He would return one day. Do I have a problem with the fact it has been almost 2,000 years? No. If anything, I am glad Jesus waited as long as He does, or I may not be in heaven.
  - ii) Look at this way: From the time of Adam and Eve to the time of Noah was roughly a 2,000-year gap. From the time of Noah to the time of Abraham was roughly a 2,000-year gap. From the time of Abraham to the time of Jesus was another 2,000-year gap. Therefore, I conclude that God is still on the throne and God works at His pace. So why is God waiting so long to wrap this up? God is waiting for more people to be saved. (See 2nd Peter 3:9). Still, there has to be a "final Christian" saved before God wraps this up.
  - iii) Think about it another way: Do you believe heaven is finite in terms of population or infinite? I'll argue it is "finite". That means there has to be a final person admitted before God closes the door. That's what Jesus' return is all about: A wrap up of life as we know it. Paul believed it was going to happen at any moment in his lifetime and we as Christians should live as it could happen at any moment in our lifetime. It is a motivational tool to keep us working for God!
- e) Now, back to the verse: "We will all be changed". The idea is when Jesus comes back all the Christians living at that time will be instantly changed into heavenly saints. Paul does not get into the physical details as much as Paul explains believers go to heaven.
  - i) What about Christians who have already died before that event? This is why I emphasize the fact that heaven has "no time". When we go to heaven, we are no longer bound by the constraints of time. My view is I will "enter" heaven at the same time as my late father who was saved and at the same time as my wife and children who are saved. The "rapture" from a heavenly perspective will also be at that same "timeless" time as when you and I go to heaven.
  - ii) Some Christians argue "Christian's souls sleep" in the ground until Jesus comes back. I like to point to the bible verse that says, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord". (2nd Corinthians 5:6 and 5:8). I disagree with this view in that I believe from "our perspective of time" Christians have died before me, and if Jesus delays in coming back Christians will die after me. At the same time, from the "Heavenly eternal view, all Christians enter heaven at the same time". Again, I could be wrong on the details, but that is the way I see it from studying the bible.

13. Verse 52: in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.
- a) The idea of "in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet" is the idea that the people living at the time of Jesus return will "instantaneously" be transferred from our human bodies into "heavenly" bodies. It will be as if you and I are just standing still and in the blink of an eye we are no longer on earth, but in heaven. For those Christians who have already died, they don't "rest in the ground", but are instantaneously transferred into their new heavenly bodies and are now in heaven. Again, remember the verse, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord". (2nd Corinthians 5:6 and 5:8).
  - b) This is where the term "rapture of the church" comes from. The word "rapture" is not in the bible. It is based on a Latin word used to translate the concept of the church being instantly transferred from "human-living beings" into "heavenly based creatures".
  - c) Remember the big topic: What happens to Christians after we die? Paul's point is that all Christians who die prior to Jesus Second Coming are in heaven and at the time of Jesus Second Coming, the rest of the church is at that moment in heaven. End of "story".
  - d) So far, I've avoided the topic of when "is" the rapture of the church relevant to Jesus return. First, one has to remember that Revelation Chapter 20 speaks of a 1,000 year period where we rule and reign with Jesus on earth. During this 1,000 year period, Jesus rules over those who survive the 7-year "tribulation". For those of us (that's a majority of Evangelical Christians) that argue that the "1,000 year millennium" is a future event, some Christians argue that the actual rapture occurs prior to the seven-year "tribulation" beginning. Other Christians argue that the rapture happens at the end of the 7-year tribulation at the same time as when Jesus comes back.
    - i) Those who argue the rapture is at the end of the seven-year tribulation point to these verses and say in effect, "These verses don't mention the seven year tribulation and only say in effect that Jesus comes once and that's it". Given that fact, they argue that the rapture of the church is after the seven-year tribulation.
    - ii) Those of us who argue the rapture of the church occurs prior to the seven-year tribulation draw our conclusions from studying a lot of Old and New Testament scriptures. We see Jesus second coming as not just an instantaneous thing, but a series of events that is called the "Tribulation" and is the main topic of Revelation.
    - iii) Those who argue that Jesus must come after the seven years like to ask the question, "Where does it say in the bible that Jesus comes twice, once to gather the believers (i.e., the "rapture" of the church) and once again to wrap up the world?"
    - iv) My answer is to say, "Where in the Old Testament does it say the Messiah will come two times? That's an important question too, and there is no place in the Old Testament where it says the Messiah will come two times. It is only by studying the bible that one has to come to the conclusion that either 1) there are two Messiahs: One to suffer for our sins and one to rule over the earth or 2) The same Messiah comes twice.
    - v) With that said: Those of us who believe in the rapture prior to the tribulation "induce" this idea from the Scripture as opposed to "deductive" reasoning.
    - vi) The bible says no one knows the day or hour of Jesus return. Once the tribulation period has started, one can know the day and hour of Jesus return, because it will be exactly three and one half years from the day the Antichrist goes into the Jewish temple and declares Himself God. (See Rev. 11:2-3 and Daniel 9:25-27).
    - vii) Those of us who hold a "rapture prior to the tribulation" view argue if Christians go through the tribulation, we can know the day of Jesus return which contradicts Matthew 24:36. The "post-tribulation" people argue that "no one knows the day or hour" refers to the whole seven year time period of the "Tribulation".
    - viii) In summary, the debate continues with both sides giving some biblical support. ☺

- e) Meanwhile, we're still back in 1st Corinthians, Chapter 15:
14. Verse 53: For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. <sup>54</sup> When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." <sup>55</sup> "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"
- a) At the end of Verse 54 and all of Verse 55, Paul is quoting "Hosea 13:14".
    - i) The point is that "death" as a concept loses to our victory in Jesus Christ!
    - ii) All people must face death someday. No matter how successful or famous one becomes, one still has to face the reality of death. Paul's point here is that death itself is the "loser" for those who believe in Jesus. Death has no "sting" to those who put their trust in Jesus. Believers will be instantly transformed and instantly transferred into our new bodies. For believers there is no "sting of death".
  - b) This leads us back to Verse 53 and Verse 54: Those souls who are Christians "clothe" themselves, i.e., get a new body that lasts forever. That is the idea of "imperishable". It is the idea that we are instantly changed at the moment of our death or at the moment Jesus comes back from having a body that decays to a body that will live forever. The "mortal" being that we are becomes "immortal" for all of eternity.
  - c) Before I wrap up this chapter, notice what is not discussed: The fate of unbelievers. Don't get me wrong. Paul believes strongly in the existence of an eternal hell and states so in other places in the bible. The issue of the moment is what happens to Christians after we die and Paul stays focused on that issue.
15. Verse 56: The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.
- a) It is "sin" that causes us to die in the first place. It is only the forgiveness of Jesus that gets us to overcome the damage caused by sin.
  - b) The "power of sin is the law". God's laws are His standard for entering heaven. That does not change from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Therefore the law is God's "power" of stating that we are condemned by sin. Let's face it, if we never knew sin was wrong, we have an excuse before God. We are not forgiven for disobeying the law we just accept Jesus' payment in our place for our sins of violating God's laws.
  - c) What about those who don't know God's laws? Part of the answer is that some of God's laws are "instinctive" in that we instinctively know murder and stealing is wrong. The bigger answer is God judge's people fairly based on what they do know!
16. Verse 57: But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>58</sup> Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.
- a) Paul's conclusion is that we have "victory over death" through Jesus. We as Christians don't have to face the "sting" of death. Remember that Paul is answering the question of what happens to Christians after we die? Some Christians in Corinth were worried that only Jesus gets resurrected and not the rest of us. Paul used this chapter to point that the purpose of Jesus dying for our sins is so we can live forever with Jesus in heaven.
    - i) While some of the details of how we live forever are "fuzzy", the fact that we who are trusting in Jesus for our salvation are saved for eternity is what is clearly laid out in this lesson.
  - b) The other issue of Verse 58 is once we accept Jesus, we don't just "ignore Him thereafter" as if it's a "that's done, so what's next" situation. To accept Jesus means that one then lives out the rest of one's life doing what Jesus commands us to do and try to please Him in all that we do. Being saved is an instantaneous thing when we accept Jesus. Our rewards in heaven are based on how we live our life once we make that commitment. Our job after we are saved is to help others enter the kingdom of heaven and help other believers grow in their faith and trust of God. That is "Christian living". Paul never says it is easy, but is emphasizing that all of this continual effort is "worth it".



17. Chapter 16, Verse 1: Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. <sup>2</sup> On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. <sup>3</sup> Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.
- a) Paul wraps up this letter with some other issues. The first one is about a money collection that Paul was organizing for the "head church" in Jerusalem.
  - b) Verse 2 says, "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money". Even in Paul's day, we get clues that Christians met on the first day of the week, which in our vocabulary would be Sunday. For a Jewish person, the "Sabbath" is the final day of the week, which starts at sundown on Friday night and ends Saturday night at sundown. Because Jesus rose on the first day of the week, Christians started the tradition of meeting on the first day of the week, which became "Sunday".
  - c) Verse 3 then says, "Then, when I arrive (in Jerusalem), I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem."
    - i) In other words, when Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians, Paul was planning on taking a journey back to Jerusalem. Paul was planning on seeing the Christians in Corinth on his way back to Jerusalem. Paul's plan was when he arrived in Corinth the money from this collection would already be there and Paul would not have to beg the Christians to "dig into their pockets".
    - ii) A key word in Verse 2 is "should". In other words, Paul was not forcing the Christians to give to the head church in Jerusalem, he was just asking them.
  - d) Notice that Paul wanted to take men from Corinth with him to Jerusalem. Paul asked the church in Corinth to pick out "men you approve of" to travel with him. Let's say that some people in Corinth didn't trust Paul. Let's say they wondered if Paul was taking this collection for himself. With Paul asking for unnamed men of Corinth to accompany him, Paul was assuring them that this collection is really for the poor Christians in Jerusalem.
  - e) Why did Paul organize this financial collection? Is Paul condoning the idea of a single centralized church where we all support the "head church" as well as our local church?
    - i) That was not Paul's intention. One had to remember that to be a Christian in Jerusalem at that time meant one was "outcast" of the Jewish society. It would be hard to find work and to be a Christian in Jerusalem was a danger of losing one's life. Paul's interest in this collection was an act of showing one cared about the life of Christians and their financial survival.
  - f) This actually leads me to my theme for Chapter 16: The Christian life can be summed up in two words: Evangelism and Encouragement. The idea is all Christians are to be involved in bringing new believers into the fold ("evangelism") and/or working to strengthen the life of believers ("encouragement"). Our spiritual gifts are all designed to help other Christians grow in their faith or again, bring in new believers. This includes the practical aspect of financially helping Christians survive.
    - i) Being a Christian is more than just helping out around one's local church. It is about caring about all Christians and doing what we can to help those in need. One can go broke giving to every Christian cause that asks. Practically, one cannot give to every cause, but that is not an excuse to ignore every cause as well. The correct answer is to "do what one can" and give one's all to support the church.
  - g) Finally, let me talk briefly about "giving". I disagree with some churches that argue that Christians are supposed to tithe their income. That is a "law" requirement and Christians are free from the law. (See Romans 8:2 and 1st Corinthians 9:1). At the same time, Christians are encouraged to give regularly and freely. To quote Paul, "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2nd Corinthians 9:7 NIV).

18. Verse 5: After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you--for I will be going through Macedonia.  
<sup>6</sup> Perhaps I will stay with you awhile, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. <sup>7</sup> I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. <sup>8</sup> But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, <sup>9</sup> because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.
- a) Notice Paul is not "anti-planning". Now notice the words "if the Lord permits" at the end of Verse 7. Paul made all of his travel plans based on the concept "if the Lord permits". How does one know God's plans for one's life? The simple answer is to keep moving forward, and if "doors are being closed" in that direction, it may be a sign God is leading us in another direction.
  - b) Paul's plan for the moment was to keep working in Ephesus. Paul planned to go through Macedonia sometime in the near future, and that would require Paul to stop in Corinth. Paul's plan was to travel again after the Jewish holiday of "Pentecost", which occurs about 50 days after Easter. Paul said at that time, he would like to spend some time in Corinth and work with that church again, if God permitted it.
  - c) How did Paul know he was supposed to stay in the city of Ephesus for awhile? The answer is Verse 9 that says, "Because a great door for effective work has opened to me". Going back to the question of "what is God's will for your life and my life", the answer is to see where "A great door for effective work" is being opened in our lives. For many of us, that is our "back yard" and for some of us, it is a different city or country.
    - i) Remember that a "great door for effective work" is not based on how many people we are witnessing to. God may call on us to minister to just one person. The key is to be doing the "effective work" that God wants us to do. If one is not sure what that is, ask. God usually answers that question either in direct prayer or by "direct example" of what one is, or is not doing at that moment.
  - d) Finishing Verse 9, Paul says, "There are many who oppose me". To put it another way, if there is opposition to what one is doing for God, this does not necessarily mean we are to run away. Paul knew that his work was effective, because of the organized opposition.
    - i) If you make a study of all the great works done for God in the bible, it was usually followed by organized opposition. So how do we know when to "stay and fight" or when to "run for our lives"? If you study Paul's life, he did both on occasions.
    - ii) The answer might be as simple as to "watch the results". If one can see the results of one's work and at the same time, one can see spiritual resistance, it may be a sign that this is where God wants us to work! Remember, "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world". (1<sup>st</sup> John 4:4) In other words, God gives us the spiritual power to win over such resistance.
19. Verse 10: If Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am. <sup>11</sup> No one, then, should refuse to accept him. Send him on his way in peace so that he may return to me. I am expecting him along with the brothers.
- a) Let me "translate" this verse: "Hey Corinthians, if Timothy comes, be easy on him!"
  - b) Timothy was a young assistant to Paul. Paul wanted Timothy to go to Corinth and bring back a "progress report" to Paul about the Corinthian church. Paul is urging the church in Corinth to treat Timothy well and help him in his missionary work.
  - c) Why would this church not accept Timothy? Remember from the first chapter of Paul's letter that this church was "divided" in that some followed one leader and some another. Paul was urging them to accept Timothy as a brother in Christ and treat him well.
20. Verse 12: Now about our brother Apollos: I strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers. He was quite unwilling to go now, but he will go when he has the opportunity.
- a) In the book of Acts, one reads of a Christian convert named "Apollos" (Acts 18:24-19:1) who was a great public speaker. Here in Verse 12, we read of Paul "urging" Apollos to go to Corinth, but that Apollos was unwilling to go at this time.

- b) It shows that Paul was not the "pope" of the church and could not order other recognized church leaders to do what Paul wanted them to do!
  - c) This leads back to the question of "What is God's will for me at this time". A leader of one's church may say, "Well, we really need people in this mission field at this time, and therefore, you have to go". Apollos said no to Paul's request to go to Corinth and Paul did not force Apollos to go. The same should be with our relationships with other believers. It is ok to ask other Christians to do certain tasks, but we should never force others to "act". One has to be open not only to God's will for our lives, but God's will for the lives of other believers. God has not lost "their phone numbers" and it is not up to us to command other Christians as to their particular ministry.
    - i) What about one's own children? That is a different matter as the parent is responsible for raising the children to obey one's commands.
    - ii) What about a subordinate at one's church? That too, is a different matter. When one is working for someone, one has to be willing to follow orders. The situation Paul is talking about is when one is "outside" the issue of normal command and one is "asking" someone to take on a particular missionary mission. Still, even in the Christian situation of "boss and employee", it is better to "ask" than command.
21. Verse 13: Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. <sup>14</sup> Do everything in love.
- a) Paul is now wrapping up the letter with some "general commands" for all Christians.
    - i) The idea of "be on your guard" is to watch for signs of trouble. Paul constantly warned churches about false teachers and false doctrines within the church.
    - ii) The idea of "stand firm in the faith" is an encouragement to keep on believing in God no matter what the circumstances are around us.
    - iii) The idea of "be men of courage; be strong" is also about not losing faith, especially when facing danger or facing persecution. It is easy to be a Christian when life is going well. The struggle is during the difficult times. In such times, Paul is urging all of us to be men (and women) of courage. That also leads back to the idea of Christians working together to support each other, especially in such times.
  - b) Finally, Paul says, "Do everything in love." This leads back to Chapters 12 through 14, where our primary "motivator" to help other Christians is love. We should have such a love for other believers that we "agonize" over that love and over the fact we want to see those other Christians grow in their faith and trust for God. Love is our ultimate motivation for service to God.
22. Verse 15: You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers, <sup>16</sup> to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it. <sup>17</sup> I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. <sup>18</sup> For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition.
- a) In Verses 15 through 17, Paul singles out three people who are "good examples" of the type of faith that Paul desires for all believers. Their names are "Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus". The idea is not that these three people are perfect. The idea is these three people are at the moment good examples of how Christians are to live.
  - b) What did they do? They "devoted themselves to the service of the saints". In other words, they applied the principal of "love for the fellow Christian". They were good examples of how to live a Christian life by giving of themselves to others.
  - c) Paul says the good works of these three guys "outshined" what was lacking from you!"
    - i) If one wants to sum up the problem of the Corinthian church, it is the fact they lacked love for the fellow Christian. They were divided into factions, suing each other and focusing on their own needs over the needs of other Christians.
    - ii) Paul was contrasting the Corinthian church with the service of these three men!

- d) In Verse 17, Paul says these three men "have supplied what was lacking from you."
  - i) I believe that means when they saw Paul they figured out what they could do to help Paul. For that moment, they put Paul's needs as a priority over their own needs. It doesn't mean they didn't take care of themselves. It just means they were good Christians in that they put the needs of others (Paul) over their own needs for that moment.
  - ii) Paul told the Christian church to "treat them well" (My paraphrase of Verse 18) in that they were living the type of life Paul wanted all Christians to live.
- 23. Verse 19: The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.<sup>20</sup> All the brothers here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.
  - a) Paul now sends greetings from other Christians and other churches. This was important in the sense that Paul wanted the Corinthian church to know that they were still brothers and sisters in the Lord, despite their problems and Paul wanted to know that other churches were sending their greetings and hoping for the best for the Corinthian church.
  - b) In the book of Acts, there was a husband and wife couple named Aquila and Priscilla. To make a long story short, Paul met them in Corinth. This couple worked with Paul to help establish the Corinth church. (Source, Acts, Chapter 18).
  - c) Next, let's discuss, "Greet one another with a holy kiss" and what that meant:
    - i) My best example to describe this let me start with my grandparents, who were born in Croatia. In that country, it is customary to greet relatives by kissing each other on both cheeks. It is a symbolic gesture to show one's relationship. That is similar in concept to a "holy kiss". A "holy kiss" is simply a form of greeting.
    - ii) In our culture, we might give our friends a "sideways hug" or some other form of greeting. My point is the "holy kiss" type of greeting may be cultural, but the point is it is ok to show some sign of affection to other believers.
- 24. Verse 21: I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand.
  - a) Paul probably dictated this letter. This final greeting (the last few verses) was with Paul's own hand, possibly just to validate the letter as genuine.
- 25. Verse 22: If anyone does not love the Lord--a curse be on him. Come, O Lord!
  - a) Paul did not spend much time in this letter talking about those who turn their back on God and ignore the Gospel message. The letter is written to believers about believers.
  - b) Here, Paul takes a moment to give a warning about what happens to nonbelievers. Does this mean we are to ignore nonbelievers? If that were true, no one would be saved.
  - c) Paul's point is about those who spend their life denying Jesus as God and this will be their "ultimate fate" for a lifetime of denial of Jesus.
  - d) The word translated "curse" is based on a Jewish concept: In ancient Judaism, if a Jew refused to be obedient to God, that person got three warnings. The final warning is the same Jewish word translated "curse". The idea is one is beyond the point of salvation. Does that mean we should give up on a nonbeliever being saved? No, it simply means that if one denies Jesus all of their lives, there is some point of no return.
  - e) The final three words are "Come, O Lord". Paul wanted Jesus to come back now just as all Christians should want Jesus to come back now. Until Jesus does that, our job is like Paul's to constantly work on bring in new members ("evangelism") and helping other Christians to grow in their faith ("encouragement").
- 26. Verse 23: The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.<sup>24</sup> My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen.
  - a) Paul ends this letter with a reminder that God's grace, through Jesus already "exists" for all believers, but we constantly need reminders that it is there. Finally Verse 24 shares Paul's personal love for the church in Corinth. Paul never failed to see them as believers despite their problems and the issues that they had to deal with.

27. Ok how many of you didn't think I would not finish in about 12 pages? ☺
- a) It's tough to summarize the entire letter in a few sentences. Let me just share with you what I personally "got the most" out of this book. It is the idea that the Christian life is not just about caring for one's loved ones around us, but caring for all Christians and making every effort to put the needs of others before the needs of one's one.
  - b) The church in Corinth was full of problems. They were divided, they sued each other, and they put their own needs and the needs of their "friends" before other Christians.
  - c) What Paul desires for them and for all of us, is that we show "love" to one another. That includes the believers we are not to "crazy about" as well as the one's we like. Grant it, there are times we need rest and times we have to take care of our needs. Our priority as Christians is to care about the needs of other believers over our own needs.
  - d) As far as the "salvation issues" of Chapter 15, I let God worry about the "how" details as I simply just trust in the fact that Jesus is Lord and Jesus died for my sins. As I've stated, the bible spends relatively little space devoted to our future life in heaven. We get some clues as to our future in heaven in Chapter 15, but for the most part, God wants us to focus on the "here and now" and trust Him as to what our eternal life is like in heaven.
28. With that said, may God's blessing be upon all of you and may we work together to love and serve Christ by serving one another! Heavenly Father, we thank you for the things Paul has taught us about applying the Christian live to our lives. Help us to not read this book as a historical event, but to apply it to our own lives. Help us to see areas of our own life that need changing based on what Paul taught in this book. Help us to love others as You desire. Help us to show love to the believers ("encouragement") as well as reach out to other possible believers ("evangelism"). We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

## Supplement: Bibliography

"If I have seen further, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants." (Isaac Newton)

Without prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all these commentaries are useless. My prayer as I prepare these lessons was for God to show me the things He wanted *me* to learn, and second, the lessons He wanted me to pass on in my writings. I have quoted many sources throughout these lessons. If any of these writers appeal to you, I invite you to read or listen to further commentaries as listed below. I have also quoted other sources not listed, and those names are usually listed in the lessons. These other authors were usually quoted from the materials listed below and taken from those sources.

First and foremost, the greatest commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself. Here are the bible versions I use in this study. I mostly quote The New International Version (NIV), Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society; The New King James Version (NKJV). Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.; The King James Version (KJV) and The Living Bible (TLB) Copyright © 1971, 1986 by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. "The Message" copyright © 1993 by Eugene H. Peterson. All rights reserved. All the bible text is taken from Parsons Software: Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1999, Parsons Technology, Inc., all rights reserved and from Zondervan Reference Software (32-bit edition) Version 2.6, Copyright © 1989-1998 The Zondervan Corporation.

Here are the commentaries I have referenced over the past lessons. The specific commentaries on 1st Corinthians are listed first, and then the bible-wide commentaries. They are listed in alphabetical order by author. The reference to "audio" commentary means the information was gathered via the Internet in MP3® Format, unless otherwise stated:

1. Commentary on 1st Corinthians by Jon Courson. It is in book form from Harvest House Publishing. It is also available in MP3® format at <http://www.joncourson.com/>
2. Commentary on 1st Corinthians by Bob Davies. They are available in MP3® format at [http://northcountrychapel.com/audio\\_studies/](http://northcountrychapel.com/audio_studies/)
3. Commentary on 1st Corinthians by David Guzik. It is available for free in text and audio format. The web address is [http://www.enduringword.com/library\\_commentaries.html](http://www.enduringword.com/library_commentaries.html).
4. MacArthur's New Testament Commentary: 1st Corinthians; By John MacArthur, Jr. Moody Press, Chicago, IL Copyright © 1984 by The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago; Also available in electronic format through Parsons Technology ("QuickVerse® 7.0") Copyright © 1997, Parsons Technology, Inc., PO Box 100, Hiawatha, Iowa. All rights reserved.
5. Commentary on 1st Corinthians by Chuck Missler, available at K-House Ministries 1-800-KHOUSE1. The web address is <http://www.khouse.org>. Also available at <http://firefighters.org/html/library.cfm>
6. The Defender's Study Bible by Dr. Henry Morris World Publishing (1995) ISBN: 052910444X
7. The MacArthur Study Bible with commentary by John MacArthur Nelson Bibles (1997) ISBN: 0849912229
8. The Life Application Bible, Zondervan Publishing: [www.zondervanbibles.com/0310919770.htm](http://www.zondervanbibles.com/0310919770.htm)
9. When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties -- Norman L. Geisler, Thomas Howe; Baker Book House 1999
10. I also refer to Greg Koukl's apologetic ministry which is Stand to Reason at [www.str.org](http://www.str.org).