

A COMMENTARY ON
THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL THE
APOSTLE
TO THE CORINTHIANS

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AN INTRODUCTION

CORINTH

A prominent Greek city, 40 miles west of Athens; Its history goes back to the year 1000 B.C. when some of the ancient tribes settled down in it. The old Corinth was so famous in the Hellenic world to be called '**The rich Corinth**' by 'Homer', and '**The light of all Greece**' by 'Cicero'. In the year 800 B. C., It was known as a huge industrial city, particularly in ship-building; that 'Thucydides' said that the first military ship in the world was built in Corinth in the year 664 B.C.

Located across a land strait between two seas: the Aegean and the Adriatic Seas; Corinth had two harbors: Cenchreae and Lechaem. What added to its importance was that it was located on the land highway connecting the East with the West; **binding Rome – the capital of the Roman world and the East.**

Corinth was famed **is a center for arts**, and in particular architecture. The Phoenicians who settled down there since a very early time, left their finger prints on certain industrial arts like dying and textiles; as well as on matters of religion and legends. It was also famed for its 'Corinthian bronze and pottery.

Corinth has been **a city open to the world**; not only as the most famous Greek commercial city; but also for holding biennial sport game competitions in Isthmes; which was the second important after the Olympic games, if not on the same level.

It was destroyed by the Roman forces, led by Mummius in the year 146 B.C., who killed its men and took its women and children captives. Then was rebuilt by Julius Caesar in the year 46 B.C., restored its riches and glory, as a well-established Roman province. In the year 27 B.C., when Greece separated from Macedonia, Corinth became **the capital of the province of Achaia**, and the seat of the Roman Governor, on behalf of the Roman Congress, and not of the Roman Emperor. It kept its good economic fortune, until it fell under the Turkish rule in the year 1485 A.D.

Having been an open city, **Corinth embraced several religions**. Groups of Jews came to it, after being expelled from Rome by Claudius Caesar, including Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18: 2); as well as Jews from Palestine, for doing business, or as slaves purchased by its inhabitants. Because several Egyptian, Roman, and far-eastern **gods were worshipped there, beside Aphrodite**, the Greek goddess of beauty and love, whose temple was built high up on its top; Corinth became an example for licentiousness; About 1000 heathen priestesses were dedicated for harlotry to the account of the temple; that new terms were added to the Greek language: 'Koine Corinthacin', to mean (live Corinthian), or (live corrupt); 'A Corinthian girl' to mean (a Corinthian harlot); 'To live a Corinthian', to mean (to

be Corinthized) or to (plunge in corruption). The Aphrodite worship goes back to a Phoenician origin.

The city of Corinth, known by the apostle Paul, was partly destroyed in the year 521 A.D. by an earthquake; then was utterly destroyed by another earthquake in the year 1858 A.D.; The modern Corinth was rebuilt four kilometers far from the old city.

THE BEGINNING OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN CORINTH:

It was founded by St. Paul during his second preaching trip (Acts 18); There, his ministry, that extended for a period of 18 months (51 to 52 A.D.), had great success despite the corruption that prevailed on the city. That was the longest time spent by the apostle anywhere after Ephesus.

Starting his ministry in Corinth among the Jewish society and the proselyte Gentiles; the apostle Paul presided with Aquila and Priscilla, with whom he worked as a tentmaker (Acts 18: 3-10); and drew to faith Crispus the ruler of the Synagogue and all his household (Acts 18: 8). But the opposition of the Jews was so fierce that he shook his garment and said to them: “*Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; From now on I will go to the Gentiles*” (Acts 18: 4-6). He departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named ‘Justus’, where a church was established that embraced many.

At the beginning of his ministry in Corinth, the apostle was so shocked by the horrible atmosphere of corruption, beside the fierce conflict between the different categories of inhabitants coming from several countries for business, that he had the intention to go back to Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 2: 17-18); But his plans were utterly changed by a divine proclamation (Acts 18: 9-20), by which God commanded him to stay in Corinth, and testify with daring.

To the apostle, Corinth had a special importance, being the greatest of Greek cities; **He considered the success of ministry in it, as a symbol of its success in the Gentile world**; particularly among those with philosophical mind, who used to boast of their cultural prominence, proclaim slogans like knowledge and freedom; and, at the same time practice the corrupt pagan life. The success of ministry there, proclaims the rich work of God’s grace in sanctifying the corrupt who throw themselves in the bosom of God.

It so seems that the church there, gained a great number of the lowly-level people, the slaves in particular (7: 21; 1: 26); beside some elites like Titus and Justus (11: 21-22). The city at that time embraced 200,000 free citizens and 400,000 slaves.

The apostle Paul managed, as well, to gain to faith a multitude of souls among traders, sailors, professional wrestlers and gamblers, those dedicated to corruption of both sexes, and slaves. **Those came from Rome, Greece, Egypt, and Asia Minor; And with such a diversity of races, cultures, financial possibilities, and religious backgrounds, they were required to submit to the Spirit of God, who sanctifies them, and grants them the spirit of unity and harmony, as a church holy to the Lord Jesus.**

After departing from the city, someone **came to it by the name of ‘Apollus’**, an Alexandrian Jew with a high Hellenic culture, who received the Christian faith and preached it. Although his ministry in Corinth was fruitful (3: 5-9). yet his name was abused by some to stir-up controversies in the church; Some claimed to be followers of Paul, the first preacher in the city; Others, to be followers of Apollos, impressed by his high wisdom and eloquence; A third group claimed to be followers of the apostle Peter; probably for having been baptized in Palestine on his hands, beside their belief that he was faithful in keeping the literal Jewish law; And a fourth group who counted themselves as followers of Christ, probably wishing to be free of commitment to any human leadership, and to do whatever they like. By that they misunderstood the spirit of Christian freedom.

Many scholars believe that the apostle Paul visited Corinth three times at least.

FEATURES AND TROUBLES OF THE CHURCH:

(1) The majority of its members were of the Gentiles (12: 2); together with a decent number of the Jews, whose fathers, the apostle called “*Our fathers*” (10: 1-11).

(2) **Beside suffering from controversies, the church has been under the great pressure of corruption that prevailed in the city – idol worship**; sorcery, connection to evil spirits, and licentiousness. Some women rebelled against the good custom of wearing a head cover, used by honorable ladies; Some men intended to grow their hair; Some women used to raise their voice in the church, while talking to their men, in an attempt to show off their social prominence; Some misunderstood the significance of speaking tongues, to create an atmosphere of chaos in the church, that led the apostle to write down this epistle, to proclaim that “*God is not the Author of confusion but of peace*” (14: 33); and to add: “***Let all things be done decently and in order***” (14: 40).

(3) According to **St. John Chrysostom**: [The city was packed with speakers and philosophers, among whom was ‘Periander’ who was considered as one of seven most wise men of his time]. Talking about the result of such a situation, the saint says: [Seeing how such a great city has received the truth and eagerly listened to the word of God, the devil planned to divide them apart, with the knowledge that once a kingdom divides on itself, it would not stand. To do that he had the right weapon in the haughtiness and the boasting of wisdom among its inhabitants.

Some counted themselves better than others;... Some abused their freedom by eating the meat of sacrifices offered to idols; and doing this even in the idol temples; causing a controversy in the church; Some, for the sake of profiting, sued their brethren in civil courts; ... Some men let their hair grow.; ... Some others ate in the church, disregarding fellowship with the needy. ... Some boasted of having spiritual gifts, causing dissension in the church; ... And still others rejected the teaching of the resurrection of Christ. ... All such things, resulted from the influence of the evil pagan philosophy, that caused dissention even among the philosophers themselves

Beside all that, another serious crime was committed, namely, that someone of prominence in the city sinned with his father's wife, disregarded the rebuke, and even became a leader of the people, giving more chance of offense¹].

Theodoret, Bishop of Cyprus, says: [The church was divided into several groups, each with leaders, eloquently defending their doctrines, and entering into debates against the other groups. One of them who dared to have a sinful relationship with his father's wife, was admired because of his eloquence²].

THE GOAL OF THE EPISTLE:

The apostle Paul departed from Corinth after 18 months of a very successful and fruitful ministry. And right away, events moved with a very quick pace, to a serious dissension, resulting from the appearance of four adversary groups inside the church; Beside certain behavioral and doctrine problems, that threatened to deprive the church of her holiness, and to destroy her faith; Something that made the apostle very uncomfortable for the following reasons:

a- **Having been distressed by a letter he got from Chloe's household**, telling him about serious contentions among the congregation (1: 11), the apostle dispatched his disciple Timothy to Corinth for the sake of reconciliation, providing him with many commandments (4: 17; 16: 10). Yet the epistle within our hands probably arrived there before he did.

b- Having received a report concerning the already mentioned act of sexual immorality, the apostle felt a commitment to send them an epistle to warn them against having a fellowship with such a person; which is lost so far.

c- **A certain message from Corinth to the apostle**, lost as well, was probably the main reason for writing the first epistle to the Corinthians; whose contents could be known through our study of the epistle within our hands.

The church so turned into numerous controversial groups, whose voices were raised without limit; ... while some members of the congregation led a life of licentiousness and disorder; ... Some sued their brethren in heathen courts; ... Many controversial views appeared concerning matrimonial and family relationships as a whole (7); concerning the banquets and food offered to idols (8-10); concerning the behavior of some women in the meetings, and in the banquets of love of the Lord (11); concerning the abuse of spiritual gifts (12-14); concerning the hope in the resurrection of the dead (15); and concerning the collection for the saints in Jerusalem (16).

Beside the problems causing contentions in the church, there were, as well, certain theological (doctrine), ethical, social, worship, and eschatological problems. There were

¹ *Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians, proem.*

² *PG 82: 226.*

people who cared for the theoretical philosophies and human wisdom, more than for the working living faith; Hence the topic of this epistle came to be “**Our Lord Jesus Christ**”.

THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE EPISTLE:

In his four epistles: the first and the second to the Corinthians, the one to the Galatians, and that to the Romans, **Paul the great apostle to the Gentiles recorded a great apologetic thesis for the sake of receiving the Christian faith by the Gentiles**; all of which go back to his third preaching trip, during which a multitude of new believers from many nations were drawn to Christian belief on the apostle’s hands. Some consider these four epistles as the most important of his writings; and some even call them ‘the great epistles’; or ‘the four main epistles’; bearing the apostle’s wide-ranged thoughts, that set forth with humanity, from the deadly literality to the life-giving Spirit; his heart, wide open before everyone with no partiality; and his depths, yearning for the salvation of all men.

The reference of these two epistles (1 and 2 to the Corinthians) to the apostle Paul, is something that goes without doubt; based upon the following inside and outside testimonies:

The outside testimonies:

1- These two epistles occupy a prominent position among the oldest lists of the writings of the apostle Paul. In the **Muratorian Canon** (in about the year 170 A.D.), these two epistles came on the top of the nine epistles directed to the churches; with a statement that they were written to counter the contentions resulting from heresies.

2- In the writings of **Marcions Apostolicon** (in about the year 140 A.D.) they came directly following the epistle to the Galatians.

3- St. Clement the Roman (in about the year 95 A.D.) – who was a friend of the apostle Paul (Philippians 4: 3), referred to the contents of these two epistles, in a message to the Corinthians, asking them to commit themselves to the directions of the apostle Paul concerning the contentions in the church¹.

St. Agnatus of Antioch²; St. Policarb³; and St. Justin the martyr, referred to them as well.

The inside testimonies:

The two epistles are packed with inside signs that confirm their authenticity as being referred to the apostle Paul. Although they both bear amazing harmony and conformity with what came in the book: ‘The Acts of the Apostles’ written by St. Luke the Evangelist, yet it could not be said that either of them quoted from the other, as the two epistles and the book of Acts, each has a distinctive type differing from the other.

¹ Chapter 47.

² Ad Ephes 18.

³ Chapter 2,6,11.

There is no way to doubt their reference to the great apostle to the Gentiles, with what he bears of compassion and flaring zeal for the salvation of souls, and with the multitude of preaching travels he practiced.

As an example, when he talked about the five hundred brothers who saw the Christ, risen from the dead, most of whom were still alive at the time this epistle was written, he was telling them the episode of the resurrection in the era of the apostles, which seemed as something ridiculously funny in the sight of non-believers.

FEATURES OF THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS:

1- **The epistle, presenting such clear and readily received mental solutions of faith;** firmly and seriously condemning every fault, corruption, or diversion of faith; It takes away doubts, and supports faith. It presents all that with the spirit of exalted compassion and true love, through the divine truth and the work of God's grace. And while presenting such deep look and thought; It also cares for the practical life of faith.

2- The epistle came written in such an exalted order, that its reader would find no difficulty in following the author, moving from one point to another.

3- **The epistle presents to us important doctrine talks, concerning the two Persons of Christ and the Holy Spirit;** the Eucharist, and the resurrection. It reveals as well the nature of the church meetings and the ministry in the early church. And presents a portrait of the faults and evils practiced by the believers who recently came from idol worship. Showing certain shortcomings expected in a city of such circumstances as Corinth, he demonstrates that the gospel satisfies all aspects of life, not touching one and disregarding the other; He presents some basics by which the believers were committed in their family life, their relationships with others, their worship, behavior in the markets, and while having leisure or under temptations. By all that, the believers would lead a life of harmony; knowing nothing but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

One of the main features of this epistle, is demonstrating the **power of the cross**, being the power of God and His wisdom for salvation; and being the dynamic power to change the basics of the inner man, and to renew his depth; by which to change the life of the old pagan world. That salvation work was not realized by Paul, by Apollos, or by Safa (Peter); but was realized by the preaching of the crucified Christ. **The apostle Paul put the cross very high up, to cast its shadow on all the activities of human life and on all its aspect.** The cross for him is not anguish or deprivation, but is the foundation of the spaciousness **of the heart and the mind with love, and the enjoyment by the believers of the eternal glory.**

4- The Corinthians were used to practicing **the Greek democracy;** the students listen to the teachers, not to learn, as much as to offer commendation, criticism, or reproach. They carried all that with them to the church, as well as the spirit of struggle and of competition,

which they also practiced in the sport tournaments held in Corinth. The apostle Paul in this epistle dealt with everything that came to his knowledge in the reports he received.

5- He presents to us the judgments on several aspects:

- Judging others before the time (4: 5)
- Judging ourselves (11: 31)
- Our judgment by the Lord (11: 32)
- Judgment of the brethren (6: 5)
- We shall judge the world (6: 2)
- We shall judge angels (6: 3)
- Judgment before worldly courts (6: 6)

DIVISIONS OF THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS:

- (1) The church unity** 1 - 4
- (2) Dealing with the ethical corruption** 5 - 6
- (3) Social problems** 7 - 10
- (4) Dealing with problems of worship** 11 - 14
- (5) Eschatological issues** 15
- (6) Collection for the poor of Jerusalem, and receiving Timothy**

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Problems dealt with in the epistle	Solutions
Contentions in the church (1: 11; 3: 3)	Boasting of the cross, and the power of God for salvation (1: 18)
Slothfulness concerning sexual immorality (5: 1-7)	Separation of the evil person (5: 11)
The brethren resorting to law before the unrighteous (6: 1)	The saints will judge the world (6: 2)
Marriage and virginity (7)	Each one has his own gift (7: 24)
Matrimonial relationships (7: 3)	Depriving one another should be temporary, and with mutual consent (7: 5)
When one spouse enters into faith (7)	The non-believer is sanctified in the believer (7)
Eating things offered to idols (8-	Doing everything for God's glory

10)	(7: 39)
Covering the head (11)	Submission to order without contention 11: 16)
Slothfulness concerning communion (11: 20-22)	Man should examine himself (11: 28)
Abusing the use of spiritual gifts (12-14)	Love is grater than all gifts (13)
Denying the resurrection (15)	Resurrection of Christ – faith’s reality (15)
Collection for the saints (16)	Binding the giving with worship and love (16: 2)

DIVISION 1

THE CHURCH UNITY

(Chapters 1 to 4)

THE CHURCH UNITY

1 to 4

POSITIVE SOLUTIONS FOR THE PATISANSHIP:

1- Acquiring the divine, instead of the human wisdom: The wisdom of God concentrates on the divine exalted love for man, proclaimed through the cross, which is rejected by the human wisdom: The Jews see in the cross a stumbling block, for they seek a worldly kingdom that grants them a temporal glory above all peoples; The Greeks see it as foolishness, for they seek a philosopher teacher who continuously presents to them new philosophies that satisfy their mind; Whereas the believers find in the cross the power of God for salvation (1: 18); They see in the foolishness of the cross a conquest and victory for them; It presents to them the spirit of power and not the spirit of weakness (Chapter 2).

2- Adopting the spiritual behavior instead of the carnal or natural behavior. Here, the apostle divides humanity into three categories:

The spirituals: Those who let the Spirit be the leader for the body, by the work of the Holy Spirit, who makes their bodies light, enjoying some features of the Spirit; Man would be sanctified as a whole, and lives as though has become a Spirit:

He receives what concern the Spirit of God (2: 12 – 14) **He recognizes** what concern the Spirit of God (2: 13-14)

He cares for what concern the Spirit of God (Romans 8: 5) **He compares** spiritual things with spiritual (13)

He restores the one who is overtaken in any trespass (Galatians 6:1) **He judges** all things (2: 15)

The Carnals: Those who let the body be the leader of the Spirit; Man would seem wholly as a body; in whom the body prevails over all his feelings, emotions, and abilities; and guides all his energies and talents:

He feeds on milk and not on solid food ((3: 2)

He embraces envy, strife, and divisions (3: 3)

He is sold under sin (Romans 7: 14)

Sin dwells in him (Romans 7: 17)

He lives according to the flesh (Romans 8: 5).

The naturals: Those who do not seek what is God's; Yet they intend to practice some virtues as mere ethical work; assuming that they can have the authority over their thoughts, senses, emotions, words, and behavior. **The natural man** lives by human wisdom, disregarding the work of God.

He does not receive what concern the Spirit of God (2: 12-14)

He does not recognize what concern the Spirit of God (12: 13-14)

3- Getting attached to Christ, rather than to ministers (3: 5). We are God's **plantation**, not of him who planted, nor of him who watered. **It is Christ who gives the increase.** We are the building of God; He is the foundation. No minister can build on the foundation of another. We are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in us.

Every minister should be aware not to build with wood, hay, or straw, lest it would be consumed by the fire of judgment. He who is ministered should not boast of the minister, as *"All are yours (the Lord's)"* (3: 22).

4- Refraining from judging the ministers (4: 1-5): If we should not boast of this or that minister, We, as well, do not have the right to judge them; but should leave it to God to judge them on His great day (4: 5).

5- Following the lead of the modest minister (4: 6-13): *"We have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men; we are fools for Christ's sake; but you are wise in Christ"* (4: 9-10).

6- Receiving the warning of a minister as from a father (4: 14-21). *"What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love, and a spirit of gentleness?"*(4: 21).

CHAPTER 1

THE CROSS IS THE SECRET OF UNITY

The great apostle to the Gentiles, writing to the church beloved to him, starts his epistle with a joyful introduction that brings to them the spirit of hope. He sets forth with them to the cross of the Lord of glory Jesus Christ to find in it a solution for all their problems, whether concerning their behavior, families, church, or doctrines; He brings them over to the cross, to see in it the secret of hope and unity.

In this chapter the apostle talks about the church that suffers from contentions; Although with the spirit of humility, yet together with the authority as an apostle appointed by God Himself. In his thanksgiving to God for the growth of the church which he planted in Corinth, there is a confirmation and proof of his success in realizing his mission, and of the truth of the divine call to him to work.

He showed them as well, that they are the church of God sanctified in Jesus Christ; are called to be saints; are rich in several gifts and exalted graces; and are not less in gifts than any other church. By that, he prepared their minds by the spirit of hope to receive his counsel, to enter into the secret of the cross, and into the enjoyment of the power of God for salvation; instead of scattering their energies and gifts in contentions and dissensions. As in the cross, we can see God, the source of every good gift and every wisdom and riches, to boast of Him and not of ourselves.

1- A prologue to the epistle	1 - 2
2- The apostolic blessing	3
3- Thanksgiving to God for the growth of the church	4 - 9
4- The report of the household of Chloe	10 - 13
5- The mission of the apostle Paul	14 - 17
6- The cross, the secret of wisdom	18 - 25
7- Boasting in the Lord	26 - 31

1- A PROLOGUE TO THE EPISTLE:

St. John Chrysostom and many other scholars believe that this prologue to the epistle, with what it includes of apostolic blessing, and thanksgiving to the Lord for the growth of the church, prepares the way for the apostle to discuss with love and openness all the serious problems of this church.

“Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother” (1)

He opens the epistle with the spirit of humility; not saying “Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ”, but “**Paul, called to be an apostle**”.

- ❖ Look how, from the very beginning he drives away their pride, and brings down to earth their imaginations that are very dear to them. By saying “**called to be an apostle**”, he means to say: What I learned was not my own, but **I was called while persecuting the church**. And God intends for you to be saved by the same way; for we have done nothing good on our own, but were saved by the will of God¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

Because some have attacked the apostleship of Paul and caused division in the church. He started his epistle with a confirmation that he is an apostle, not through a human will, nor by a call from somebody, but “**through the will of God**”. When the Lord called him for the apostolic **work by His free grace**, he set forth right away to proclaim the free salvation to others. He did not get the apostleship for the sake of his worthiness, but through the will of God. He is not like the false prophets, about whom God said: “*I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran; I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied*” (Jeremiah 23: 21). He says: “*It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy*” (Romans 9: 16). And that he is not writing to them to seek commendation, nor recognition as an apostle; But, being an apostle called by God to minister to the Gentiles, he is writing to the church which he planted by the grace of God to be sanctified in the Lord.

- ❖ He writes that he is “*an apostle through the will of God*”, hinting by this to the false apostles, not sent by Christ, whose teachings are not the truth. There were, and still are, several perverted groups who preach Christ according to their whims, and destroy the churches, whose dry branches are staying with us till this very day².

(Father Ambrosiaster)³

“**Sosthenes our brother**”: Sosthenes, who was the ruler of the Jewish Synagogue, then believed in Christ, born in Corinth, and beloved by the people, was counted by the apostle as his partner in writing this epistle, to let the people receive well what came in it. He was probably the same Sosthenes mentioned by St. Luke the Evangelist in the Book of Acts 18: 17, who was blessed by being beaten by the Greeks before the eyes of Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia. Having received the Christian faith, he accompanied the apostle Paul in Ephesus, partaking of the preaching ministry, which made glad the heart of every Christian in Corinth. Mentioning his name was probably intended as a call to the people of Corinth to

¹ In 1 Cor. Hom 1: 1.

² Ambrosiaster: *Comm. On Paul's Epistles, CSEL (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, Vienna: Vienna: Tempky, 1866) 81: 4.*

³ أعطى ارasmus Erasmus هذا الاسم لشخص عاش في القرن الرابع لمؤلف كانت كتاباته تُنسب للقديس أمبروسوس أسقف ميلان، لذا دعاه "أمبروسياستر".

follow his lead, **he who turned from being the ruler of a Jewish Synagogue to a preacher of the Christian faith.**

The apostle used to include in his epistles a coworker or a disciple to invoke **the spirit of love and collective work in the congregation;** By such spirit of humility, mixed with love, he would present a joyful heavenly symphony to the heavenlies.

- ❖ If he puts on the same level those who were far less than him, like Sosthenes; What would those who despise those equal to them, say¹?
- ❖ **Paul and Sosthenes, writing the first epistle;** Then Paul and Timothy, writing the second, to the people of Corinth, create a magnificent symphony².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours” (2)

Before the several problems that prevailed among them, **he cared to refer to the divine call** addressed to them:

- 1- **The goal of their calling:** To be saints as He (God) is Holy (2)
- 2- **The secret of their calling:** To be called by the name of Jesus Christ (2)
- 3- **The experience of their calling:** The cross is the power and the wisdom of God (24).
- 4- **The possibilities of their calling:** A challenge to the wise and the rich, etc. (26-31).

As it was his custom, the apostle starts by encouraging everyone. While criticizing their unruly behavior in the church, and the corrupt ethical behavior of some of them, he did not hesitate to address them as being: ***“those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints”***; in an attempt to lift up their moral spirit, to make them listen to him, and to respond to his criticism. Being called: ***“sanctified”*** and ***“called to be saints”***, for being sanctified in the Lord Jesus, and dedicated their hearts to Him through gaining the sacrament of baptism; It is befitting of them to walk along the way of holiness. They have become a holy church, not on account of their reference to Paul, to Apollos, or to Cephas (Peter), but for the sake of God who sanctified them.

- ❖ We do nothing good on our own, but by the will of God, we gain this salvation. We are called “saints”, not because of our worthiness; but because in this is His gladness³.

¹ In 1 Cor. Hom 1: 1.

² Comm.. On Matthew, 14: 1.

³ In 1 Coe. Hom 1:1.

- ❖ By reminding them of their impurity, of which he liberated them, he provokes them to have the humility of mind; as they are not sanctified by their good work, as it is rather by the compassion of God¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

While writing to the church of Corinth, it is obvious that he addresses his talk to all those who are called by the name of Christ Jesus **everywhere**; namely, to the catholic church extending from one end of the world to the other; As to God, there is a holy remnant everywhere, and in all the generations, who live together in a spiritual fellowship. This remnant has dedicated its life to God; namely, **has separated itself**, not from the world, but from its corruption, **in order to carry the icon of the Holy One**. That is the goal of the gospel of Christ. The Greek word of “**sanctified**” means (separated), so that **man would be possessed by God, and dedicated to His ministry**. It is wrong to look at humanity through a dark lens; As in all generations there are saints who dedicate their life and their hearts to the holy God, and bear the hope of unity.

- ❖ Although the epistle was written to the people of Corinth, Yet it is addressed to all believers in the whole world; indicating that the church in the world, and particularly in Corinth, should be one, whatever the distances separating them; That is why He unites them together by saying: “*both theirs and ours*”².

(St. John Chrysostom)

By saying “**ours**” he means (**for me and Sosthenes**); feeling that the saints are the gift of God to His ministers. In the same way the minister feels that he is not for himself, but for humanity for whose sake Christ died; He feels, as well, that the saints are his help and support, and are even the crown of his glory.

2- THE APOSTOLIC BLESSING:

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (3)

The apostolic blessing in every epistle came to reveal the heart of the apostle Paul, flaring with love; **seeking for every church and for every believer a divine blessing and gift according to his needs**. This blessing, at the same time, prepares the receivers to receive well what came in its context.

The apostle starts **by grace**, followed **by peace**; as we could not enjoy peace, unless the Lord presents to us His heavenly grace, that forgives our sins, that caused the animosity between God and us. It was the desire of the heart of Paul, the apostle of peace, for the church in Corinth, that God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ would **grant her the divine grace**,

¹ In 1 Coe. Hom 1:1.

² In 1 Cor. Hom 1: 2.

which fills the souls with deep peace, so that the spirit of dissension would find no place in her.

Every blessing, indeed, evolves from the rich grace of God in the soul, and her peace; namely, her reconciliation with God. **God commanded Aaron and his priest sons to bless the people**, saying: *“The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I shall bless them”* (Numbers 6: 24-27). This blessing has been truly realized through the gospel of peace in the New Covenant; As our peace would not be realized except by the crucified Christ.

❖ **If the source of your peace is the grace of God; and if you are saved by grace; Why then would you boast? How could man find grace with God, except by humility?**

❖ If you have peace with God, Why then would you put yourselves ahead of others? That is real cause of dissension... Again, we would not benefit anything, if all people commend us, while the Lord opposes us. On the other hand, there would be no danger, if we are rejected and hated by all, as long as the Lord receives and loves us¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

The apostle, proclaiming that the divine grace and the heavenly peace are to be granted by God the Father, and by the Lord Jesus Christ, confirms to us that they are one Deity. **Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus** says: [Paul says that Christ is a grace-Giver, just like God the Father; confirming that they are One²].

3- THANKSGIVING TO GOD FOR THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH:

Carrying the fellowship of the features of the Lord Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul starts by opening the door of hope before the Corinthians, with the spirit of encouragement; by calling them ‘saints’, and ‘dedicated to the account of the Lord’. Then he follows by presenting a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God for the sake of their growth.

“I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Jesus Christ” (4)

He expresses his true love toward his brethren whom he ministers, by presenting thanksgivings to God, and prayers for their sake. By such a big and wide heart, he cares for his brethren even in his prayers.

❖ There is nothing compared to the longings and compassion of the blessed apostle Paul, **who prayed for all cities and peoples**; How could he pray for all those people, and how

¹ In 1 cor. Hom 1: 3.

² Comm.. on 1Cor., 166.

he could thank God for their sake; **as though he himself was the one who got the greatest blessings¹!**

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Although Paul, does not thank always the Corinthians, even when they do good; Yet, as a father, he presents thanksgiving to God for their sake all the time whatever they do².

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ Paul, caring to provide sweetness to their minds before he starts to provoke or to counsel; He does the right thing, when he presents to God thanksgiving for His gifts to them³.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

While thanking God for His gift to the church, the grace by which many have become united with him in Jesus Christ, Paul refers God to himself, calling Him “*my God*” (4).

- ❖ By his great emotion, he counts what is common to all, as his, personally; saying “*my God*”, as the prophets used to say every now and then (Psalm 43: 4; 42: 1)⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“*I thank my God always concerning you*” (4). The apostle Paul, before talking about a multitude of corruption that hit some in that church on many aspects; something that touch the unity of the church, her sanctity, worship, and doctrines, he starts by the positive side, proclaiming his perpetual thanksgiving to God on the good and the sanctified aspects in the church. **As though their weaknesses did not overshadow what they have enjoyed of blessings and divine gifts**; nor preoccupied his mind from thanksgiving and praising God for what they have enjoyed. He “*always*” presents a perpetual sacrifice to God, his God who called him for ministry by His grace, which He never cease to increase.

Again he keeps on showing everything good in them, **as they enjoy the grace given to them by Christ Jesus** (4), that called them, not only to be saints in Jesus Christ, but also **to become rich in the gifts of the Holy Spirit**, about which he talks in this epistle: being rich in every speech and knowledge (5); coming short in no gift (7); and anticipating the day of the ultimate coming of the Lord (8).

- ❖ “*given to you*”. By whom? By me, or by another apostle? Absolutely not! ... “*in Jesus Christ*”¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ In Eph Hom 3.

² Comm.. on 1 Cor. 1: 2: 1-15.

³ Comm.. on 1 Cor., 166.

⁴ In 1 Cor. Hom. 2: 2.

¹ In 1 Cor. Hom. 2: 3.

“That you were enriched in everything by Him in speech and knowledge of every kind” (5)

He thanks God for the abundance of spiritual gifts enjoyed by the church in Corinth; that she is not less than any other church, especially in the gifts of speech and spiritual knowledge; namely in testifying to the gospel of Christ; their speech, namely, their ability to preach, got bound to knowledge.

The scholar Origen, discerning between speech and knowledge, says: [**By knowledge, you reveal what you know; and by speech, you clarify what you know**¹]. There are many who have the gift of speech; yet without knowledge, their speech become void and fruitless, even a cause for offense. While there are many who have the knowledge stored in their minds; yet they are unable to communicate it to others, and to testify to what is in their mind. The church of Corinth having enjoyed the complete portrait of speech bound to knowledge; namely, the ability to sound teaching, based upon the divine truth; The apostle wishes for them to have their eyes opened to acknowledge the abundance of their inner riches; and not to get preoccupied with contentions, but with ministry, preaching, and the perpetual meditation in God.

❖ ***“In speech and knowledge of every kind”***. There are many who have knowledge, yet they lack the ability to speak; like the illiterate who are unable to clarify what is on their mind. He says: But you are not like them; You are able to understand and to speak¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ The slothful person, perpetually preoccupied, and confused with his several shortcomings; would be a stranger to the dedication in God, and to the spiritual riches, about which the apostle says: ***“That you were enriched in everything by Him in speech and knowledge of every kind”***².

(St. John Cassian)

❖ Let us be persecuted in order to run; Yet we should not run in vain; Let us enter into the race for the sake of the reward on the heavenly work. Let us run to acquire? But what shall we acquire? What is the reward? What is the crown?

It so seems to me that what we wish for is nothing but the Lord Himself; He is the Judge of those who strive; and the Crown of the winners.

He is the One to distribute the inheritance; And He Himself is the good Inheritance.

He is the Portion and the One who gives it; He makes us rich, and He, Himself, is the riches.

¹ *Comm. on 1 Cor. 1: 2: 29-30.*

¹ *On 1 Cor. Hom. 2: 3.*

² *The Institutes 10: 21.*

He reveals the treasure to you, And He, Himself, is the treasure. He draws you to desire the high-priced pearl; which he presents to you as though it is for sale, if you intend to trade well¹.

(St. Gregory , Bishop of Nyssa)

“Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you” (6).

Realizing that the gift of testimony, based on true knowledge, is a divine grace, or an exalted treasure, enriching the soul to need nothing more, the apostle says: ***“The testimony of Christ was confirmed in you”***; Namely the foundation of the gospel of Christ in you.

- ❖ The testimony of Christ is confirmed in us if we could say together with the apostle Paul: *“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, not things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 9: 38, 39). Otherwise, if we get confused by the smallest of things, the testimony of Christ would not be completely confirmed in us¹.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ The testimony of Christ is confirmed in them, for they became strong in faith; Instead of trusting in human things, all their hope is in Christ; Neither pleasure, nor seduction of pleasure, would prevail on them².

(Ambrosiaster)

“So that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ” (7).

By properly presenting the commendation, he prepare the Corinthians to receive the criticism to come. For starting with painful words, would stir-up the animosity of the listener³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Although we are short in no gift, Yet we are eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ; He who will keep us in everything, to present us blameless on the great day of the Lord; on the day when the world comes to an end, when nobody would be glorified in His sight⁴.

(St. Jerome)

¹ *The Beatiude, sermon 8.*

¹ *Comm.. on 1 Cor. 1: 2: 25-40.*

² *Ambroaiaster: Comm. On Paul's Epistles, CSEL 81: 7.*

³ *In Cor. Hom. 2: 5.*

⁴ *Against the Pelagians 2: 8.*

God, in the abundance of His love, let His church deprived of no gift; He is the Father who grants His church everything she needs.

Do not marvel that, having become true witnesses to the gospel of Christ; namely, had *“the testimony of Christ”*; they were **eagerly waiting for His second coming**; As **this is the goal of their faith, strife, and preaching, to be prepared for the day of the Lord**; waiting eagerly, and with great joy, for His coming; which He has proclaimed at the time of His crucifixion (John 14: 3); and renewed His promise before His ascension to heaven (Acts 1: 11). This promise became the steadfast hope of the believers (Titus 2: 13); 1 Peter 3: 12; Hebrew 9: 28); and the end of the Holy Book came with a supplication, full of zeal, for the Lord Jesus to come quickly.

❖ If God is unseen, yet He exists and is present now, and **will appear later on**; That is why there is need for perseverance; As for this goal you received the wonders, by which you would holdfast¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ The righteous in this world may not enjoy what he desires, but he may rather suffer, and be exposed to dangers; Yet he eagerly waits for the coming of Christ².

(The scholar Origen)

❖ On that day, the Lord Jesus Christ will be proclaimed to both the believers and the non-believers. The non-believers will realize that what they do not believe in is a steadfast truth. Whereas the believers will rejoice to know that what they believe in, is more amazing than what they could imagine³.

(Ambrosiaster)

“Who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ” (8)

Commenting on these words, **St. John Chrysostom** says: [These words refer to that they might be still shaking and worthy of rebuke⁴].

God who laid the firm foundation in their hearts, that their souls were eagerly waiting for His coming, could certainly work in them amid the afflictions and troubles that shake their faith, to make them steadfast and well prepared for His coming. He starts the way with them; and completes by working in them, accompanying them, and keeping them on the way of holiness, blameless to **the end**. He will not take away the temptations, afflictions, and

¹ In Cor. Hom. 2: 6.

² Comm. on 1 Cor. 1: 2: 48-51.

³ Ambrosiaster: Comm. On Paul's Epistles, CSEL 81: 7-8.

⁴ On 1 Cor. Hom.2: 7.

offenses, but will keep His believers and sanctifies them, to be borne by Him, and become blameless (John 13: 1; Philippians 1: 6).

The word “*confirm*”, came in Greek as ‘Koine’, a canonical technical term, referring to a surety of security; **As though God presents to His believers a surety that they will be in His presence on the day of the coming of the Lord Jesus.**

The term ‘*Blameless*’ does not mean that man would become perfect, but refers to him being found innocent of the charge against him. They are not perfect in themselves, but God, by His grace will keep them from judgment, to appear on the day of the Lord, as His friends (Romans 8: 33); By this, Christ would present His church, a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle (Ephesus 5: 27), to be glorified in it.

“*To the end*” means to the day of the second coming of Christ.

- ❖ Who will confirm us? Jesus Christ, the Word and Wisdom of God.
He will confirm us, not for one or two days, but forever¹.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ Paul trusts that the Corinthians will be kept in righteousness to the day of judgment; For those people who were not shaken by such a multitude of dissensions and troubles, have proved that they will hold fast to their faith up to the end. By so commending them, Paul challenges those who were corrupted by the faults of the false apostles; By proclaiming the faith of the former, he calls the later to repentance².

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ By saying that he hopes for them to be blameless on the day of the Lord Christ, the apostle refers to that, so far, they are still at fault³.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

St. John Chrysostom believes that it was not a commendation, as much as it was a hidden rebuke; for the Corinthians were far from being ‘blameless’, as it will be obvious from the rest of the epistle⁴.

“God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (9)

“*God is faithful*”; He is true in His promises; would never deceive us; He starts with us, and would complete to the end (Philippians 1: 6). “*God is faithful*” as an expression much beloved by the old Jews; which they understand that God is faithful in keeping His exalted

¹ Comm.. on 1 Cor. 1: 2: 52: 54.

² Ambrosiaster: Comm. On Paul's Epistles, CSEL 81: 8.

³ Comm.. on 1 Cor., 167.

⁴ On 1 Con. Hom. 22: 7.

divine promises to them as His own special people. They see in the faithfulness of some believers, a reflection of God's faithfulness; quoting the two following stories:

(1) It was claimed that to Rabbi Phineas the son of Jair, in a certain town, came some people and gave him two measures of barley to keep for them. Having forgotten all about them, when they came to him after seven years to claim their barley; he took them to a large storehouse, and told them to haul a huge amount of barley. Responding to their protest, he said them: [You have trusted me with two measures of barley; which I planted one year after another; And here you have the harvest of seven years. They marveled at his faithfulness, and said among themselves: **If such is the faithfulness of the men of God; How would be the faithfulness of God Himself?**]

(2) Rabbi Simeon the son of Shetach purchased a donkey from an Edomite. After some time, his disciples discovered that there was a necklace around the donkey's neck with a high-priced pearl; They rushed to him with the pearl, to say that, being the blessed of the Lord, he became rich; according to the words: "*The blessing of the Lord makes one rich; and He adds no sorrow with it*" (Proverb 10: 22). To their astonishment he said: [I purchased the donkey, and not the necklace], And he rushed with it to the Edomite from whom he purchased the donkey; who said: [**This faithfulness of the man of God is surely a shadow of the faithfulness of God**].

❖ St. Paul so said to keep the Corinthians from falling into despair, when he starts to criticize them. He reminds them that the problem is not in God, as much as it is because of our sins and lack of faith¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

"*You were called*", does not mean a mere calling to us, as much as it carries the possibility of grace and divine strength, to realize the calling, in case we accept it.

❖ Not by this or that, but he says "By the Father", you were called, and by Him you will get rich².

(St. John Chrysostom)

We were called **to the fellowship of His Son Jesus**, to become joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8: 17-20); to become like Him, as children of God (2 Thessalonians 2: 14; 1 Peter 4: 13; 1 John 1: 3); Not according to nature, but by adoption, through uniting with Him.

❖ You are called **to a fellowship with the Only-begotten Son**; If you are you still addicted to depending upon humans? What misery could be worse?!

¹ In 1 Cor. Hom. 2: 7.

² In 1 Cor. Hom. 2: 8.

❖ He promised to make **us fellows with His Only-begotten Son**; And for this very goal He called us; ... He always intends to give; yet by refusing to receive, they drove themselves out¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ Believe always in Christ; For you are called for no other goal, but to be one with Him².

(The Scholar Origen)

❖ Fellowship is brotherhood; As Paul proclaims the unfailing faithfulness of God toward us; It would be fitting of us not to be unfaithful to our sonhood; But we are committed to remain faithful to it³.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ God, being Faithful, means that we could trust in His proclamation of Himself; His word proclaims that He is the faithful God⁴.

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

Saying: *“Into the fellowship of his Son”*; We will have fellowship with Him in the following:

a- **In His perpetual triumph on the hosts of darkness:** *“Now thanks be to God who always lead us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place”* (2 Corinthians 2: 14).

b- **In the divine nature:** Granting us, by His Holy Spirit, to become an icon of Him, carrying His features; *“that through these we may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”* (2 Peter 1: 4).

c- **In His sufferings and crucifixion:** (1 Peter 4: 13; Colossians 1: 24; Philippians 3: 10). *“that I know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to His death”* (Philippians 3: 10).

d- **In His risen life:** (Matthew 9: 28).

e- **In the eternal inheritance and the fellowship of glory:** *“Blessed be the god and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you”* (1 Peter 1: 3-4).

4- THE REPORT OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF CHLOE:

¹In 1 Cor. Hom. 2: 8.

²Comm.. On 1 Cor. 13.

³Comm.. On Paul's Epistles, CSEL 81: 8.

⁴Stromata 1: 17: 3.

“Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (10).

After the introduction, the apostle started to provoke them to forsake any division among them, but to be joined together in the same mind and the same judgment; concentrating all their energies on the enjoyment of the hope of the gospel.

He seeks from them *“by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”*; being aware of the power of this name in doing wonders; the most important of which was then, to join all of them together in Him, to have the same mind and the same judgment; and that divisions would find no place among them.

St. John Chrysostom noticed how the name of Jesus Christ was mentioned in this epistle more than in any other. The goal of the apostle from this is to draw the hearts of the adversary groups, away from boasting of their teachers, to the Person of Christ Himself.

- ❖ The apostle did well by adding the name of Jesus Christ here, having found that the Corinthians do not glorify Him enough¹.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

He asks them all to *“speak the same thing”*; As, even if their views differ in many things. Yet, in order to avoid any dissensions in the church, when they proclaim their faith in God, and His salvation work, they are committed to speak the same words.

By faith they would be like the angels of God, who suffer no dissensions nor contentions among themselves; By the true love, they would all enjoy the same mind; namely, would have the same understanding of the divine truths and the heavenly life.

- ❖ Paul started by confronting the ailment itself – **the spirit of dissension**, uprooting the evil together with its fruition. He spoke to them with daring; as, beside being weaker than others, they were his disciples; hence he says to them: *“If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 9: 2)¹.
- ❖ It is easier to partake of someone’s view, than to partake of his feelings. It would be possible to unite in faith, but not in love. That was the reason for saying that they should join together in the same mind and the same judgment².

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ *Comm.. on 1 Cor., 167.*

¹ *In 1 Cor. Hom., Argument.*

² *Comm.. On 1 Cor. 3: 2.*

❖ Let us listen to the apostle, saying: “*I plead with you, brethren... that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*” (1: 10). He was addressing the multitudes, but intending for them to be one¹.

(St. Augustine)

❖ The seen church, being a mixed body that include both the righteous and the unrighteous; the apostle commends some and criticizes others.

He who conforms to the sound teachings of the church concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; beside the ordinances concerning the resurrection and the judgment; and who faithfully keeps the orders of the church, would not be in dissension².

(The scholar Origen)

❖ Paul seeks from the Corinthians to have the same mind; on account that those born again, are all the children of God; He seeks of them to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and to unite together under the teaching he presented to them, and to defend it¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

“For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you” (11)

The apostle got a message from the church in Corinth, concerning certain worship and faith problems; yet they did not refer to any contentions. But it **was Chloe’s household** who declared to him the true situation in the church. Chloe was probably a prominent and religious woman in Corinth, whose household received faith in the Lord Christ. Some of her household wrote to tell the apostle Paul about the dissensions that dwelt upon the church. It is probable that Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1: 17, were the sons of Chloe. But, according to **father Ambrosiaster**, some believe that Chloe’s household are those who remained faithful, and bore the fruition of faith in the Lord Christ; While others believe that Chloe is the name of a city; like when someone says ‘the people of Antioch’.

St. John Chrysostom believes that by saying “**Chloe’s household**”, Paul referred to the source of his information, without designating a person in particular; to confirm the soundness of the source, without stirring-up the Corinthians against a certain person.

The contentions appeared as a natural fruition of the dissension; And every group defended themselves against the other groups.

¹ *Sermons on N.T. Lessons. 53: 4.*

² *Comm.. On 1 Cor. 1: 4.*

¹ *Comm.. On Paul's Epistles, CSEL 81: 9.*

- ❖ It so seems that the Corinthians were both carnal and natural, “*who did not receive the things of the Spirit of God*” (1 Corinthians 2: 14); They were naturally fond of contention, and filled with envy as normal human beings¹.

(St. Augustine)

It is amazing that while rebuking them about the contentions that dwelt upon them, causing dissensions in the church, he still shows them compassion, and calls them “**brethren**”.

- ❖ Although their failing was obvious, yet that does not keep him from calling them “brethren”¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘I am of Paul’, or ‘I am of Apollos’, or ‘I am of Cephas’, or ‘I am of Christ’” (12)

Speaking of the dissensions, he starts by the group who refer themselves to him (1: 12); lest anyone would think that he intends to bring all groups to the one after his name; He does not seek glory for himself.

- ❖ He put himself first, followed by Apollos, then by Cephas; Not in an attempt to glorify himself; but, seeking to correct the faults, he started by his person².

(St. John Chrysostom)

Some believe that the apostle Paul does not mean here to refer to the existence of four groups, but he introduced those names in an attempt to clarify the situation.

- ❖ His argument was mild; He did not refer to the persons who violently caused the dissension in the church, by name; but hid their names under a veil of those of the apostles³.
- ❖ If they had no right to call themselves by the names of Paul, Apollos, or Cephas; They would rather not call themselves by other names⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

Some others believe that the church in Corinth actually embraced two groups of believers: Those of a Gentile origin; and those of Jewish origin (Acts 18); And each of those groups carried within themselves their own dissension. The first group refer themselves either to Paul who founded the church there, or to Apollos, on whose hands they came into faith, who came after Paul, and whose eloquence they admired.

¹ Epistle 93: 32.

¹ In 1 Cor. Hom. 3: 3.

² In 1 Cor. Hom. 3: 4.

³ In 1 Cor. Hom. 3: 4.

⁴ In 1 Cor. Hom. 3: 3.

As to the second group; they were divided into two sub-groups: those who referred themselves to Peter, either for being the apostle of the circumcision (Galatians 2: 7), or for the sake of his old age. They probably did not see him so far in person, but heard reports from Judea about him, contrary to Paul who was accused of disregarding the law of Moses. And another group who referred themselves to the Lord Christ; either in an attempt to live under no order or ordinance; and without being under an apostolic leadership, they haughtily referred themselves to the Lord Christ, despising any other leadership; Or, because, having seen the Lord in Judea, they counted themselves better than the rest of believers.

❖ Not intending to cause more dissension, he accused those who call themselves by his name; saying: “ *I am of Paul’, or ‘I am of Apollos’, or ‘I am of Cephas’, or ‘I am of Christ’*”(12) of dividing Christ Himself. How evil they are to cause dissension in Him who is against dissension¹!

(St. Augustine)

❖ Those who say such things are not acting in harmony; but have dissensions among themselves. The solution would be for them to join together in a fellowship with the Spirit of Paul by the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ; and to stop contending against one another and devouring one another. **Controversy leads to perdition; whereas conformity gathers together; and make the Son of God to dwell in their midst**².

(The scholar Origen)

❖ Anyway, those who see the teachers as good shepherds, are committed, not only to listen to the good things they teach, but also to imitate the good deeds they practice. Among those was the apostle who says: “*Imitate me, just I also imitate Christ*” (1 Corinthians 11: 1); he, who was a light taken from the eternal light -- the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who was put up on the Minaret, glorified on His cross; says: “*God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world*” (Galatians 6: 14). Paul did not seek what is his, but what is Christ’s; while exhorting those whom he has begotten through the gospel (1 Corinthians 4: 15), to imitate his life. And he rebukes those who cause the dissensions under the names of the apostles, and firmly criticizes those who say “I am of Paul”, saying to them: “*Was Paul crucified for your sake? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*”(13)¹.

(St. Augustine)

Father Ambrosiaster says that while referring to their faults, the apostle did not mention the names of those who caused the dissensions.

¹ *Sermons On N.T. Lessons, 57: 3.*

² *Comm. On Mattheww, 14: 1.*

¹ *Epistle 208: 5.*

By mentioning the names of the good teachers, he meant to refer to the false ones. If it is not befitting of the Corinthians to boast of being referred to any of the good teachers; how much more would it be concerning the false ones, to whose corrupt teachings he will refer later on.

Some may probably wonder: How could the name of Christ be mentioned as being the head of one of the dissenting groups? To this **St. John Chrysostom**¹ responds saying: [Although the controversies in Corinth were not concerning little issues, but basic ones. Yet those who claimed to be of Christ, were wrong, to deny the others that privilege, by making Him the Head of one category, and not of all].

“Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for your sake? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”(13)

As the founder of the church in Corinth, and a spiritual father of the Corinthians, he did not wish for them to refer themselves to him or to anyone else, but to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the One Jesus Christ, who presented the salvation, and granted them, by His Holy Spirit, the adoption by God the Father through the holy baptism.

As a father, the apostle Paul spoke with bitterness, because by their behavior, they tore apart the body of Christ, namely, the church. The seriousness of their dissension lie in two things: The first is their partiality to someone, however his holiness might be, as though he saved them on the cross, or in his name they have been baptized. The second is their dissension concerning the mind and teaching.

❖ Through believing in controversial issues concerning Christ, they were tearing Him apart: Some think that He is only a man; others think that He is only God; and others say that He is the One about whom the prophets prophesied; while others deny that fact.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ Seeing how he was chosen by a certain group, and how Christ was despised; the apostle hastened to say: ***“Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for your sake? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”*** ... You are not in me; but you and I are together in the Lord; You are not under my authority, but under His¹.

(St. Augustine)

❖ By that, Paul refuses to have any temporal honor nor glory from anyone².

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ You should not refer anything good to yourself, or to anyone, but in everything you should glorify God³.

¹ In 1 Cor. Hom. 3: 5.

¹ Sermons on N.T. Lessons, 26: 2.

² In 1 Cor. Hom. 3: 6.

❖ A proud man or angel would unwarrantably become happy to find out that the hope of some is concentrated in them. On the contrary a saintly man or angel, when they see some people refer themselves to them; they hasten to glorify God, and to refer every good thing they get to the help of God; Which made Paul cry out saying: “**Was Paul crucified for your sake?**”. And to say: “**Neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters; but God who gives the increase**” (1 Corinthians 3: 7); And the angel exhorts him who intended to fall at his feet to worship him, saying; “*See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus*” (Revelation 19: 10)².

❖ “**Was Paul crucified for your sake? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?**” Look at Paul’s mind, filled with the love of Christ! Although many were baptized; Yet, it is not important by whom they were baptized, but in whose name they were baptized. The main issue is He who works in baptism; and who forgives the sins.

Baptism is truly a great thing; without which we cannot have the kingdom of God; Yet its greatness is not in the human act; Namely, the mere procedure, without taking the work of the Holy Spirit into consideration, is worth nothing!

(St. John Chrysostom)

Being the body of **Christ**, the division of the church is as though His own body is divided. And as the precious **blood of Christ** is the cause of our salvation, It would be befitting of all of us to bind ourselves to it ; ... For, has Paul, Apollos, or Cephas, shed their blood as an atonement for our sake? ... And as **baptism** is the door through which we enjoy sonhood to God the Father, by uniting with the only-begotten Son; Were those apostles or ministers natural children to God, that we become baptized in their name?!

If the body of Christ, and His blood, are the secret of salvation of the whole church; and by His name we are baptized, It is therefore befitting of us to have the one heart, the one mind, and the one faith; so as not to divide the One Christ.

❖ Finding out that he unwittingly contributed to the dissension, through having a group who refer themselves to him; he hastened to cry out: “**Are you baptized in the name of Paul?**”. As though he is saying to them: Do not tell me who baptized you; but in whose name you were baptized? Your credit is not to the one who baptized you, but in whose name you were baptized¹.

❖ Do you see how he hold them fast, as though by nails, to the name of Christ? Do you see how often he mentions the name of Christ? It is obvious to anyone that he does that by

¹ In 1 Cor. Hom. 5: 4.

² On Christian Doctrine 33.

¹ In 1 Cor. Hom. 3: 5.

intention, so that, by continuously repeating this name, he would enflame their souls, and consume their natural corruption¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

5- THE MISSION OF THE APOSTLE PAUL:

“I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius; lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name” (14, 15).

Through God’s ordinance and exalted care, the apostle Paul baptized none in Corinth except Crispus, the former ruler of the Jewish synagogue (Acts 18: 8), and Gaius who gave him hospitality (Romans 16: 23); probably the same person to whom the third epistle of John was addressed (3 John 5). All the others were baptized by Silas and Timothy.

The apostle thanks God that He did not allow him to baptize anyone other than those whom he mentioned by name; lest anyone should say that he had baptized in his own name. He was keen, as much as possible, not to baptize more, so as not to be accused of forming a group bound to his name.

- ❖ The apostle so wrote to a congregation, who were influenced by the eloquence of some, and who assumed that it is better to be baptized by someone than by others¹.
- ❖ Corinthians, like the Novatianists (followers of Novatian), and the Donatists² (followers of Donatus), in those days, used to refer baptism to themselves; and were thus denied the glory of the name of Christ. Crispus and Gaius, called as witnesses, never assumed to have gained more glory by having been baptized by the apostle Paul³.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ The greatness of baptism is not based on the one **by** whom baptism is done, but on the One in whose name it is done. Thus, although baptism is important and essential for entering into the kingdom of heaven, Yet it is still less so than preaching the kingdom. Someone with not particularly gifted could baptize; but the truly gifted is the one who preaches the gospel⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ The baptism carried out by Peter was not his, but of Christ. So was the baptism carried out by Paul, or by those who, in the apostle’s days were preaching Christ, not sincerely, but through some selfish ambition (Philippians 1: 15, 16); Still their baptism was not theirs, but of Christ.... And being of Christ, despite the difference in the features and in the

¹ In 1 Cor. Hom. 2: 7.

¹ CSEL 81: 44.

² للتعرف عليهم راجع سلسلة: قاموس الأباء القديسين مع بعض الشخصيات الكنيسة، حرفان ن، د.

³ Ambrosiaster: Comm. Om Paul's Epistles, CSEL 81: 11: 12.

⁴ In 1 Cor. Hom. 3: 6.

personalities of those who carried it out, yet the benefit from baptism was the same. For, if the exaltation of baptism depends upon that of the one who carries it out, the apostle would be wrong when he thanks God that he baptized none in Corinth except Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanas (14); As in that case it would be better for everyone to be baptized by the apostle Paul, and no body else¹.

(St. Augustine)

“Yes I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other” (16)

It so seems that the household of Stephanas, as the firstfruit of the believers in Achaia, most probably received faith, and were baptized by the apostle Paul. And it so seem that Epaenetus (Romans 16: 5) was one of that household.

Some scholars believe that saying “*the household of Stephanas*” means that the early church cared for the baptism of the whole households, namely, the grown-ups, and the children, beside all the servants and slaves. Once the head of the household accepted faith, he drew the hearts all its members to enjoy the new risen life,

He says: “*I do not know whether I baptized any other*”. All what preoccupied his mind was to preach the gospel of Christ, and to draw every heart to the crucified Christ, risen from the dead; and not the number of persons he baptized; he cared for the salvation of people, and not for censuses. “*Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples*” (John 4: 2).

“For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel; not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect” (17)

Some believe that he meant to say: “*Christ sent me to preach, more than to baptize*”; Or else his baptism would be considered as un-Canonical; Although He had the authority to baptize, yet, he concentrated more on preaching. As his main task was to establish churches and to preach, he did not have the time to baptize; not out of disregard to baptism, that he commended in an exalted way (Romans 6: 3); but for the sake of concentrating on his more difficult apostolic mission of preaching, testifying among non-believers, and drawing them to believe in the crucified Christ. The apostle baptized some, and will baptize others; but his apostolic task, namely, preaching the gospel, is far more difficult, that needs labor and an iron soul; and on which everything else depend².

❖ Preaching the gospel is a task designated for a few; Whereas baptism could be done by anyone in priesthood¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ Epistle 93: 47.

² In 1 Cor. Hom.3: 6.

¹ In 1 Cor. Hom.3: 6.

❖ Any priest can baptize; but preaching is a gift given to a few; although it should not be designated to those with eloquence, which is completely secondary in importance¹.

(Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus)

❖ Who else could destroy the darkness of ignorance? Not a prophet, nor an apostle, or a righteous man; But rather the divine power from heaven; by whose death for our sake, we would be defended against the devil².

(The scholar Origen)

Here, the apostle Paul reveals his way of ministry; Presenting the power of the cross to the world; In his preaching he does not follow the way of the Greek schools of philosophy, namely, through debate, nor through eloquence and logic, but presents the spirit of power, and reveals the work of the divine grace. ... He presents the cross of Christ, simply, without putting it in a glittering philosophical way. ... He presents the Holy Spirit, perpetually capable of reaching the depths of the heart, and not the human philosophy that would temporarily draw the mind... Although he was taught at the feet of Gamaliel, the great Jewish teacher, Yet, once he started preaching the cross, he disregarded all the teachings and philosophies he has acquired.

Starting the debate concerning the philosophical dissensions and contentions that occurred in the church of Corinth, the apostle Paul found it a convenient opportunity to deal with the subject of '**human philosophy**', namely, the mere '**human wisdom**', outside the circle of the cross; in an attempt to bring them over into the wisdom of God proclaimed in the cross, to enjoy the one mind and the one view.

The cross of Christ needs no shining philosophical garment; for it shines with a divine light on the heart, renews the human nature, reconciles man with his God, presents the Holy Spirit of God to dwell in him, and opens before him the door of sonhood to God.

Paul did not use philosophy in his preaching; lest the success of ministry would be referred to his eloquence or philosophy, when it is truly referred to the power of the cross and to the exalted divine work. As an apostle of the Lord Christ, the Physician of souls, he presents to them the true treatment, which is the cross of Christ, and not the debate and philosophy.

6- THE CROSS, THE SECRET OF WISDOM:

Of the main features of this epistle, is demonstrating the power of the cross, as being the power of God and His wisdom for salvation. It is the dynamic power for changing the foundations of the inner man, and for renewing his depths; leading to a change of the life of

¹ *Comm.. On 1 Cor., 169.*

² *Comm.. On 1 Cor. 1: 6: 8-12.*

the old pagan world. Such an amazing work was not realized by Paul, Apollos, or Cephas; but was realized by preaching the crucified Christ.

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (18)

But the teaching of the cross, the salvation of the world, destroyed by sin, is proclaimed. Those who care for the human philosophies, and not for their own salvation, see it as foolishness; and see Christ as someone from Nazareth, poor, homeless, with few friends, of neither prominent social, nor religious status; did not present philosophical views worth mental debate; rejected by His own; and in weakness was nailed to the cross, fallen under the punishment of the slaves; helpless to save Himself from its disgrace. They saw in Him all that because they did not believe in His resurrection. Whereas those who care for their salvation see it as the power of God.

- ❖ The power of the cross could not be recognized by those who are perishing, for they, imprudently and foolishly, reject the means of salvation¹.
- ❖ A Greek who hears the word ‘**crucified**’, may say: [How is it possible for him who found no help while suffering the bitterness of crucifixion, to resurrect and help others?! ... It is indeed something beyond comprehension; ... the power of the cross is unutterable; Through an unlimited power, while amid horrors, He appears as above them; and while in the grasp of the enemies, He overcome them¹.
- ❖ He did not come down from the cross, out of helplessness, but out of choice ... He, who is beyond the authority of death, how could he be detained by the nails of the cross?! ... These things that we well know, are not recognizable by nonbelievers².
- ❖ The cross, although seemingly a object of opposition, is far too great to be opposed; It actually draws the opponents³.
- ❖ What is exalted, seems for the philosophers, who are unable to recognize it by their mental capacities, as weakness and foolishness⁴.
- ❖ What is the cross been unable to present? ... It presents the teachings of the eternity of the soul, of the resurrection of the body, of despising the temporal, and of longing for the

¹ In 1 Cor. Hom. 4: 1.

¹ In 1 Cor. Hom. 4: 3.

² In 1 Cor. Hom. 4: 3,4.

³ In 1 Cor. Hom. 4: 5.

⁴ In 1 Cor. Hom. 4: 6.

eschatological! ... It indeed turns **humans into angels**, always practicing self-giving, and demonstrating all kinds of endurance¹.

- ❖ Has not the cross mended many faults?! Did it not destroy death, wipe away sin, bring the power of the devil to naught, satisfy the being of our good body, reform the whole world?!... And still you do not trust it²!?
- ❖ Who makes known the great deeds of the Lord? (Psalm 105: 2); ... How from death we became eternal? ... How did we acquire this conquest with no labor nor sweat?; ... How were our weapons not covered by blood; Nor we stood on the battle front, nor were wounded?; ... How, in spite of not seeing the battle, yet we did acquire it?; ... The Strife is our Christ; and the crown of victory is ours!

Now, as long as the conquest is ours, it would be fitting of us, being warriors, to sing with joyful voice the songs of conquest; to praise our Lord, saying: “*Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?*” (Corinthians 15: 54, 55)¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ By such deed (crucifixion), God reveals that works speak with a voice, louder than words².
- (Ambrosiaster)

“For it is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent’ (19)

This verse is quoted from the prophet Isaiah (29: 14), that came in the Septuagint version as “**I shall destroy the wisdom of the wise; and will conceal the understanding of the prudent**”. God destroys the wisdom of the wise; namely, His salvation plan is not based on it. Those who consider themselves as prudent, their prudence is of no value. The Christian faith bears the “Truth”, that surpasses the human understanding.

- ❖ Paul talks about the wisdom of this world, and not about the eloquence itself; which could be also given by God. God created the languages, and gave each its particular features; He gave the Greek language its exaltation. Those who corrupt those gifts, prepare food for deception, and preach vain words.

Paul is not against their eloquence, but against their vain teaching behind that eloquence³.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

¹ In 1 Cor. Hom. 4: 6.

² Baptismal Instructions 12: 57.

¹ De come. Et cruce. PG 49: 396D-397A.

² Ambrosiaster: Comm. On Paul's Epistles, CSEL 81: 4.

³ Comm. On 1 Cor., 170: 7.

❖ In case that human wisdom is acting against the cross and the gospel; It is not befitting of us to boast of it, but to withdraw ourselves in shame from it. That is why the apostles were not wise; not through any weakness in this gift, but lest the preaching of the gospel would be put to no avail¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” (20)

Where are they? They are nowhere to be found; having been destroyed by God (19). By the “**wise**” he means the Greek Philosopher; and by the “**scribe**”, the learned Jew; whereas the “**disputer of this age**”, includes all those fond of barren theoretical debate; whether Jews or Gentiles.

Some believe that the “**wise**”, the “**scribe**”, and the “**disputer of this age**”, all refer to the Jews, as it came in (Isaiah 29: 14; 33: 18; 44: 25).

The “**wise**” to the apostle, “**chataam**” to Isaiah; refers to him who practices teaching. The “**scribe**” to the apostle, “**copeer**” to Isaiah, refers to the learned man, distinguished among the common people, particularly in the knowledge of the Jewish tradition. The “**disputer of this age**” to the apostle, “**derosh**” or “**dorshan**” to Isaiah, refers to him who answers questions, and who gives a symbolic understanding of the Holy Book.

Those three were well known among the Jews. “**Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?**”; As this wisdom lacks faith in the crucified Christ; it, accordingly is incapable of presenting salvation to men.

According to the Jewish tradition, no one can be wise, strong, or rich, without God. In the holy Scripture, there were **two “wise”** men: ‘Ahithophel’, the Israelite (2 Samuel 15-17), and ‘Balaam’, the Gentile (Numbers 22-24); and both were miserable in this world. There were two “strong” men: ‘Samson’, the Israelite, at the time of his fall (Judges 13-16), and ‘Goliath’ the Gentile (1 Samuel 17); and both were miserable in this world. And there were two “rich” men: ‘Korah’ the Israelite (Numbers 16), and ‘Haman’ the Gentile (Esther 5-7); and both were also miserable. Why? **Because all of them did not count their gifts as coming from God.**

Where the wisdom of God is proclaimed, all human wisdom would wither, and be counted as nothing. If all stars are gathered together, they cannot turn night into day; Only the sun can. All the gifts of man, likewise, cannot make a saint out of him; As this is the work of the crucified Christ, the Sun of Righteousness.

❖ We hear the Son of God say: “*I thank You Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them to babes*”

¹ In 1 Cor. Hom. 3: 7.

(Matthew 11: 25). Who are the wise and the prudent? And who are the babes? By the wise and the prudent, he means those about whom Paul says: “*Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?*” If you still ask about their identity; They are those who daringly debate what concern God; who utter vanity about Him; and who are puffed up by their own teachings¹.

- ❖ By this He realizes what the prophets prophesied: “*I will destroy the wisdom of this world, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent*” (19). He does not destroy His gift to them, nor take it away, but only destroys what they refer to themselves, and what they did not get from Him... the weak and foolish things found in those claiming to be wise and strong; contrary to the grace that heals the weak, who are not puffed up in pride with a blessing of their own, but would humbly realize their true misery².

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ The wisdom of this world differs from that of God. The wisdom of God is true, without any addition that would corrupt it; whereas that of the world is foolish; However, the simplicity of the wisdom of God makes those who acquire it seem as foolish in the sight of the world³.

- ❖ Don't feed on the food of the deceptive world, which may take you away from the truth⁴.

- ❖ I can say with complete confidence, that neither the love of worldly eloquence or philosophy, nor the evil and deceptive claims of astrologists or diviners concerning the knowledge of the future, nor the deification of the devils; could separate us from the love of God, in our Lord Jesus Christ⁵.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ The wise and the prudent, should keep silent; because they both despise the wisdom of God⁶.

(St. Hilary, Bishop of Poitier)

- ❖ Paul presents three kinds of wisdom: **the first**, and the greatest is called foolishness by the world; The second kind is naturally given to men to reason, work, do progress and discover things; **and by which** we can know God; **A third** kind of wisdom is acquired through meditation in the creation.

¹ Sermons on N.T. Lessons 18: 1.

² City of God 10: 28.

³ Comm.. On 1 Cor. 1: 7: 1-7.

⁴ In Levit. Hom 10: 2.

⁵ In Judic. Hom. 3: 3.

⁶ The Trinity 2: 12.

The first kind of wisdom called foolishness by the world, is granted to us by the Savior; Those who know God by the natural wisdom, and who reach Him through meditation in the system of creation, can also gain salvation¹.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

“For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe”
(21)

Saying: “...*the wisdom of God*”, should not be understood as the wisdom whose source is God; but the wisdom whose goal is searching for God. As many philosophers thought that they could recognize God’s nature, secrets, and plans, by their mere human wisdom.

According to the apostle: As the philosophers of the world, in their search for God’s works and creation, failed to know God, “*they became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened*” (Romans 1: 20-21). And, As man, forsaken by God, to use his own wisdom, failed to reach the true knowledge; God intervened by the gospel of the cross, seen as foolishness by the world, to reveal to them the divine truth, and to present salvation to them. Despite the ample time (about 4000 years) given to men by God, they failed to reach the knowledge of the truth.

By mere human nature, man, either utterly denied the existence of God, or denied His care for humanity; And neither through understanding, nor meditation in nature, could man get in touch with God’s hand, nor to recognize His plan. No wisdom could shed light on the depths of the mind; reveal to it the secrets of the divine secrets; renew man and grants him salvation; or bring him forth to the heavenly glories, except that whose source is God.

❖ A teacher instructs his student to follow his lead; Yet finding him reluctant to do so, and intends to learn everything on his own; he forsakes him to go his way. But once the student realizes his inability to reach knowledge, the teacher resumes his effort to teach him. God, likewise, starts by commanding men to follow His lead through the knowledge presented by the nature of His creation; And when they realize through experience, their inability to achieve it on their own, God tries another way to lead them to Himself¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ This foolishness in preaching, “*the foolishness of God that is wiser than men*” (25), draws many to salvation; not only those unable to realize the nature of God by reason, something they have received by faith; But would draw as well, even those who failed to recognize their own nature, despite their confirmation that they live, understand, and

¹ *Comm.. On 1 Cor., 171.*

¹ *In 1 Cor. Hom. 5: 3.*

intend. Even those, are not denied salvation; As the foolishness of preaching is presented to believers¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Faith in the crucified Christ grants us authority; And anything lacking in our faith, is presented to us by the power of God².

(The scholar Origen)

“For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom” (22)

Some scholars believe that there was no other people, so slow to receive faith in God like the Jews. And having always been fearful of deception, they sought from prophets miracles and signs, to believe that they were actually sent by God; and have always boasted that tendency. That is why they despised the simple preaching of the crucified Christ; for they were seeking a Messiah who does signs from heaven (Matthew 12: 38); to rid them of their enemies through force.

By the “Greeks” he means the Gentiles in general, especially the philosophers, who, seeking a religion depending upon human wisdom, despised the gospel.

- ❖ In his epistle to the Corinthians, Paul, the exalted teacher of all churches says: ***“For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God”*** (22-24).

What a great teacher, strong in faith!

Even in this phrase, teaching the church, he counts it not enough to talk about Christ as the Son of God, but, for the sake of teaching the faith, obvious and clear, he adds that Christ, the power and wisdom of God, whom he proclaims and calls “the crucified”, was intentionally crucified.

He does not use eloquence, nor his face blushed out of shame, while referring to the cross of Christ. Although it is for the Jews a stumbling block, and for the Greeks foolishness, to hear that God is born in flesh form, that He suffered and was crucified, his pure features were not weakened because of the evil of the adversary Jews; nor the strength of his faith was lessened because of the foolishness and lack of faith of the others.

He clearly and daringly persisted on proclaiming that He, who is a stumbling block and foolishness for some, is the power and wisdom of God. And as men differ in their features among themselves, they also differ in their thoughts. While, out of lack of

¹ Epistle 169: 3.

² Comm.. On 1 Cor., 1: 8: 1-4.

sound understanding and of true goodness, they deny this in non-belief; The wise believer, on the other hand, feels in his depths, that He is a holy Gift, and a Giver of life¹.

(St. John Cassian)

“But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness” (23)

The apostles were not preoccupied with making signs and performing miracles, nor with presenting mental philosophies; as much as with preaching the cross of the Lord Christ, to let both the Jews and the Gentiles enjoy the power of salvation.

The Jews were offended for they did not find in Christ, the earthly King who, as a Messiah, makes sign and wonders from heaven, in order to turn them into a great kingdom, and to rid them of the Roman authority (Matthew 12: 35). The Lord Christ, instead, came to them meek and humble, seeking no temporal glory.

The Greeks, on the other hand, counted the cross as foolishness, for it presents a crucified person, and not a teacher who could debate diverse philosophies. They saw him just a simple Jew who could not join the procession of great philosophers.

St. Justine the martyr mentioned some of the scoffing words by ‘Trypho’ against the Christians: [Your Jesus fell under the great curse of God. We are really astonished! how could you expect something good from God, when you put your hope in someone crucified?!].

St. Justine also says: [They count us crazy to put a crucified person on the same level as the eternal God, saying: ‘Where is your understanding, to worship a God, who Himself, is crucified?!’].

So the crucified Messiah became a stumbling block for the Jews; And instead of enjoying the grace of salvation by the cross, they fell into the denial of Christ, and of the salvation work of God; which made their sin greater.

❖ Christ, whom we preach in the whole world, is not a Christ adorned by an earthly crown, nor a Christ rich with worldly treasures and earthly possessions; But He is a crucified Christ, who was despised, and still is, by all the haughty nations and peoples; Yet, at that time, has been the subject of faith by a few, when he made the lame walk, the mute talk, the deaf hear, the blind see, and the dead rise; thus destroying the pride of the world; As, even among the things of this world, there is nothing stronger than the humility of God (23-25) ¹.

(St. Augustine)

¹ *The Seven Books of John Cassian* 3: 8.

¹ *Epistle* 232: 6.

“But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (24)

Those who received the divine call, whether the Jews or the Gentiles, came to have one view of the crucified Christ. ... They see Him as the **power of God**; finding in Him the power of salvation working in their life; And realizing the **wisdom of God**, namely, His divine plan for forgiveness, sanctification, and eternal glorification of man in the Lord. ... In the cross they see the secret of the enjoyment of their depths of the **true beauty**, the exaltation of mind, and the surety of salvation. They see Him shine over the entire world, to embrace all together in Him; whether of Jewish or of Greek origin; called to become in truth, the one church, the chaste bride of Christ, who bears the power and the wisdom of God.

If the Jews request a sign; Christ Himself is the greatest of signs. His cross, the stumbling block to the Jews, is the power of God for salvation to those who believe in Him. They get in touch with this sign through the renewal of their depths. And if the Greeks seek wisdom, Christ is the Wisdom of God (Colossians 2: 3).

- ❖ He who truly believes, will completely be united with Him, in whom is the truth, the deity, the essence, the life, and the wisdom; All these will be seen by him; and not by the non-believer. As, without the Son of God, you will have no existence, nor a name; the strong will be without power, and the wise will be without wisdom; As Christ is ***“the power and the wisdom of God”*** (24). He who thinks that he sees the One God with no power, truth, wisdom, life, or true light; would either be seeing nothing altogether, or surely seeing what is evil¹.
- ❖ When God created all things, he was in no need of any raw material, nor for any tools to work with; As the power and wisdom of God need no outer help; but through Christ, the power and the wisdom of God, *“all things were made, and without Him nothing was made that was made”* as testified by (John 1: 3)².
- ❖ Now, as the Son has consummated the will of the Father; which, according to the apostle, is *“to save all men”* (1 Timothy 2: 4); We are committed for our own benefit, to honor the Father, as well as the Son; As it was not possible to realize our salvation; nor for the good will of God to turn into an actual work for our sake, except through the power of the Son; according to the teaching of the Holy Scripture, that the Son is **the power of the Father** (24)³.

¹ *Against Eunomius 2: 7.*

² *Against Eunomius 2: 4.*

³ *Against Eunomius 12: 3.*

- ❖ Proclaiming that His nature exalts above, and surpasses every mind, he uses glorified names; calling Him “A God above all”; “*The great God* (Titus 2: 13); “*the power and the wisdom of God*” (24); etc¹.

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

- ❖ If we are truly the body of Christ; in which God let every member care for the other, harmonizes with the other; and when one member suffers, all the other members partake of his suffering; and when one member is glorified, all the other members rejoice together with it; We are then committed to practice the compassion that has its origin in such a divine music; that when we gather together in the name of Christ, we shall have in our midst the **Word of God, His wisdom, and His power**¹.

(The scholar Origen)

It is a stumbling block for the Jews to hear Christ calling Himself the Son of God, while breaking the Sabbath. And it is foolishness for the Gentiles to hear preaching about the virgin birth, and the resurrection.

“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (25)

God’s plan for salvation by the cross, which seems to some people as foolishness; or by Christ’s crucifixion, which seems as weakness (2 Corinthians 13: 4), is the secret of the believers’ wisdom and strength. What seem as foolishness is more wisdom than the wisdom of men; which, in itself, is unable to comprehend; And what seems as weakness, is stronger than the strength of men; that turns humans into heavenly creatures, the earth into heaven, and the weakness into strength.

- ❖ It is also His pleasure to save by the foolishness of the gospel. But I say that it is not actually foolishness, although so it seems! As for example: Plato has been defeated, not through a more competent philosopher, but through uneducated fishermen; which made it a greater and a more exalted defeat²!
- ❖ Again, the Greeks request from us to answer them with philosophy, wisdom, and eloquence; and will consider it foolishness when they see us unable to realize their request. Yet by providing them with the absolute contrary of what they request, they are drawn to faith! Is this not an unutterable power of what we preach³?!
- ❖ Wherever there is God’s wisdom, there would be no need for that of men. Before, and as a part of the human wisdom, was the comprehension that God, with His unutterable power,

¹ *Against Eunomius* 6: 2..

¹ *Commentary on Matthew* 14: 1.

² *In 1 Cor. Hom.* 4: 4.

³ *In 1 Cor. Hom.* 4: 5.

is the One who created this great world. But now, there is no more need for such mental evidences; Faith alone is enough; As he, who believes that Christ was crucified and buried; and is utterly convinced that He, Himself, has resurrected and sat in heaven on the right hand of God the Father; does not need more wisdom, nor more mental proofs, but just faith. The apostles, themselves, who came, not with wisdom, but with faith, have surpassed the pagan philosophers in wisdom and exaltation. What is more, is to say that, to stir up a debate, is much easier than to receive the divinities by faith, which exalts beyond all human comprehension¹.

- ❖ We shall recognize His power and authority by gaining to faith those who have been in animosity with Him for such long time. *“The weakness of God is stronger than men”* (25); By the same power He raised Christ from the dead, God draws us to Him².

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Has not Wisdom, Himself, come down to share our weakness; and to demonstrate to us the holy life in our human form? And yet, By coming to Him, we do that by wisdom. Coming down to us, was considered foolishness and weakness by haughty men; While coming to Him, we become strong. But as *“the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men”* (25); Wisdom, as well, is the way by which we can reach our home³.

(St. Augustine)

7- BOASTING IN THE LORD:

“For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called” (26)

The apostle draws our attention to the blessings of the cross, through which we are called to enjoy wisdom, might, and honor. It was the conviction of the Jews that the Spirit of God would not dwell upon someone who is not wise, might, and noble; Yet all that was realized by the cross, not according to the flesh, nor to the conviction of the world, but we came to have the wisdom, the might, and the abundance of riches of God for salvation; This is the call of the gospel for salvation for all men.

“But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are” (27)

He refers here to those chosen for ministry who lacked the temporal learning, riches, authority, and might; who seemed as foolish, and were despised by the great and the mighty;

¹ In 1 Cor. Hom. 4: 4.

² In 1 Cor. Hom. 3.

³ On Christian Doctrine 11, 12.

He chose them to let those who think of themselves as being wise, might, and great, realize how much they need the divine work; how, by the grace they would become the sons of God, would be honored even by the heavenly creatures; and how they would get rich by immeasurable divine treasures.

- ❖ Although Paul has not been formally educated, yet he overcame Plato; His conquest was clear and obvious, having drawn to himself the disciples of the later. By that it is obvious that the gospel was not the fruit of human wisdom, but of the grace of God¹.
- ❖ Let us then gain them through the example of our life; As by such way, many uneducated persons have amazed the minds of philosophers, demonstrating in themselves that the philosophy within works produces a louder voice than the tongue².
- ❖ If it is not by the wisdom of talk, Why then was the eloquent Apollos recruited to preach the gospel? It was not through the dependence upon his eloquence as much as it was upon his wide knowledge in the holy Scripture that enabled him to debate the Jews publicly, showing that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 18: 24) ... Christ, who, initially was capable of working without the need for educated people, has added to them some eloquent ones, not that He needed them, but to confirm that He does not discern between these and those. Not needing the wise to realize what He intends to do; Yet, He did not reject their ministry on account of their wisdom¹.
- ❖ ***“Not many mighty; not many noble are called”***; As those are often loaded with pride. Nothing would cause more failure, as far as the accurate knowledge of God is concerned, like haughtiness, and being connected to riches; as that would draw man to admire the current things, to disregard the future ones, and to have his ears closed through a diversity of worries. Choosing the ignorant of this world; is a great sign of the conquest; and of that God would overcome without the services of the educated².
- ❖ God, not only called the un-educated, but, as well, he called the needy, the despised, and the unknown, in order to shame those in high places³.
- ❖ God did everything for this goal: to destroy the vain glory, and the pride, and to humiliate the haughtiness. He, as though says: Are you still preoccupied with this issue? I did everything so that you do not have to do anything on your account, but to refer everything

¹ In 1 Cor. Hom. 3: 8.

² In 1 Cor. Hom. 3: 9.

¹ In 1 Cor. Hom. 3: 7.

² In 1 Cor. Hom. 5: 2.

³ In 1 Cor. Hom. 5: 2.

to God.... If you refer yourself to this person or to that, What forgiveness, do you expect to get¹?!

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Look at what God did! According to the apostle: “**He chose the weak ...**” . Now the words of the fishermen are read; and the necks of the philosophers bow down.... So, let the empty wind pass by, Let the smoke scatter, Let everyone else be despised, when it comes to the issue of salvation²!
- ❖ This Cornerstone has made both sides befitting to Him; And to confirm this, He chose the foolish of this world to shame the wise; And He did not call the righteous, but the sinners; so that no man would boast of his greatness, and no one would despair on account of his abasement³.
- ❖ Let them think of Him, who coming down to heal, by the example of His humility, the secret of the haughty – the pride; “*He chose the weak of this world to shame the strong, and the foolish to shame the wise*” – who are not actually wise, but pretend to be – “*and chose the despised of this world,... and the things that are not to reduce to nothing things that are*”¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ The prophet Amos was a herdsman; Peter, his brother Andrew, and John were fishermen; Paul was a tent-maker; Matthew was a tax collector; So have been all the other apostles. Although they were not rulers, nor governors, or men of philosophy or eloquence, but were poor, and of lowly professions, yet their voice and words reached the ends of the world².

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

God chose “*things that are not*” ... What does he mean by that? It was a common expression in the East at that time (see Isaiah 40: 17), used to refer to those counted as nothing, as non-existent. The Jews used to despise the Gentiles, and to count them as though non-existent, and not as people (see Hosea 1: 10; 2: 23; Romans 9: 25; 1 Peter 2: 10).

When a Hindu of a high status speaks of someone, despised in his sight, he calls him “*alla tha barkal*”, meaning (non-existent); an expression that does not refer to material existence, but to a complete disregard of someone, to become as though reduced to naught in his sight.

¹ In 1 Cor. Hom. 5: 3.

² Sermons on New Testament Lessons 37: 12.

³ Sermons on Christmas and Epiphany, sermon 19: 4.

¹ Sermons on New Testament Lessons

² Epistle 13.

By saying: **“to reduce to nothing things that are”**, he refers to the noble, the rich, and those of high status, who feel as though no one exists in the world beside them.

The apostle probably refers here to the Gentiles; whom the Jews considered as foolish, weak, lowly, and non-existent; And of whom, nevertheless, God chose those who put to shame the Jewish leaders who counted themselves as wise, rich, and noble. The Jews used to consider the Gentiles as no better than dogs (see Matthew 15: 27).

In the old, many despised the hyssop and counted it as nothing, Yet God honored it as He honored the cedar; and commanded its use in the rite of purifying the leper, in the burnt offering of the red heifer, and in striking the lintel and the two doorposts of the house for salvation (Exodus 12: 22). And Solomon, in his wisdom, spoke of it, as well as of the cedar (1 kings 4: 33).

“That no flesh should glory in His presence” (29)

The word “flesh” here refers to mankind, as it came in Matthew 24: 22; Luke 3: 6; John 17: 2; Acts 2: 17; 1 Peter 1: 24.

The gospel of Christ exhorts us to practice humility and not haughtiness before God; as all men enjoy the same blessings without any discernment based on honor, authority, or riches. God, who does not disregard the despised, and does wonders through them, exhorts the haughty not to boast of their greatness, wisdom, or riches, but to boast instead of the Lord.

❖ By saying: **“according to the flesh”** (26), he means (according to things seen, according to the present life, according to the system of nations)¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (30)

By saying **“Of Him you are...”**, he means that, contrary to those who count their glory and pride in the wisdom of the world; Having become the children of God in Christ Jesus, your spiritual existence of God is realized through union with Christ Jesus; not according to the flesh (26-29), but by the Spirit you came to be His ambassadors who bear His possibilities. Every goodness in us is a gift from God, that we enjoy through our fellowship with Christ; As Christ Jesus came to grant us the blessings of the gospel.

❖ The expression **“Of Him...”** (30), I assume he used, not concerning our enjoyment of existence, but concerning faith; namely, to become the children of God, **“not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh”** (John 1: 13). Do not think that He has taken our glory away, and left us without; As there is another glory, a greater one, His gift. Being His children, it is befitting of you to be glorified in His presence; This is what you gain in Christ. Saying:

¹ In 1 Cor. Hom. 5: 2.

“God chose what is low and despised in the world”, means that, having God as their Father, they will be more honored than anyone else. While saying *“He (Christ) became for us wisdom from God”* (30); he refers this to no one but to Christ who made us wise, righteous, and saints¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“He became for us wisdom”; He comes to us to acquire Him, being the wisdom of the Father that surpasses the wisdom of the philosophers, the scribes, and the disputers of this world. While the human wisdom presents to us philosophies without power, He, Himself, is the Source of wisdom, who grants us, as His ambassadors, the secret of wisdom; *“He becomes for us”* to own Him, And He to own us; cherish Him to become wise. Being the Source of every wisdom; our Christ presents to us all the divine facts to grant us the experience of living knowledge, for our salvation. By His Holy Spirit, He brings us forth to His royal way, not to go astray to the right nor to the left, but to walk along the way of wisdom. He opens before us the doors of His school; leads us by His Holy Spirit along the way of life; and lets us enjoy new experiences every day.

- ❖ He does not say: **‘He made us wise’**, but says: *“He became for us wisdom”*; to demonstrate the abundance of the gift; the same way as saying: *“He gave us Himself”*. Notice how he consummates his talk in a befitting order, saying first that He made us wise through saving us from error; then made us righteous and saints through granting us the Spirit. This way, He saved us from all evil, to *“become for us”*².

That does not refer to a relationship of existence and being, as much as it is a talk of faith.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ If you are convinced that Christ is the Power and the Wisdom of God; Now listen to this: **“The soul of the righteous is the throne of wisdom”**; Yes! Because where would the throne of God be, but where He dwells? And where does He dwell, but in His temple? And *“the temple of God is holy, and you are that temple”* (1 Corinthians 3: 17). Now, you realize how you have received God³.

(St. Augustine)

“He became for us righteousness”; We put Him on, to hide in Him, and appear righteous before the Father, something that the law could not realize (see Galatians 2: 21; 3: 21). By His blood, we will, not only get forgiveness of our sins, but will, as well, bear His righteousness in us;

¹In 1 Cor. Hom. 5: 4.

²In 1 Cor. Hom. 5: 4.

³Sermons on New Testament Lessons 3: 7.

It will, not only take away from us the divine wrath, but we will also be the subject of pleasure to the Father.

❖ The Righteousness of God is Christ, about which the apostle says: “***He became for us from God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption***”; as it is also written: “***He who boasts, let him boast in the Lord***” (31).

The righteousness of God, the gift of grace without worthiness; is not known by those who intend to set up their self-righteousness; not submitting to the righteousness of God, namely, to Christ.

In this righteousness we find the sweetness of God, about which the psalm says: “*O taste and see that the Lord is good*” (Psalm 34: 8) ¹.

(St. Augustine)

“***He became for us sanctification***”; By working in our depths, we became icons of the Holy One; Taking our place on the cross, He became without beauty; And bringing us over to His heavenly sanctuaries, we came to bear His amazing holiness.

“***He became for us redemption***”; not from the Egyptians servitude, nor from the Babylonian captivity, or the Roman occupation; But from the bondage of the devil, death and corruption; to enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God. He presented to us a new exodus, not under the leadership of the prophet Moses, but through His precious blood, to cross over to heaven itself. That is our redemption.

❖ +If we still do not see that Christ has become “*all in all*”, according to the words of the apostles; We see Him partly in all. As saying: “***He became for us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption***”, implies that in one He is wisdom, in another righteousness, sanctification, compassion, chastity, humility, or perseverance; Christ, presently is divided among all the saints. But when all come together in the unity of faith and virtue, He is conformed in a consummate entity; Namely, when God becomes “*all in all*”, we may then say that God is present in all through certain virtues¹.

(St. John Cassian)

❖ Don’t marvel to hear us talking about the privileges of the love of Christ; as in other circumstances, we intend to consider Christ, Himself, as the Entity of these privileges themselves; something we often see in the Holy Books; when He adapts Himself according to the circumstances of the believers; seeing Him, not only called Justice, but also Peace and Truth².

(The scholar Origen)

¹ *City of God* 21: 24.

¹ *The institutes* 5: 4.

² *The Song of Songs, Comm. Book 1: 5.*

“As it is also written: ‘He who boasts, Let him boast in the Lord’ (31)

In the Book of Jeremiah, it came: *“Do not let the wise boast in their wisdom; do not let the mighty boast in their might; do not let the wealthy boast in their wealth; but let those who boast, boast in this, that they understand and know Me, that I am the Lord; I act with steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, says the Lord”* (Jeremiah 9: 23-24). The reason for boasting in the Lord, is that He is the source of wisdom, might, riches, sanctification, and every blessing, present and future. We boast in God the Father, who granted us every good gift in Christ Jesus. Our boast is no more in the body, nor in the world with its wisdom, riches, and authority, but only in the Lord, for the following reasons:

- ❖ The plan of His salvation exalts beyond any human thought.
- ❖ By His humility proclaimed on the cross, He granted us the renewal of our depths, to let us partake of His humility.
- ❖ He presents to us Himself, a source of joy; as in Him we enjoy the conquest over sin; we enjoy His righteousness, and His holiness, we become rich with His gifts, and enjoy the fellowship of His glory.

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 1

YOUR CROSS IS THE SECRET OF MY UNITY

- ❖ Your cross is the secret of my salvation, power, and praise.
Through your cross, I see my brethren called saints.
I see them bearing Your amazing righteousness.
- ❖ Your cross turns my life into a praise of love
I thank You for Your gifts to my brethren
As I count what they enjoy as my own.
I see You, amazing in Your love, and in Your care for all men
- ❖ On the cross I discover Your divine secrets.
I see You grant everything to my account.
I do not refer myself to an apostle nor to an angel.
For no one died for my sake but You.
I have not gained baptism in any other name but Yours, together with Your Father and Your Holy Spirit.
- ❖ Your cross is my pride.
That which was a stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Gentiles.
Yet they can see it in the amazing might of God.
By it, I reign and become heavenly.
By it, I bear the exalted wisdom of God.
By it, I, who am not, can challenge every haughty thing that is.
By it, I, the weak, can challenge anyone who thinks of himself as strong.
By it, I gain a heavenly honor that surpasses that of many nobles.
- ❖ By the cross, O You, the Redeemer, became my By it, You became my sanctification and redemption.
How could I not boast in Your cross, O the divine Love?

CHAPTER 2

THE MYSTERY OF THE HIDDEN WISDOM

In the first chapter, the apostle Paul talked about the topic of the unity of the church. He started by revealing the ailment, then talked about the One Christ, crucified for the sake of all, and in His name we gained baptism; presenting His cross to us, to experience the power and wisdom of God; and in it all believers enjoy wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Now, **the apostle reveals the work of the Holy Spirit**, the Spirit of Christ, who unifies us with Him in our daily life.. He provides us with the knowledge of the cross, and presents to us the strength to confront the afflictions, persecutions, and fears. He gives us the proof of the Spirit, the power, and the experience of the secret of our eternal glory; proclaims to us the secrets of God; and lets us enjoy the spiritual discernment and the mind of Christ.

In the present chapter, the apostle Paul explains to them how he started his ministry among them; reminding them of the evangelic program he used, that includes three aspects:

The negative aspect: which implies not using the excellence of speech or human wisdom

The positive aspect: which implies that the testimony to God is realized by a divine proclamation.

The conclusion: He concentrates on the Person of the crucified Christ; to let the believers enjoy, the treasure of the true heavenly wisdom, that exalts above every human wisdom in this world, and the might of God, instead of being preoccupied with the dry mental debates; As by the cross, the Lord would transfigure in them, and be glorified in all.

This chapter **represents the journey of the believing soul under the leadership of the Holy Spirit**, who brings it forth to the mind of God, before the ages, for our salvation; and sets forth with it to the eternal glories connected to our glory.

1- The cross and the proof of the Spirit	1 - 4
2- The power of God and the perfect wisdom	5 - 6
3- The mystery of the hidden wisdom	7 - 8
4- The mystery of the eternal glory	9 - 12
5- The spiritual man	13 - 15
6- We have the mind of Christ	16

1- THE CROSS AND THE PROOF OF THE SPIRIT:

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God” (1)

The apostle Paul consummates his talk about the secret of the unity of the church and its connection to the cross, namely, to the wisdom of God, which is a stumbling block to the

Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks. Now the apostle confirms that he did not come to them as an eloquent speaker, nor as a clever philosopher; and did not demonstrate human wisdom with glittering words; having been raised up in a new school – **that of the hidden divine wisdom** – with the spirit of humility and the divine fear. He was borne by the Spirit of God to unutterable glories, was shown exalted divinities, and was transformed, from being a carnally natural **man into a spiritual one who bear the mind of Christ**.

He confirms to them that, coming to preach to them the gospel, he did not use eloquence nor excellence of speech like their philosophers; but presented to them the divine truth in a simple form. As though he says to them: [I, brethren, although foolish, weak, and despised, yet God used me for the glory of His name, and came to talk with simplicity, so that my speech would be in harmony with the salvation plan of God].

In Tarsus, the apostle Paul studied the writings of philosophers; and came to find out that the Hellenic way of thinking, which he counted as the way to salvation, has failed to renew the world; and that there is need for a divine intervention.

The apostle Paul enjoyed the Greek culture (the Hellenic); which some Jews in Tarsus and Alexandria cared for. He enjoyed the Roman citizenship by birth, that protected him against violence while preaching among the Gentiles; and he studied, as well, the Mosaic law and the Jewish tradition in Jerusalem. The three of them reacted together in the life of the apostle Paul; Yet what preoccupies his mind now, is the enjoyment of his preaching ministry, of the divine power working for salvation through the cross of the Lord of glory Jesus Christ.

❖ Nothing was more prepared for the battle like the spirit of Paul; Or rather, nothing was equal to the grace working in him for everything¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“The testimony of God”: or “the secret of God” as it came in some old versions. The gospel is called “the testimony of Christ”. Here he means the testimony borne by the gospel concerning the salvation plan of God, by the cross, and not by the eloquence of speech.

❖ What Paul calls here as “testimony” is the incarnate Word of God, hidden from all ages with God. In it, the heretics played an arrogant and slothful role; preaching their evil teachings with great eloquence, and by human wisdom; taking away from the cross of Christ its power².

(Ambrosiaster)

“For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (2)

¹In 1 Cor., 6: 1.

²CSEL 81: 21-22.

Because in the cross of Jesus Christ, Paul found his inner satisfaction; and realized that it is the fountain of wisdom and of every happiness, the topic of his preaching was for all to share it with him.

He determined not to present any other knowledge, nor to preach anything else, or to discover any other secrets; As his heart, mind, and feelings, were all swallowed by the Person of the crucified Christ. Christ was the essence of his preaching, and His cross was the banner under whose shadow he called everyone to come for refuge. By the Spirit of the Holy God, he entered into the secret of the eternal wisdom; recognized the secret of the cross, that was in the plan of God even before the fall of Adam and Eve; and with it he set forth to eternity, to behold the glories prepared by the Crucified for those who believe in Him.

❖ It is the incarnate Word who consummated our salvation. He is the One who saved and set us free. We believe in Him, He who saved us by His cross and resurrection¹.

(Marius Victorianus)

❖ I came to you, not with excellence of speech, nor with wisdom; and uttered nothing but that “Christ has been crucified”².

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ So Paul utters, having in mind those who are unable to recognize the exalted teachings concerning the deity of Christ³.

(St. Augustine)

“I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling” (3)

The weakness, fear, and trembling, were probably on account of that at the beginning, Paul confronted vicious opposition, and felt failure in his ministry. That was before the Lord spoke to him in the night by a vision, saying: ***“Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city”*** (Acts 18: 9, 10). By this, the apostle presents to us a living portrait of the minister who realizes his weakness, helplessness, fear, and trembling; and receives the work of the Holy Spirit of God, who grants him strength and support to succeed by the divine grace.

❖ That is another topic: That the believers, and the preacher himself, are not only uneducated ... but there were other sources of opposition, risks, plans, and daily fears, confronting him as well. The word “**weakness**” for him, in many circumstances, means **persecutions**. ... ***“My trial which was in my flesh they did not despise nor reject”*** (Galatians 4: 14); ***“If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concerns my infirmity”*** (2 Corinthians 11: 30).

¹ AGAINST Arius, 1a.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 6: 1.

³ Trinity 1: 12.

Yet, on account of his persistence, even while confronting the fear of persecution and death, he did not err. That is why those who claim that Paul did not have fear, are depriving him of honor and greatness. As without fear, how could he be credited with endurance and self control before dangers?

As for me, I admire him in that, even in his fear, and rather in his terror amid dangers everywhere, while sowing the gospel, whether on land or in the sea, he so strived to keep his crown, and never surrendered.

If you wonder whether Paul feared dangers, Be sure that he, not only feared, but was even terrified; because, although being Paul, yet he is also human. This is not an accusation against him, but it is statement of the weakness of human nature¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ Appearing as though foolish in preaching, according to human wisdom; Paul stirred up hatred and persecution against himself².

(Ambrosiaster)

By saying that he was in fear and trembling, he probably means, not from men, but for the sake of men; As his heart burnt together with every offense; **and weakened together with every weakness**. That is what the Corinthians experienced during the stay of the apostle Paul in their midst, that extended for more than a year and a half (Acts 18: 11).

The apostle Paul was known for his spirit of humility and meekness, that led some Corinthians to accuse him of **weakness**: “*Letters are weighty and powerful, but bodily presence is weak, and speech contemptible*” (2 Corinthians 10: 10). Although his voice seemed to be so faint, his body so small, and his features so unattractive; beside refraining from using eloquence of speech or philosophy; Yet idol worship collapsed before him, and hearts flared with fervent love for heaven. Although his human possibilities were not so impressive to preoccupy his listeners, yet God, through his weakness, fear, and trembling, was proclaimed in his work, and our crucified Christ who bears our weakness, transfigured to proclaim His power; “*God chose the weak of the world to put to shame those who are mighty*” (27).

“And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (4)

The words of the apostle Paul, were so anointed with the Spirit, to draw the hearts, and at the same time, they bore power. We can see that in the episode of the lame man at Lystra who, hearing Paul speaking, “*observed him intently*” (Acts 14: 9); And when the people saw that Paul healed him, “*they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language: ‘The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men’, and Barnabas they called Zeus, and*

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 6: 2.

² CSEL 81: 22.

Paul Hermes, because he was the chief speaker". They were all affected by the spirit of power, that the priest of Zeus intended to sacrifice for them; but the two apostles tore their clothes, and could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them (Acts 14: 13-18).

The apostle Paul preached the Lord Christ, the crucified and risen from the dead, not in a shining philosophical way, but in the simplicity of words, he revealed the divine facts and the heavenly ordinances, the way they were delivered to him by the Holy Spirit, who is capable of piercing the hearts, and of working in them to receive the word. By that, the apostle could proclaim to the Thessalonians: "*Our gospel did not come to you in words only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake*" (1 Thessalonians 1: 5).

"My speech and my preaching". By the speech he probably means the teachings and the thoughts of faith concerning the gospel of truth, he proclaimed. While the preaching bears the meaning of testimony to this faith, not only in words, but in work and behavior. That is what the Holy Spirit has strongly proclaimed through the renewal of souls and hearts, that made the believers enjoy the sanctification, purity, and love; things that the philosophies of the world were incapable to realize.

By speech, he may, as well, mean the private talks in individual and family meetings; and by preaching the public talks in assemblies.

❖ Saying that the gospel was preached without words of human wisdom does not belittle it, but that, on the contrary, is the greatness of the splendor of the gospel, that it is divine and from heaven. The proof through words of human wisdom, and the cleverness of eloquence, is weaker than the proof by works and signs; Yet, to take away any doubt that those signs are like the deceptive kinds of signs presented by the diviners, he did not say: "in the demonstration of the power", but said "***in the demonstration of the Spirit***", then, "*of the power*" (4), to confirm that the things done are all spiritual. Saying that the gospel was not proclaimed through words of human wisdom, does not therefore imply any kind of despoil, but is rather a great adornment; as it is a proof that it is divine, and high from heaven; Hence he adds: "***that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God***" (5). The proof by works and signs is greater than by words¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ If the Holy Books drew men to faith because they are written with eloquence and philosophical cleverness, our faith would undoubtedly be based on words and human wisdom, more than it is on the power of God².

(The scholar Origen)

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 6: 3.

² De Principiis 4: 1: 7.

2- THE POWER OF GOD AND THE PERFECT WISDOM:

“that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (5)

He reminds them that, although he came to them in weakness and trembling, and did not use the wisdom of philosophy, yet the Holy Spirit drew many to the evangelic truth; confirming that the success of his ministry in Corinth is a strong proof of the potential and activity of the divine wisdom to work in the life of men.

He confirms to them that their faith, based on the enlightenment of their souls, and on their enjoyment of fellowship with God, has nothing human in it; As the true Christian bears a testimony of the power and wisdom of the gospel in his depths, through his experience and the renewal of his nature; something that no one but God Himself, can achieve. The believer testifies that his hope, joy, peace, sanctification, longing for worship, his enjoyment of the secrets of the Holy Book, his love of God and men, the fervor of his heart for the heavenlies, and his fellowship with angels; All these are realized by the power of God working in him.

❖ The human wisdom denies the cross; whereas faith proclaims the power of God. The human wisdom has not only failed to proclaim the things anticipated by men, but it also provokes them to haughtiness for what they have already achieved. Faith, on the other hand, not only presents to them the truth, but exhorts them to glorify God¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing” (6)

Some believe that, speaking about wisdom, the apostle Paul had in mind four kinds of wisdom:

(1) The wisdom of the Gentiles: Namely, the Greek wisdom, called in Hebrew ‘yewaniyt’ or ‘chokmaah’; despised by the Jews, who count whoever acquires it, or let his son do, as accursed².

(2) The wisdom of the Jews: that of the scribes and the Pharisees, who assumed that by crucifying Christ they would realize the wisdom.

(3) The wisdom of this age: In Hebrew ‘aionos’, and in Greek ‘toutou’; the wisdom acquired by the Jews from the writings of their teachers; concerning the temporal life, which they discern from the wisdom of the age to come; namely, that concerns the days of the Messiah. The wisdom of this age, applies therefore to the case of the Gentiles, who are preoccupied with theoretical philosophies, and to that of the Jews who interpreted the word of God in a literal way, which corrupted the spiritual heavenly concepts.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 6: 3.

² Bava Kama, fol. 82.

(4) The wisdom of the gospel: The apostle Paul came to them, not with the exaltation of human wisdom, whether the wisdom of the Gentiles, the wisdom of the Jews, or the wisdom of this age; But he opened before them the treasures of the true high wisdom, namely the wisdom of the gospel, “*known by those who are mature*”, those who became mature in the knowledge of God, enlightened by the Holy Spirit of God, and became wise and mature by the truth they enjoyed.

By the wisdom here, he means, not only recognizing the salvation plan of God, but enjoying it as well; namely, the living knowledge experienced by the mature who seek eternity. Concerning those who strive to get the reward of the exalted call of God in Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul says: “*Let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you*” (Philippians 3: 15).

The wisdom presented by the apostle is completely different from the wisdom of the rulers of this age; as it is not a political wisdom, nor that of philosophers, or of professional law scholars, but a hidden heavenly wisdom, presented to seekers of a sanctified life in the Lord, and not to seekers of temporal glory.

The rulers of this age do not wish to think about the truth of their life, like a sinner who does wish to get preoccupied with what lies beyond the time. They reject the wisdom of God that leads them to hope in the eternal glory.

By saying “*coming to nothing*” (6), the apostle refers to the activity of the vain wisdom, whose plans will certainly come to an end. He who holds fast to vanity, will himself become vanity, as his life and glories will end at the grave, and will not enjoy the eternal glory, but will fall under destructive judgment.

❖ He gave the gospel the name “wisdom”, being the way to salvation, realized by the cross.

“*The mature*” are those who believe; who realize that all human things are utterly helpless, and look at them convinced that they benefit nothing; these are the true believers.

By saying “*the rulers of this age*”, he means the philosophers and those of eloquence, who usually become the rulers of the people. He calls them “*the rulers of this age*” on account that their authority will not extend beyond the present world¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ Speaking about the wisdom of the rulers of this age, the apostle Paul seems to speak about, not just one wisdom mutual to them, but about several kinds of wisdom for every single one of them².

(The scholar Origen)

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 7: 1.

² De Principiis 3: 31.

- ❖ The mature are those who preach the cross, being the wisdom, testifying to the working power of God. They know for sure that works utter with a voice louder than that of words. Their wisdom is not of this age, but of the age to come, when the truth of God will be proclaimed to those who deny it now¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

3- THE MYSTERY OF THE HIDDEN WISDOM:

“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory” (7)

The believer does not boast of ignorance; nor counts ignorance as a virtue; but, **while looking at the beauty of the amazing wisdom of God**, and enjoying His salvation work, his soul gets satisfied, and treads upon the honey of this world. Experiencing the eternal wisdom, he is not preoccupied with the temporal wisdom. The wisdom of God is beyond comparison to the wisdom of the world; God in His love and by His wisdom, shines His light on us, to make us realize that we are sick and in need of the heavenly Physician; and that we are suffering a kind of bankruptcy, that needs the Grantor of riches. The wisdom of God is not set upon covering-up; but, while revealing weakness, it grants strength; and while proclaiming death, it presents the power of resurrection. The human wisdom, on the other hand, is often set upon covering-up of situations, without presenting strong positive solutions.

The source of the wisdom, presented by the apostle as God Himself, dates back before the ages, to the eternal ordinance by God for our salvation, and will extend to after the ages, to bring us forth to the fellowship of the heavenly glory.

The wisdom of God works to set out of man a glorified saint; It works in his temporal life, to carry him over beyond the time; to let him live in this world under God’s protection, and in the world to come, exulted in the exalted glory.

The apostle did not say “we speak with ignorance”, but said “***We speak the wisdom of God***” (7). While speaking of not leaning upon the human wisdom, he proclaims the commitment of the believers, the ministers in particular, to receive the wisdom of God, which is greater, stronger, and more attractive than every human wisdom.

The apostle did not say that their preaching is secret, nor that their teaching is incomprehensible by reason; but he refers to the fact that this wisdom was “***hidden in a mystery***” from humanity, until the proper time came to be proclaimed by the gospel; and that it is a wisdom beyond the comprehension of men, yet it does not contradict it.

By saying “***for our glory***”, he refers to the glory gained by the believer, through enjoying the sonhood to God, and the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in him, as a deposit of “***the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory***” prepared for us in heaven (2 Corinthians 4: 17).

¹ CSEL 81: 23.

❖ By the wisdom Paul means the cross and every ordinance for salvation¹.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Missa)

❖ He calls it a mystery, as neither an angel, nor an archangel, or any other power, has known it before it was practically realized; Hence he says: “*to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places*” (Ephesians 3: 10).

Although the non-believers hear, yet they seem not to hear. The believers on the other hand, having the cleverness through the Holy Spirit, discern the meaning of the things stored in the word. That is exactly what the apostle Paul means by saying that the word he preaches is, so far, a mystery. This word also refers to the fact that the gospel contradicts everything expected; The Holy Book, not intending to call what happens as beyond every human hope and thought, calls it a ‘mystery’.

Hence, the mystery that is above everything, is preached everywhere, yet, is not known by those who lack the sound mind, nor proclaimed through human wisdom, but by the Holy Spirit. And being extremely difficult to receive, it is called a mystery; Namely, that no higher power has come to know it before us; and not many know it even now.

❖ *He* considers our salvation as his own glory, as well as his riches (Ephesians 3: 8); although he, himself is rich enough in goodness, and needs nothing to make him richer.

Saying: “**Which God ordained before the ages**” (7), he refers to the care designated for us ... **As if He does not love us, He would not ordain it for us before the ages for our glory**².

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ Paul testifies that he is a messenger to proclaim a hidden mystery, not known by the rulers of this world, hence called foolish. The wisdom of God is hidden because it is not in words but in power, not possible to express in human terms; but to believe in by the power of the Spirit. Having known the sins of the world beforehand, God ordained this wisdom in a way, confusing to those who intend to turn His wisdom to their foolishness; And in order, as well, to glorify us who are to believe in Him³.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ Paul does not mean that he now speaks of mysteries and secrets; But the message which preaches was before, a hidden mystery⁴.

❖ This mystery although hidden, yet **it was ordained before the ages**¹.

¹ PAULINE Commentary from the Greek Church.

² In 1 Cor., Hom 7: 4.

³ CSEL 81: 24.

⁴ COMM. On 1 Cor., 175.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

“Which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (8)

While the apostle Paul enjoyed the heavenly wisdom to present it to believers; the rulers of this age, on the other hand, from the Romans to the Jews and the Greeks, did not know it. By the ‘ruler of this age’, He probably meant here the Roman governor and the Jewish leaders, namely the high priest, the scribes, the Pharisees, the lawyers, etc., who, if they had known the divine wisdom, and recognized the Person of the Messiah, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Not knowing the truth, they were inflicted by blindness, and walked in foolishness.

Some believe that if this implies to Herod and Pilate, but it does not imply in the same way to the two high priests and the scribes, who knew that Jesus is Christ. They were like the vinedressers who said: *“This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance”* (Matthew 21:38).

While others believe that the leaders of the Jews, having not realized the truth of the Person of Christ, nor the wisdom of His plan, or understood His mission; and having their eyes shut to understand the prophecies of the Old Testament; they rejected the Person of Jesus as the Messiah, and crucified him in ignorance. Having been only preoccupied with getting rid of the apparent enemies – the Romans, and the enjoyment of temporal glory, they sought a Messiah according to their natural human mind.

They crucified **“the Lord of Glory”** or **“the King of glory”**, whom the heavenly creatures praised, saying: *“Lift up your heads, O you everlasting gates, and the King of glory shall come in”* (Psalm 24: 7-9). This title “the King of glory” by which Christ was called concerns Jehovah (Acts 7: 2).

❖ As to the words **“had they known”** (8), It seems to me, they were said here, not concerning the Person of Christ, but concerning the hidden ordinance behind that event. As though he says: They did not know what is meant by “death” and the “cross” ... They did not know that the cross so shines with its splendor; that it realizes the salvation of the world, and the reconciliation between God and men; ... They did not know that their city was to be taken away from them, and that they were to become in the worst of conditions.

By saying **“the wisdom”**, he meant Christ, the cross, and the gospel ... Seeing the cross, which was counted as a subject of disgrace, as a great glory; the apostle believed that there was the need for a great wisdom, not only to know God, but **to realize as well that divine plan**².

¹ *On Divine Providence, Dis. 10: 61. (ACW).*

² *In 1 Cor., Hom. 7: 5.*

- ❖ What then? Was their sin concerning the crucifixion forgiven? Yes, it would have been, when He said on the cross: *“Father, forgive them”* (Luke 23: 34), if they repented; the same way Saul, who watched the stoning of Stephen, and persecuted the church, was forgiven, to become Paul, the great leader of the church¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Thinking that He could be overcome, they scoffed at Him, and hanged Him on the tree, saying: *“If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him”* (Matthew 27: 42). They only saw one side of Him, and not the other; *“for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”*².
- ❖ What was seen of Him was despised; And what was hidden was not recognized; *“for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”*³.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ On the cross, the Lord prayed for the forgiveness of Pilate, Herod, Caiaphas, and the rest of them, for their ignorance; Yet after His resurrection and ascension to heaven; and the dwelling of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles; He delivered them to punishment on account of their denial of faith⁴.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

- ❖ The rulers of this age are not only the Jews and the Romans, but every spiritual power set against God.

The Jewish leaders could not be counted as the rulers of this age, having been submitted to the Romans. And it was not the Romans who crucified Jesus, for Pilate himself said that he has found no fault in Him.

The rulers who crucified Him were the devils, who, although they knew that Jesus is the Messiah; Yet they did not know that He is the Son of God; Hence it could be said they crucified Him in ignorance⁵.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ If Christ was not condemned to death, Death would not have died. Through his own conquest, the devil was defeated. By rejoicing for the seduction of the first man, and for delivering him to death, he had himself killed (Genesis 3: 1-19); And by delivering the second Man to death, the first man escaped from his snares⁶.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 7: 5.

² Sermons on New Testament Lessons. 41: 1.

³ Sermons on New Testament Lessons. 41: 1.

⁴ Comm.. On 1 Cor, 176.

⁵ CSEL 81: 24-25.

⁶ The Ascension, 263.

(St. Augustine)

As to Referring the crucifixion to the Lord of glory, the Holy Book used the exchange of titles between the deity and the Manhood of the Lord Christ -- ‘Communicato idiomatum’; -- referring all the works and the words of the Lord to the One Person – **the incarnate Word of God.**

- ❖ Having taken the soul and the body of man, there was no addition to the number of divine Persons; The Holy Trinity remained the same as before. As it is for every man – except for Him who alone, adopted a Personal union – the soul and the body represent one person; It is the same for Christ, the Word; His human soul, and His body represent one Person. And as it is the way when a philosopher dies, it would, language-wise, be correct to say: ‘the philosopher died’, and ‘the philosopher was buried’, although all those events apply to his body, and not to him being a philosopher; The same way, concerning the name “God”, “the Son of God”, “the Lord of glory”, or any other title given to Christ, being ‘the Word’; it would be correct to say :”God is crucified”, although it is certain that He endured that death in His human nature, and not in that by which He is the Lord of glory¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ “*The Word became flesh*”. Here, the amazing Paul, while exhorting his listeners to adopt humility, speaks about Jesus Christ who, being the Image of God, emptied Himself and took the form of a servant, and humiliated Himself to death, the death on the cross; Yet, again, he calls the crucified “the Lord of glory”, when he says: “***Had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory***”. He even speaks more openly about that same Essential Nature, saying: “*Now, the Lord is the Spirit*” (2 Corinthians 3: 17). Therefore, the Word, who was “*in the beginning*”, the Spirit, is the Lord, and the Lord of glory².
- ❖ The features concerning the servant, are referred to the Lord; While the honors concerning the Lord, are referred to the servant; That, through the connection and the union between the natures, **the features of one are referred to the other.** While the Lord received the scourges of the servant; the servant enjoyed the honor of the Lord; Hence the cross was said to be “**the cross of the Lord of glory**”; And every tongue confesses that Jesus is the Lord to the glory of God the Father³.
- ❖ While the human nature is glorified by taking it on, the divine nature was not corrupted by this action; But it made the human element submit to sufferings, while by His divine power, the resurrection of the One who suffered is realized. In this way, the experience of

¹ *Epistles, 169: 8.*

² *Against Eunomius, 5: 2.*

³ *Against Eunomius, 5: 5.*

death is not referred to the Godhead, who had the fellowship in our human nature through union with Humanity; While, at the same time, the glorified divine names are referred to man; that He who appeared on the cross, is called “the Lord of glory”; transforming the glorified names from the Godhead to the Humanity through union with the lesser nature¹.

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

4- THE MYSTERY OF THE ETERNAL GLORY:

“But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things that God has prepared for those who love Him’ (9)

The eternal life, its glories and eternity, are things revealed by the gospel (2 Timothy 1: 10); things that could not be felt by senses, nor expressed by the human language with all its eloquence; or imagined by the human mind. It is beyond human wisdom or possibility.

- ❖ What those who walk in good life would gain is mentioned in the gospels, yet could not be accurately described; as how could they be, when they are not seen by the eye, nor heard by the ear, or entered into the heart of man²?!

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

- ❖ I implore you, brethren, to love God a true love, not out of fear of hell, but of desire for the kingdom; and more so for the sake of the future things, when “*He puts all enemies under His feet*” (1 Corinthians 15: 25); when there is no more opponents; and when the righteous see the blessed things that no eye could see, no ear could hear, and not entered into the heart of man³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Our hope, O brethren, is not in the present things, nor in this world, or in the kind of happiness that blinded men and made them forget God ... We have not become Christians for the sake of the blessings of the present time; but for what God has promised us, and so far we have not got; which is described as not seen by eye,⁴
- ❖ His gifts are enormously great; Yet, what we are getting of them is less; because of our limited possibilities to receive them. As by our simple faith, steadfast hope, fervent desire, and spacious heart, we may receive what is presented to us in more abundance; that, which no eye could see, having no color; no ear could hear, having no sound; and not entered into the heart of man, but the heart of man would enter into it.

¹ *Against Eunomius, 6: 2.*

² *The Great Catechism, 40.*

³ *In 1 Tim., hom 15.*

⁴ *Sermons on New Testament Lessons, 77: 1.*

❖ We shall behold God; We shall live in security and peace; We shall suffer no hunger or thirst; And we shall not fall into worry, ... Yet what would all that be, compared to beholding God, who, though He could not be proclaimed now as He is, yet we shall behold Him¹.

The goodness that we shall see, that **“no eye can see, and no ear can hear”**, is the **Merciful whom we shall behold; who will be seen by the believers, by those who will enjoy the good portion in the resurrection of the body, in case they have the obedience in the resurrection of the heart**².

(St. Augustine)

❖ The Holy Books proclaim to us that the goodness stored for us, is both immeasurable and incomparable³.

(Mar Isaac the Syrian)

❖ From this we can have an idea about the extent of the greatness of the exaltation, beauty, and splendor of the spiritual body.

We should not imagine that God partially reveals the secret to some, and allows for others to be destroyed by ignorance. But we should know that God, having pre-knowledge, through His divine power, of what everyone will choose, has prepared the proper things for everyone according to his own worthiness⁴.

(Severian, Bishop of Gebala)

“But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God” (10)

God proclaimed His wisdom by the gospel, to prepare us to enjoy the eternal glory, and the heavenly happiness. He reveals His joyful secrets and His glorious works to His believers; according to what is written: *“It will be said in that day: ‘Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation’”* (Isaiah 25: 9).

God reveals His wisdom by His Holy Spirit who proclaimed the Word of God; and we enjoyed the Holy Book; as the men of God spoke in the Old, moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1: 21); and the apostles in the New Covenant spoke by the same Spirit. This Spirit is not like the limited Spirit of man that knows the depths of man; but it is the divine Spirit who knows the depths of God, and with an unlimited knowledge He reveals the hidden divine secrets; That Holy Spirit who proclaimed the broad lines of the heavenly truth through the prophets, has presented the complete truth through the apostles and the Evangelists.

¹ Epistles, 130: 17.

² Sermons on New Testament Lesson, 77: 11.

³ Ascetical Homilies, 2.

⁴ Pauline Comm. From the Greek Church.

❖ The Holy Spirit does not need teaching by words; As, being God, the apostle says: “*He searches all things, even the depths of God*”¹.

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

❖ As this Spirit alone, can search everything that the human soul cannot, even the depths of God, We are in great need of being strengthened by this Spirit².

(The scholar Origen)

❖ God proclaims these things by His Spirit to His believers, because things that concern God are not to be known without His Spirits; As the Spirit of God knows what concerns Him³.

❖ The Spirit of God, knowing what He knows by nature, and not by learning, He taught us the secret of Christ; For, being the Spirit of God, He is as well, the Spirit of Christ⁴.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ He who gains the proclamation of the Spirit, would also receive the understanding of the Spirit⁵.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

“For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God” (11)

It is difficult for man to enter into the depths of another man and to know his thoughts, his hidden plans, his purposes, and what goes on in his mind. No one knows such things except man himself. Even so, no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God who proclaims these secrets to the apostles who are designated to realize God’s plan concerning the salvation of the world.

❖ By distributing their wealth among the poor, the rich store them in the most secure places, namely in heaven. In case you have some commitments to your family that keeps you from doing so; you are the one to know how to give account of your riches to God; as no one can know the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him. It is befitting of us to wait for the time when the Lord will come to scatter the darkness and reveals the hidden things of the hearts; Then “*you will be commended by God*” (2 Corinthians 4: 5)⁶.

(St. Augustine)

¹ *Answer to Eunomius, Second Book.*

² *Commentary on 1 Cor. 1: 10: 6-10.*

³ *CSEL 81: 27.*

⁴ *CSEL 81: 27.*

⁵ *Comm.. On 1 Cor., 177.*

⁶ *Ep. 130: 8.*

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God” (12)

We have not received the spirit of the world; namely, its thoughts and philosophy. Our look at the truth is not set upon changing philosophical theories, but it is the gift of the Spirit of God, the Grantor of the truth.

What the apostle utters, he was not taught by human wisdom, but it is the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church, that does not receive her faith by the spirit of the world, but by the Spirit of God. That is why he does not clothe his preaching by a human garment, but presents it in simplicity, according to what the church has received from God. The eloquence, the philosophy, and the human wisdom could not present the things of God; Only the Spirit of God can.

Here the apostle speaks for himself, and on behalf of the rest of the true apostles; that they have received the Spirit of God, by whom they know the things of God; and through that knowledge they preach the crucified Christ. They did not receive the spirit of the world, that of the Jewish teachers, who seek a temporal kingdom and an earthly Christ; interpreting what came in the Old Testament in a temporal material way.

❖ The spirit of the world, acquired by diverse people, does not know the truth, but can use guessing; hence it deceives the others, as it is deceived by the outer appearances¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ By so saying, the apostle Paul reveals that the Holy Spirit is not a creature, but has a divine nature².

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

5- THE SPIRITUAL MAN:

“These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (13)

“Comparing spiritual things with spiritual”; Scholars are often preoccupied with presenting faith through comparing it with science and philosophical theories. But the need is for revealing the spiritual things with spiritual. What came in the New Testament is a realization of the prophecies of the Old Testament, uttered by the men of God, moved by the Holy Spirit. Every phrase in the Holy Book is revealed by the books; We recognize the spiritual secrets by the proclamations of the Spirit and the language of the Spirit.

The carnal persons cannot understand the spiritual things; About them the apostle Jude says: *“These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit”* (Jude 19). Those who do not enjoy the sanctification by the Spirit cannot understand the spiritual things;

¹ CSEL 81: 28.

² COMM. On 1 Cor., 178.

As the spiritual understanding in man has been destroyed by the corruption of the sin; there was a need for him to be sanctified by the Spirit of the Lord, so that his mind, his heart, and his whole depths, would be prepared to understand the spiritual things and to respond to them. The carnal person bears weak eyes that cannot see the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, and enjoy their beauty. Hence he does not appreciate the light, but intends to live in the ignorance of darkness.

It is as though he says: We should not go back to use the language of the Jews or that of the Gentiles, when we talk about God; but we should use the language of the Spirit of God to utter the spirituals; the language of simplicity, clearance, and openness.

By saying: “*comparing the spiritual things with spiritual*”, he also means that no one can utter the spiritual things, but he who became spiritual; as the spiritual things need spiritual persons to utter them (1 Corinthians 2: 6, 9-10, 14-15;; 3: 1).

❖ Some spiritual facts are vague and need interpretation; but this could only be realized by comparing them with other spiritual things. As an example, when I say that Christ is risen from the dead, I compare it with how Jonah was saved from the belly of the big fish (Jonah 2: 10); And when I say that He was born from a virgin, I compare it with the pregnancy of the barren women like Sarah, Rebecca, and others (Genesis 21: 1-7; 25: 21)¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ It does not imply that Paul had no human wisdom; but that he preached by the wisdom of the Spirit².

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (14)

For the natural man to discern, he has to know the mind of the Lord!! And who can do that? These words could be understood in the following way: Can the natural man know the mind of the Lord? Or, in order to understand a thought, should one not have knowledge of it?

What is meant by the natural man?

Some believe that a **natural** man is contrary to a **spiritual** man. The latter is led by the Holy Spirit who sanctifies his body, mind, soul, spirit, and all his energies, to appear in his wholeness as a Spirit. Whereas the former is governed by the natural instinct and the animal lusts. Some of the Greek writers believe that the natural man, sharing with the animals, being confined to the sensuals, and not living by the exalted mind and the live conscience; is called by some ‘**a carnal man**’.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 7: 8.

² Comm.. On 1 Cor., 178.

Some believe that the word “*natural*” refers here to the body before the resurrection; whereas the word “*spiritual*” refers to the body risen from the dead, as it came in 1 Corinthians 15: 44: “*It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body*”. The natural man is confined to the pleasures of the earthly body; while the spiritual finds his pleasure in the eternal glory.

Many believe that the **natural** man is he, who lets his animal soul (psuche) govern his spirit, and is not led by the Spirit of God (Jude 19); Such a man, not given life by the Spirit, is a stranger to the divine things.

The **carnal** man, a practical proclamation of the **natural** man, is led by the devil, and bears an “*earthly, sensual, demonic*” wisdom (James 3: 15). Some believe that it means he, whose mind, heart, and depths, do not go beyond the natural things; and shuts his emotions and feelings in the carnal lusts. Such a man cannot appreciate the value of spiritual things, but denies and oppose them. To him, heaven is nothing but a product of fantasy and imagination.

A natural man cannot understand the spiritual things, the way human ear cannot receive the high-frequency radio waves; the deaf cannot judge musical contests; and the blind cannot discern the different colors.

❖ God granted us a mind to learn and to receive help from Him; and not self-efficient mind. The eyes are beautiful and of benefit, yet, in the absence of light, its beauty becomes of no benefit. ... The same way with the souls, not supported by the spirit. The natural man refers everything to mental proofs, counting himself as not in need of any higher help; which is a sign of utter foolishness¹.

❖ The way man cannot learn the heavenly things with his physical eyes, The soul, as well, cannot, if not supported by the spirit. And why should I talk about the heavenly things? It cannot even receive all the earthly things. The way, when we see a square tower from afar, we may see it as being round, as a result of sight deception; so will be the one who, by his mere understanding, tries to search the exalted things; he will only reach silly results.

Saying: “*they are foolishness to him*” (14); This is not due to the nature of things, but because of his weakness, being unable to receive its greatness through the eyes of his soul².

❖ As darkness may seem more comfortable than bright light to the sick eyes; So is the case as far as the spiritual wisdom is concerned. The wisdom of God may seem foolishness to those from outside; when it is actually their own wisdom which is foolishness. It is like when someone with an experience in sailing, claims, and strives to prove mentally, that he is able to sail across the limitless sea with no ship; While another, who has no such

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 7:9.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 7:10.

knowledge, lets himself be under the guidance of a captain and crew on a ship, and crosses the sea in security. The ignorance of the later is wiser than the wisdom of the former¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ The carnal man, because of his foolishness, does not know what concern the Spirit of God; To such a man, the apostle says: “*And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people, but as to carnal*” (1 Corinthians 3: 1). This could be interpreted in that the part could be taken to express the whole. As both the soul and the body, form a man, and each of them could be used to mean man as a whole; The same way the natural man and the carnal man are not different, but are one and the same: man living as a man².

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ A non-spiritual man is he, who is content with his own thoughts, and does not seek nor understand the teachings of the Spirit³.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

- ❖ For the foolish and the sensual people, the vain things seem more beautiful than the teachings of the truth⁴.

(The scholar Origen)

“But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one” (15)

He who is sanctified and who enjoys having a spiritual mind, cares for things that concern the Spirit, can judge everything, and discern everything. Enjoying a spiritual taste for the true divine facts, he can judge even the human wisdom. He can understand the divine secrets, enjoys their strength, and exults in their proclamations. His life is hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3: 3); Whereas the carnal man, however great his human knowledge may be, remains a stranger to the experience of the divine life and its secrets; and cannot understand what is in the mind of God, nor recognize the divine truth. ... He who has the mind of Christ, can discern and judge by the Spirit.

In the debates of St. John Cassian, came a talk by **father Daniel** which discerns between the spiritual man who cares for the inner depths and the continuous spiritual growth; and the natural man who is preoccupied with the outer appearances, and the carnal monastic practices, with no care for the depths. He warns the monks against this, saying: [Having separated ourselves from those in the world, we have no more to do publicly concerning the corruption of the body. Yet it is befitting of us to keep on striving with all our possibilities,

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 7:1.

² City of God 14: 1.

³ Comm.. On 1 Cor., 178.

⁴ The Song of Songs, Comm., Book 4: 15. (ACW).

until we become spiritual, lest by deceiving ourselves, and assuming that we have reached the highest perfection through the glory of our outer man, and have got rid of the carnal adultery; we would become slothful in what concerns being purified from the other covetousness and by staying this way, we would not be able to reach the stage of the spiritual progress¹].

- ❖ He who receives the gift of the Spirit, would flourish to teach others; Otherwise what he utters would become completely without benefit².

(Theodoret, Bishop of Curus)

- ❖ A spiritual person is capable of judging everything, whether he is a Greek or a barbarian, wise or foolish; And, because of his deep understanding and experience, he would be judged by no one³.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ Who could judge someone who utters the truth? Accusing him of being vain when he is true, this accusation is as good as nothing⁴.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ Judging all things, and being rightly judged by no one, it would be befitting to describe the spiritual as being the “chair of God”⁵.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ The apostle recognizes three types of men: the first is the ‘**carnal**’, who is preoccupied with his belly and the pleasures associated with it; The second is the “**natural**”, who occupies a median position between virtue and iniquity, rising above the later, yet without a clear fellowship with the former; and the third is the “**spiritual**”, who realizes the perfection of the pure life. That is why, speaking to the Corinthians, rebuking them for their being preoccupied with the pleasures and covetousness, he says to them “*You are carnal*” (Corinthians 3:3), not able to receive the more perfect teaching. While in another situation, comparing with the median kind, he says: “*But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; ... but he who is spiritual, judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one*” (14, 15)⁶.

(St. Grgory, Bishop of Nyssa)

6- WE HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST:

¹ CASSIAN: Conference 4: 19.

² Comm.. On 1 Cor., 179.

³ Comm.. On 1 Cor., 1: 11: 44-45.

⁴ CSEL 81: 30-31.

⁵ Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, 1: 18.

⁶ On The Making of Man, 8: 6.

“For ‘who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ” (16)

In this chapter, the apostle Paul intended to draw the hearts of the congregation away from being preoccupied with dissensions to the divine blessings which they enjoyed through faith. While the philosophers are preoccupied with philosophical words and expressions of no real value, the believers gain the glorified power of God in their depths to become perfect. ... While the rulers **do not know the mind of God**, the believers are enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and realize the eternal wisdom of God. ... While the rulers live by the spirit of the world as natural men, the believers enjoy the spirit of God as spiritual men.

While the rulers cannot judge the divine things, the spirituals can, and are rightly judged by no one. While the rulers live by the mere human mind, the believers enjoy the mind of Christ.

How great is God’s gift to us! We came to have the mind of Christ proclaimed to us by His Holy Spirit

- ❖ When Christ leads the soul to **understand His mind**, it is said that she enters into the secret place of the King, where His wisdom and knowledge are hidden¹.
- ❖ The bride of Christ enquires about the places of comfort in the heat of midday, and seeks from God an abundance of knowledge, that would not appear as one kind of philosophy which is said to put on a veil; While the abundance of truth is hidden and concealed; the bride of Christ says: *“But we all, with unveiled face, behold the glory of God”* (2 Corinthians 3: 18)².

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ *“We have the mind of Christ”*; namely, what is spiritual and divine, with nothing human; as Christ Himself, and not Plato or Phythogorus, has put His things in our minds³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ The Godhead is Mind and Word. *“In the beginning was the Word”* (John 1: 1). The followers of Paul had the mind of Christ (16), talking in them. Humanity was never completely denied that; as you see in yourself a word and understanding, conforming to the Mind Himself and the Word Himself⁴.

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

- ❖ Paul so says, on account of that the believers are fellows in the divine wisdom⁵.

¹ *The Song of Songs, Comm., Book 1: 5.*

² *The Song of Songs, Comm., Book 2: 4. (ACE).*

³ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 7: 12.*

⁴ *On the Making of Man. 5: 2.*

⁵ *CSEL 81: 31.*

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the prophets had no human heart but spiritual hearts; Hence he says here: “*We have the mind of Christ*”; As though he says: Before having the blessing of the Spirit, and learning the unutterable things, no one of us, or even the prophets, could understand those things in his mind. ... How could it be possible, if even the angels themselves could not understand them? ... No need for us to talk about the rulers of this world, when no man could ever understand those things, not even the higher powers¹?

❖ When we say that we have the mind of Christ, That does not mean that we know everything Christ does; but rather what He chooses to proclaim to us; Everything we know is from Him, and is spiritual².

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ Paul clearly proves that there is nothing lacking in the teaching of God. Yet that does not mean that he had all the knowledge; but God provides us with wisdom, as though out of a store, to understand fittingly³.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

❖ The mind of Christ refers to God the Father; It is as though Paul says that we have the Father of Christ in us⁴.

(Occumenius Pauline)

¹ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 7: 7.*

² *In 1 Cor., Hom 7: 12.*

³ *Comm.. On 1 Cor., 179 PG 82: 246.*

⁴ *Oecumenius Pauline Comm. From the Greek Church.*

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 2

LET YOUR HOLY SPIRIT BRING ME FORTH INTO YOUR MIND TO RECOGNIZE THE MYSTERY OF YOUR HIDDEN WISDOM

- ❖ Let me forsake the haughty wisdom,
And recognize Your cross.
O, You, amazing in Your love and humility!
The wisdom of the world is attractive; yet with no benefit.
While Your cross carries me to Your throne.
And brings me forth into Your secret heavenly place, O You, the eternal Bridegroom!
- ❖ The rulers of this age intend to crucify You, and to rid my depths of Your presence!
O, Had they known You, and recognized the secret of Your cross, they would not have forsaken You.
They would rather have loved You, and raised themselves to see what You have prepared for them.
Indeed, they would have sought Your amazing Spirit, to bring them forth into Your depths.
- ❖ I confess to You that I am a carnal man.
No one can turn me into a spiritual man but Your fiery Spirit.
With foolishness I intended to be a natural man.
When You, with Your love, would not let me be less than a spiritual man.
You intend for my whole being, to turn into a Spirit.
You intend even for my body to become extremely light.
To fly high to be together with You in Your heavens.
- ❖ Grant me Your Spirit to work in me incessantly.
To bear Your mind, to recognize the truth.
Yes, I would judge everything, and be rightly judged by no one.
For You are in me, And I am in You, O the Truth!

CHAPTER 3

GOD'S FIELD AND GOD'S BUILDING

In the first chapter, the apostle drew the heart of the people to the cross, for all to be united together in Jesus Christ by the Spirit of wisdom and power, instead of being preoccupied with dissensions and divisions. In the second chapter he presented to them **the Holy Spirit**, the Grantor of fellowship and presenter of the true wisdom, for all to enjoy the enlightenment of the Spirit; to have **the mind of Christ**; and to understand the spiritual things, instead of staying natural men who are ignorant of the things of God; This is the spirit of fellowship and unity together in the Lord. While here in the third chapter, the apostle presents **God who works in the life of the church**. It is as though, in the first chapter, he talked about the role of the second Person of the Holy Trinity – the incarnate Word, crucified for the sake of our salvation; In the second chapter, he spoke about the role of the Holy Spirit; and in the third, about the role of God the Father. The Holy Trinity is preoccupied with the unity of the church, and work together for the sake of our unity together in the Lord.

If the church is “*God’s field*” (9), namely His vineyard; everyone works together with God, each one according to his gift (5); Yet **it is God alone who gives the increase** (6). And if the church is “*God’s building*” (9), this building is the work of God the Father Himself; Christ laid Himself as One Foundation for all. And the One Holy Spirit dwells in this building, to make out of us a holy temple for God (17).

If God cares for us, being His field and His building, why should we be preoccupied with the laborers in the vineyard or the building? God has set them for our sake; Everything is ours.

1- Division dwells among carnal men	1 - 4
2- You are God’s field	5 - 9
3- You are God’s building	10 – 11
4- Testing each one’s work with fire	12 - 15
5- You are the temple of God	16 - 17
6- Let no one boast of the worldly wisdom	18 - 20
7- All things are yours	21 – 23

1- DIVISION DWELLS AMONG CARNAL MEN:

The apostle starts by rebuking them because of their weakness like babes, who are not yet developed in the spirituals. Hence he could not talk to them as spiritual men, but as babes in Christ (1). They have received the first principles of the Christian faith; Yet, having not matured in understanding them, nor enjoyed the sanctification befitting of them; but

preoccupied themselves with the philosophy and wisdom in haughtiness and pride; he was committed to deal with them as babes, as far as the holy things are concerned.

“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people, but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ” (1)

“To carnal men”; refers to those who do not care for God’s glory, nor seek what is for the edification of their brethren; but in selfishness, they seek their own pleasures. He talks to them as **carnals** (skrhinois or sarkihios), meaning those who, under the influence of carnal covetousness, envy dwells among them, and are preoccupied with temporal things.

The word **“babes”** here compares to those who are *“of full age, perfect in Christ Jesus”* (Colossians 1: 28; Hebrew 5: 13-14). They live in Christ, yet in weakness, as though they are babes who have not reached *“the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”* (Ephesians 4: 13).

According to **the scholar Origen**, the believers are symbolically referred to, sometimes as babes (1); and other times as a virgin: *“I wish to present you all as a chaste virgin to Christ”*; or as men: *“When I became a man, I put away childish things”* (13: 11).

They are like babes in Christ, unable to make a decision concerning their life of faith; Or are not qualified enough to discern between one teacher and another; or in other words, they lack the spiritual experience, befitting to understand the divine issues¹.

❖ Man can be spiritual in this life in a certain way; that, while carnal and having a body, he sees another law in his members warring against the law of his mind. But, he is going to become spiritual, when this same body gets the resurrection, about which it is said: *“It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body”* (1 Corinthians 15: 44).

How would this spiritual body be? And how would be the greatness of its grace? I fear, having still not acquired this experience, I am not worthy to talk about it²

❖ Paul does not talk about their bodies, but about the carnal spirits³.

❖ Those people were carnal, For although they have already been baptized, and received the Holy Spirit, yet they were still carnal; for they, after their baptism, they were still submitted to the covetousness of this world, and they got back to their old life which they denied. The Holy Spirit dwells in someone, when he abides in his strong faith in his new birth, and does not forsake it. If such a person repents, the Holy Spirit dwells in him, being always prepared for what is good, and loves repentance⁴.

¹ Commentary on Matthew, 11: 3.

² City of God 22: 21.

³ City of God 22: 21.

⁴ CSEL 81: 31-32.

(Ambrosiaster)

“I fed you with milk and not with solid food, for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able” (2)

The apostle says: I fed you with milk; namely, the simple initial principles of Christianity, because of the inability of your minds to understand the spiritual knowledge and the evangelic facts. He marvels that, while still fed with milk like babes, they dare to judge between one teacher and another.

It is befitting of the shepherd, being like a father, to know how to present the proper food to every one; The babe needs milk to grow and get mature and become a man in the Lord; Whereas the mature needs solid food, so as not to lose his spiritual strength and his continuous growth. The apostle Paul presents different kinds of food for three categories of men:

The **natural man** needs salvation (14: 2); Lacking the true spiritual wisdom, he does not receive what is for the Holy Spirit,

The **carnal man**, as a babe, needs sanctification (3: 1); being preoccupied with the divisions and dissensions between men, even if they are saints, and not preoccupied with God his Savior.

The **spiritual man** needs continuous work by the Spirit of God to keep on growing (3: 14).

St. John Chrysostom believes that the apostle exposed the spirit of pride in them, revealed their ignorance of the perfect things, and that they were still not able to bear those perfect things.

❖ If they were naturally unable to bear these perfect things, they would be forgiven; but if that was through their own choice, they had no excuse¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ By milk, the apostle Paul means the behavioral teachings and the miracles; And by the solid food, he means the proclamation of God’s spiritual teachings.

(Severian, Bishop of Gebalah)

❖ In the spiritual teachings, “**the solid food**” means the teachings concerning the Father and the Son. In the Old Testament, the solid food appears under the outer form of symbolism.

As an example when we read about the bronze serpent raised by Moses in the wilderness (Numbers 21: 8-9); this serpent was a symbol of Christ, which explains how the people were saved when they looked at it².

(The scholar Origen)

¹ In Cor., Hom. 8: 1.

² Comm. on 1 Cor., 1: 12: 17-23.

❖ Although they have received the new birth in Christ, they were still not prepared to receive the spiritual things. And although they received faith, the seeds of the Spirit, they still did not produce fruits befitting for God; but, as babes they still covet for the carnal feelings of non-perfection.

Paul, as a man of God and a spiritual physician, gives the milk in the spiritual issues, because of their lack of perfection and experience.

He strongly debates those who complain that, for a long time, they have not heard something spiritual, that they are unworthy of hearing them; Whereas the false apostles present their teachings to listeners who like to hear without discernment on their part.

All agree that the Lord Jesus Christ used to talk publicly in a certain way, and to His disciples in another, as He particularly did when He revealed His glory when He transfigured on the mount (Matthew 17) only to three of them, and told them not to disclose what they saw until He is risen from the dead¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ Some may misunderstand, and may even count hiding the truth from others under any circumstances, as talking vanity. But we may remember the words of the Lord, saying: ***“Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces”*** (Matthew 7: 6). The Lord Himself, although He never uttered lies, has hidden some facts, saying: *“I have many things to say to you, but you cannot hear them now”* (John 16: 12); And the apostle Paul says: *“I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people, but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food, for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able”* (1-3)².

(St. Augustine)

❖ Paul changes the level of his teaching according to the level of understanding of his listeners³.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

To the people, simple in their knowledge, the apostle presents milk. Father Caesarius, Bishop of Arl, believes that it is not unbecoming to liken some teachers to a milking cow. The way a cow has two breasts to feed her calf with milk, so also are the elder teachers who sustain their Christian herds with milk from their two breasts – the Old and the New Testaments⁴.

¹ CSEL 81: 32-33.

² Sermon on the Mount 2: 67.

³ CSEL 81: 32-34.

⁴ SERMONS 4: 4.

“For you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal, and behaving like mere men?” (3)

They are carnals by their mind, as well as by their words and behavior. **Envy** here, refers to the corruption of the inner heart that lacks love toward the successful and the progressing; **Strife** refers to transforming the thought into wounding words, and entering into oral controversies; **And the divisions** refers to unbecoming practical behavior; when they fail to become on one accord, dissented from one another. Their inner envy and strife led them, by the non-edifying debates, to tear the church of Christ apart; Contrary to him, who submits to the Spirit of the Lord, who walks as a spiritual man, whose depths are filled with peace, that flows on all those who are around him.

Envy so takes away from the soul its peace, that it cannot endure to see peace and edification prevailing among the congregation; as according to **St. Cyprian**: [All evils have their limits; and every transgression may end up with committing a crime ... Envy, on the other hand is limitless. It is a perpetually working evil, and an endlessly acting sin¹]. And according to **St. John Chrysostom**: [The envious is worse than vicious beasts, and craftier than the devils. The wrath and evil of the beasts may result from hunger or fear from us; Whereas, concerning the envious, he who does them well is the same as he who deals unjustly with them²]. The devil envies men, but would never envy a fellow devil; whereas man envies his fellow man, even among his own family and folks, something the devils would never do³].

- ❖ How can you keep unity in the bond of peace? It could never exist together with animosity and controversy⁴.
- ❖ Envy makes them carnal; as they become no more free to hear truth on an exalted level⁵.
- ❖ If envy makes men carnal, and keeps them from being spiritual, although they have already started to preach and to do many other amazing things. Now, if we do not have even this kind of grace any more, where shall we find ourselves; if we do not do just that, but add to it many other worse things?!

By this we may learn how well the Lord Christ says: *“Everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds be exposed”* (John 3: 20); And that, because impure life is an obstacle before the exalted teachings, and does not allow for a clear vision of the understanding. It would not be easy for someone who practices injustice to raise his sight up to the teachings delivered to us; but he has to be first purified from the tendencies

¹ المؤلف: الحب الأخوي، 1964، ص 398.

² المؤلف: الحب الأخوي، 1964، ص 401.

³ المؤلف: الحب الأخوي، 1964، ص 401.

⁴ Ephes. Hom. 9.

⁵ In 1 Cor., Hom. 8: 4.

that are against the truth. Whoever is liberated from this would be liberated as well from his own fault, and would realize the truth. ... It would be not be enough to refrain only from greed or adultery to reach this goal; but it is befitting of all to be in harmony with Him who seeks the truth. Hence St. Peter says: *“In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality; But, in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him”* (Acts 10: 34-35); Namely, He calls him and draws him to the truth¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ As some live according to the flesh, and others live according to the Spirit, the apostle Paul clearly says to the Corinthians: *“For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?”* (3). Behaving like mere men is the same as being called carnal; as by the body, he means one aspect of man².

(St. Augustine)

“For when one says, ‘I am of Paul’, and another, ‘I am of Apollos’, are you not carnal?” (4)

No need to say that both Paul and Apollos embraced the same faith; with no difference between them whatsoever that would warrant such a division among the people, preferring one to the other, which is a proof that they were still carnal. Having been preoccupied with the outer appearances, they were divided where there was no cause for division. If they walked according to the Spirit, the grace of God would have given them the spirit of unity.

2- YOU ARE GOD’S FIELD:

“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?” (5)

The diverse apostles are just tools in the hand of the One God, to bring you forth to the knowledge of Christ, and to present to you the word of life. No one of them preached in his own name, nor talked about himself, but about the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, there are different gifts even among the apostles, yet it is God’s gift to them, and it is He who knows how to use the gifts he gave to His ministers. He distributed the gifts for the edification of the church of the One Christ, with no discrimination between one gift and another.

God is all in all, and the apostles are only ministers who work in His name, under his leadership, and to his account. They get the honor of working in His vineyard; and at the same time, God works through them, being His tools, in whom He is pleased, and whom He provides with His Holy Spirit to give them power.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 8: 3,4.

² City of God 14: 4.

Speaking of himself and of Apollos, the apostle Paul said that they are ministers, a word which is in Greek (diakonoi), meaning (servants) (see Matthew 20: 26; Mark 9: 35; 10: 34). It is as though the minister's honor is to bow like a servant to wash the feet of those for whose sake his Master died, in order to make out of them children of God. In other words **the honor of apostleship, of all the clerical ranks, is not in the authority it gives, but in the washing of feet, and the ministry to the children of their master.**

They are two ministers who seek no temporal honor or authority; but the secret of their strength lies in Him who has sent them, and who works through them. They are not the initial source of faith, but ministers to God who presents the knowledge and the facts proclaimed to them by Him. Each of them works according to the gift given to him by the One who sends him for the edification of the church.

- ❖ After saying: “*Who is Paul, and who is Apollos?*”, he adds: “*but ministers through whom you believed*”. Although that, in itself, is a great thing that warrants great rewards; yet, if compared to the Example and the Source of all goodness, it would be as good as nothing¹.
- ❖ Lest they may say: What? Should we not love those who minister to us? He would say: Yes, but we should know to what extent; as, even those issues to which they minister are not their own, but are given to them by God².
- ❖ Look at how he started by belittling his own person, saying: “*Who is Paul? ... And who is Apollos?*”; then he refers everything to God, the Grantor of all. After saying: “*I planted, Apollos watered*”, he adds: “*Neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase*” (7)¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase” (6)

“*I planted*”. He sowed the seeds of the gospel in Corinth, and in the province of Achaia; Then came Apollos and “*watered*” those seeds sowed by the apostle Paul. Now, it is not Paul nor Apollos, who turn the seeds into plants that give fruits, but the grace of God; As it is only God who grants man the fruits of the Spirit, as a free divine gift.

The seeds have to be sown, and to be watered; Yet the increase will be realized, not through sowing in itself, nor through watering, but it is God who gives the seed life and growth. Although it is God who ordained the workers – those who sow and those who water; yet He remains the only Giver of life.

- ❖ It would be a great joy to care for the plantation of God, to rejoice in His gifts, and in working in His field; Having labored in this plantation, the apostle says: “*I labored more*

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 8: 4.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 8: 5.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom 8: 6.

abundantly than they all” (1 Corinthians 15: 10). Yet, knowing that he was given the strength to work by God of the harvest, he adds: “*Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me*”; He confirms clearly that they were appointed to work in this plantation, saying: “***I planted, and Apollos watered***”¹.

- ❖ What would be the benefit if we planted or watered, if God does not give the increase?! “*Neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase*” (7)².
- ❖ What do you think? Does the apostle contradict himself; when he, while saying that men become educated by the work of the Holy Spirit; he gives instructions as what and how they would learn?! Or we are committed to understand that, although men should learn, and teachers should never cease to teach what they are given by the Holy Spirit, “***Neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase***” (7). That is why, although saints and angels are designated to help us, Yet, nobody would uprightly learn the things concerning the living with God, unless God Himself is prepared to teach; to whom the words of the psalm is directed, saying: “*Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God*” (Psalm 143: 10)¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ By Paul, the seeds of the word were sown in the soil; And lest they would dry up through temptations, Apollos did his role in watering them; But all that was ordained by God².
- ❖ By this he established another point; By confirming that they are helpless to do anything without God who gives the increase, he does not allow those who labor more, to boast over those who contribute less; nor allows the later to envy the former³.
- ❖ It is as though he says to them: Do not be disappointed that I say that you are one (8); as that would be in comparison to the work done by God; Yet each one of you will certainly get his own reward⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ To plant means to preach and to bring others to faith; And to water means to baptize ... Yet, the forgiveness of sins and the presentation of the Spirit, are the job of God alone⁵.

(Ambrosiaster)

¹ *Sermons on New Testament Lessons, 51: 1.*

² *Sermons on New Testament Lessons, 31: 3.*

¹ *On Christian Doctrine 16.*

² *In 1 Cor., Hom. 8: 5.*

³ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 8:6.*

⁴ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 8:6.*

⁵ *CSEL 81:34.*

❖ Not in its walls, but in its teachings. He who plants in the house of the Lord, and puts the roots deep, will see the flowers of his work¹.

(St. Jerome)

“So then, neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase” (7)

It is befitting of us to give glory to God alone; as from Him are the seeds, namely the word of the preaching of the gospel; ... From Him is the soil, namely, the hearts and minds of men, that are the works of His hand; ... From Him are the workers, whom he calls to ministry; ... And from Him are the fruits, namely the fruits of His Holy Spirit.

Paul is keen to reveal the actual role of the apostles in ministry; Namely, being ministers to God, and stewards of His secrets, Yet they should not be deified; As, on one aspect, they are not the source of our faith, nor the goal of our life, but they are sanctified tools in the hand of God. And on another aspect, they are not of one mold, but each of them has his own gift provided to him by God, and has his own role, that consummates those of others. As all of them present one symphony of love, harmonized together. So, it would be futile to compare between them, nor to honor one more than the other; as all of them are called by the One God, and all of them have one goal, namely, the glory of God, and the salvation of every human soul.

By that, the apostle intends to confirm the following facts:

(1) **God is the true Worker**; as the salvation of the souls is His concern alone.

(2) Even with the diversity of gifts, **yet the ministers of God work together in harmony.**

(3) The goal of his ministry, and those of his brethren, **is the benefit of those ministered**, and not seeking temporal glory.

❖ I speak and search things, not caring about any benefit of mine, but about what is for your salvation. Yet if anyone should care for, or be preoccupied by these things, it would be me¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ Look at how he rejects to be worshipped, as though he is in the position of Christ! Although planting and watering are both great achievements, yet, he confirms that he who plants, or he who waters, are nothing; refusing to refer to himself any role in the salvation of those he intends to edify in Christ².

(St. Augustine)

¹ Homily 21.

¹ Ephes. Hom. 11.

² Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany, sermon 16: 3.

If **father Sherimon** concentrates on works, that some liken him to Pilagius; yet he confirms that God has granted every man with some goodness, that a believer could not enjoy without the grace of God.

❖ There is no doubt that, by nature, there are some seeds of goodness in every soul, sowed through the compassion of the Creator; Yet, they could never grow to perfection, unless flourished by the divine help; as according to the apostle: “*Neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase*”¹.

(Father Sherimon)

❖ It is befitting of us to hasten to see the work of God, more than to see our own work; As in whichever way we minister, we would be indebted to Him by this work, not to men. That is why the apostle says: “*Neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase*”².

❖ If it is impossible for the apostle to realize anything, unless God gives the increase; How would it be for you, for me, or for anyone, who may boast of **being a teacher**³?

(St. Augustine)

❖ Compared to God’s honor, human honor is counted as nothing. In ministry, man is honored in a way suitable for a minister⁴.

(Amrosiaster)

“Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor” (8)

He who planted, and he who watered are one; as each of them (Paul and Apollos) presented the same teaching; each of them ministered for the glory of God and the salvation of souls; So why is the dissention?! As long as the apostles bear the One Spirit, the one mind, the one faith, and the one goal?

Although it is God’s vineyard, He works through His ministers, and without Him the ministry would not succeed; Yet, being pleased with their ministry, he grants them a great reward, and each one will receive his own wages according to his labor. God does not reward man according to the fruit of his strife, but according to his faithfulness in the work to which he is committed, lest some may say: “*I have labored in vain*”.

Although the one who plants, and the one who waters are not one man, yet they are so counted because they do two different tasks to realize one goal, for seeking a harvest; and neither of them would manage without the other; Planting the seeds without watering them is

¹ Cassian: Conf. 13: 12.

² Ep. 144: 1.

³ Letter 193.

⁴ CSEL 81: 31.

a waste of the seeds; while watering without planting the seeds is a waste of water. They are also one because both are sent by the One God. Each of them working with his own gift; yet the One God will realize their goal, and without Him their labor will be in vain.

- ❖ Although they are equal, yet the one who preaches the gospel is greater than him who baptizes, and will earn a greater reward¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

“For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building” (9)

As all what we do is not our own, but of what God presents to us as a free gift from Him; any success we enjoy is from Him, and for His glory.

“You are God’s building”. They are not only God’s field which He plants by His right hand, and for which He cares, as it came in Isaiah; But they are, as well, God’s building, which He builds, and in which he intends to dwell. ... When someone looks at and admires a huge building, he would not preoccupy himself with whom laid its foundation, nor with whom cut the stones, but he would admire the architect who put the plan, and supervised the work according to it; The same way, he who looks at the church of Christ, he would not preoccupy himself with Paul, Apollos, or Peter; as they all are ministers working under the supervision of the great Architect who puts the plan of the building where he intends to dwell.

If the first man has opted to give his back to God, and to flee from His face; yet God, with His compassion, hastened after him to set out of him a holy dwelling place for Himself; No wonder that the apostles spoke of the believers and the church, as being the church of heaven, *“the temple of God, where the Spirit of God dwells”* (16), *“a holy temple”* (17), *“for a habitation of God in the Spirit”* (Ephesians 2: 22), *“a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices”* (1 Peter 2: 5), *“God’s dwelling place with His people”* (Romans), *“the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God”* (Revelation 21: 10-11).

We are His field which He Himself plants to get fruit. We are His building in which He dwells. If it is He who gives the increase, Would the Apostles be called “vinedressers”?

The “vinedresser” plants and waters; *“I panted, and Apollos watered”, “but not I, but the grace of God which was with me”* (1 Corinthians 15: 10). That is why, in case some growth or change occurs in you, even by angels, prophets or apostles, yet it is still by God, Himself who is “the Vinedresser”. They are all just laborers working under the Vinedressers, with the strength and grace given to them by Him.

- ❖ The building is not owned by the workers, but by the Master. Thus if you are a building, you are committed to keep it intact, lest it would not be a building! And if you are a field,

¹ CSEL 81:35.

you are committed to keep united together, and be surrounded by a wall; namely, to avoid animosity among yourselves¹.

❖ The apostle Paul, cherishing his work, feeling that he is sent by God, working by His Holy Spirit, and with Him; being preoccupied with what goes on in the mind of God, and finding pleasure in what pleases God; It is undoubtedly a building that will remain until His second coming.

❖ *“For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field; you are God’s building”* (1 Corinthians 3: 9).

Having said *“I planted”*, and keeping the same analogy, saying to them: “you are God’s field”, they should not be referred to the one who plants, but to God; As the field should not be referred to those who work in it, but to its owner. The same could also be said of the building.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ I wish our souls bless the Lord, to be blessed by the Lord. In either case, it would be our growth and benefit, and not the Lord’s.

Let us worship faithfully, with a true heart, and not with empty words. God the Father is called a Vinedresser (John 15: 1); And the apostle says: *“You are God’s field; you are God’s building”* (1 Corinthians 3: 9). It is therefore obvious that God the Father, as a Vinedresser, works His field and expects fruit from it.

The Lord Jesus Himself says that He planted a vineyard, and delivered it to vinedressers, who are committed to provide Him with the fruits in the proper season.

❖ *“The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard”* (Matthew 20: 1)

God works in us, His vineyard ... Our plant is the work in our heart, which is not done by human hands.

He works in us like a farmer working in his field; and by working us He gives us a better life ... The fruit He seeks from us is that we ourselves be fellow workers with Him in His vineyard; a fruit that does not enrich God, but makes us happy.

Hearing that God works in man would fill us with awe. In the gospel the Lord says: *“I am the true Vine, and you are the branches, and My Father is the Vinedresser”* (John 15: 1). What does the Vinedresser do? He works his field, and expects fruit from it.

(St. Augustine)

❖ Paul calls us fellow workers **with God**, and not His ministers or his servants.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Missah)

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 8: 6.

- ❖ The fellow workers with God are those who, once they see the venom of pride crawling into the soul of someone, they would hasten to take it away by the medication of the true humility¹.

(Caesarius, Bishop of Arl)

3- YOU ARE GOD'S BUILDING:

“According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it” (10)

As the plan of the building is made by God Himself, the Great Architect, It would be fitting of the builders to work according to the divine plan. The divine Architect entrusts His apostle Paul to begin the work by laying the foundation; namely, by preaching the steadfast basic teachings of the gospel; which was delivered to the apostle by God Himself, for the sake of the salvation of mankind. God who chose Paul an apostle to the Gentiles, chose as well other apostles to consummate the work according to the divine mind; so that the building, as a whole, would be set up in perfect harmony; All the builders should work in harmony with what the apostle Paul did, when he laid the foundations.

Speaking about the grace of God working in His ministers, the apostle Paul says that he, himself, has laid the foundation. Although it was he, who started the work in Corinth, yet it was according to the grace of God given to him, and not to him personally. He has become a wise master builder, not because of his personal abilities and gifts, but because he laid the sound foundation – namely, the Person of the lord Jesus the Savior of the world, the true Messiah.

All what the apostle has done were due to God's goodness to him; It was God who chose and called him, trained him, gave him the true wisdom; and kept on working with, and in him. It is obvious that the expression “each one” here refers to the workers and ministers, each of them doing his part according to the gift of God given to him.

- ❖ This warning is directed to me and to you. If we do not build as is befitting on the foundation already laid, fire will consume our work on the day of judgment¹.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ The wise builder is he who preaches the same gospel preached by the Savior; then others will build on this foundation, sometimes a good building, and other times a bad one. We are committed to be alert and to take heed by faith, that what we build holds fast to the foundation, lest it would split apart and collapse, although the foundation itself would

¹ Sermons 233: 6.

¹ Comm.. On 1 Cor., 1: 15: 18-20.

remain intact. Even in case someone teaches in a bad way, yet the name of Christ, being the foundation, will hold on, while the bad teachings would collapse¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (11)

There is no range for any difference of view between those who work in the building, especially as far as laying the foundation is concerned; as there is only one foundation on which the whole building would be set; namely, our Lord Jesus Christ the Savior of the world.

Jesus Christ is often called “the Foundation”, “the Rock”, and “the Cornerstone” on whom the church is built (Isaiah 28: 16; Matthew 21: 42; Acts 4: 11; Ephesians 2: 20; 2 Timothy 2: 19; 1 Peter 2: 6).

When the apostle Paul talks about the foundation, According to **St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa**, there is no excuse for man; as our foundation is the eternal Word of God, on whom our building is set. He says: [Our foundation was set before the world was established, according to the words of the apostle Paul, saying: “***No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid***” (11); As it is also written: “*He gave birth to me before the fountains of water, and the mountains, before He creates the depths, and all the hills*”¹].

❖ Other apostles laid this foundation among the Jews; Whereas Paul and Barnabas laid it among the Gentiles².

(The scholar Origen)

4- TESTING EACH ONE’S WORK WITH FIRE:

“Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,...” (12)

Although it is the same foundation, yet different workers build on it with different material; gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw. By gold, silver, and precious stones, he means the heavenly teachings (gold), set upon the word of God (silver), and bearing the glory of God (the precious stones). While wood, hay, and straw refer to the vain teachings, like denying the resurrection from the dead, or what are not bound to the holy life with the Lord; which would transform man himself into wood, hay, or straw, that burn and become ashes of no value, to be cast in the trash, and be treaded by the feet of men.

By the precious stones he probably means the beautiful marble of high quality and price. In place of marble, wood may be temporarily used, as in building a little cottage for the

¹ CSEL 31: 35.

¹ Against Eunomius, 2: 10.

² Comm.. On 1 Cor., 1: 15: 41-42.

guard beside the walls. And hay and straw are used by some poor peasants in covering the roofs of their houses for protection against weather, although they may represent a great risk in case a sparkle of fire falls on them.

- ❖ After faith, there would be need for edification; as it is written somewhere else: “*Edify one another (by these words)*” (see 1 Thessalonians 5: 11; 4: 5). Both the worker and the teacher should contribute in this edification¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

What is the gold, silver, and precious stones built upon the foundation, but our enjoyment of obedience to the divine commandment.

- ❖ The foundation should be laid first by all means; according to words of the apostle, and to those of the prophet crying out: “*I loved Your commandment more than the gold and the precious stones*”².

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

- ❖ In case we think of what is true and good, we are building on a foundation of gold. If we preach every holy word said, without corrupting it, we are building on a foundation of silver. And if all our deeds are good, we are building on a foundation of precious stones. But if, after laying the foundation, we err, and persist on erring, we would be building on wood³.
- ❖ In this situation he calls himself “wise”, not for boasting, but to present to them an example, and to refer to, that it is the role of the wise to lay the foundation. But we should also take notice of his humility; As while talking of himself as being “wise: he hastens to say: “*according to the grace of God which was given to me*” (9)⁴.
- ❖ I wish we, not only hold fast to Christ, but get closely connected to Him, according to the words of the Lord: “*He who has My commandments and keeps them, (will hold fast to Me), and I will manifest Myself to him*” (John 14: 21)⁵; Whereas if we separate ourselves from Him we shall perish.

(St. John Chrysostom)

According to **Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus**, the talk here does not refer to the Christian teachings, but rather to ethics and behavior.

“Each one’s work will become manifest; for the day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is” (13)

¹In 1 Cor., Hom. 9: 5.

²On Virginity, 17.

³Comm.. On 1 Cor., 1: 15: 46-55.

⁴In 1 Cor., Hom. 8: 65.

⁵In 1 Cor., Hom. 8: 7.

By saying “*each one*”, he connects to himself the other apostles and ministers; As, preoccupation with persons would result in dissensions and divisions; Each one should instead, be preoccupied with the reward that God prepares for him, would seek to work together with the other ministers. The day of the Lord will be like fire that would increase the splendor and the purity of the pure; and will consume the wood, the hay, and the straw.

Some believe that he probably refers to what was soon to happen, when the Jewish temple was to be burnt by the hands of the Roman Commander Titus; as though who intend to hold fast to the literality of the Mosaic law, would lose everything; While those who are flared with the Spirit, would grow in splendor and glory.

He does not talk here about a purifying fire in the sense claimed by some, of the existence of a ‘purgatory’, directly after death. But he refers to a fire searching and discerning between the true and the false teachings, which, on the great day of the Lord, will be tested as though by “*a firebrand plucked from the burning*” (Zechariah 3: 2; Amos 4: 11). Although the builders will be barely saved, yet still they would lose their labor in ministry, on account of that they erred in their teachings.

- ❖ Each minister’s work will be tested by fire; If it endures, he would get his reward, and if it is consumed, he would lose his reward, yet he, himself, will be saved. In this fire, man would not perish forever; although, being a way of discerning between the works of two persons, it would benefit one, and harms the other¹.

(St. Augustine)

“If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward” (14)

Some believe that he refers here to the purification of the vessels according to the Mosaic law: “*Everything that can endure fire, you shall put through the fire, and it shall be clean. But all that cannot endure fire, shall be purified by the water of purification*” (Numbers 31: 23).

- ❖ If this talk concerns the students and teachers; The teacher does not lose in case the students decline to listen; Hence he says: “***Each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor***” (8); Not according to the result, but according to the strife in work.

What if the listeners refuse to care? This phrase confirms that it concerns the works. What he means here is that, if someone is wicked in his life, yet with an upright faith; his faith would not save him from the punishment, and his work will be consumed¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ *City of God. 21.*

¹ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 9: 5.*

The real rest of man is in his strife, which will be sweet, when he nails his sight on the eternal reward.

- ❖ In case man's work is justified until the end, he will have his reward. He will be like the three young men in the burning fiery furnace (Daniel 3: 1-10); designated to receive the heavenly life and glory as his wages¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ I am not in favor of comfort, but I prefer the perspiration of labor, which is more glorious, according to the apostle. He who does not do what his energy qualifies him to, will certainly be punished².

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

“If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire” (15)

- ❖ These are not mere words of someone casting a curse, but someone prophesying³.
- ❖ For someone rich or noble, if captivated by a sin, he would become more corrupt. A king captivated by barbarians would be more miserable than a regular man. Sin plays the role of a tyrant barbarian, and destroys anyone whom it captivates⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

In case someone preaches faithfully, yet his preaching is not perfect, God's mercy would dwell upon him, and he will be saved on the great day of the Lord as though by fire.

- ❖ When a teacher teaches what is true; Those who follow him would be like gold or silver, purified and glitter, as though by fire; while those who do not follow him would be burned; but the teacher himself would not be harmed; and he will have his reward anyway¹.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

5- YOU ARE THE TEMPLE OF GOD:

“Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (16)

The apostle Paul speaks about the body as the temple of God, while having in mind the great number of priestesses who practiced corruption to the account of the temple of idols. That made him confirm the relationship of the believer's body with the Lord Christ, as the

¹ CSEL 81: 37.

² Answer to Eunomius second Book.

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 9: 7.

⁴ In 1 Cor., Hom. 9: 8.

¹ Comm.. On 1 Cor., 183.

temple of God and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. That made him as well, talk about the sanctity of matrimony and the danger of being attached to an adulteress (6: 15, 16).

In the old, Israel counted himself as the temple and the dwelling place of God; on account of that God was living in their midst. The Lord

Christ, having proclaimed that in case two or three gather together in His name, He will be in their midst; the church became His holy temple.

Wherever God is, will be His temple, sanctified by His Holy Spirit. The Lord Christ, proclaiming to His disciples, that the subject of their preaching is “*the kingdom of God is within you*”, The church as a whole is His temple or His kingdom.; and every member in the church is God’s temple. It is befitting of him, therefore, not to corrupt this temple, as it is not his own property; but he is just a steward on what God entrusted to him.

The body of the believer is:

- ❖ “*The temple of God*” (3: 16, 17; 19: 6)
- ❖ “*The Lord’s*” (13; 15)
- ❖ Should be offered as a living sacrifice to the Lord (Romans 1: 12)
- ❖ A dwelling place for God (Ephesians 2: 21, 22)
- ❖ A subject of the glory of God (1 Corinthians 6: 20)
- ❖ A subject of holiness (Psalm 93: 5)
- ❖ A place for peace (Haggai 2: 9; John 16: 33)
- ❖ A place where Christ will be manifested (2 Corinthians 4: 10, 11)
- ❖ Its members are for righteousness (Romans 6: 13)
- ❖ Conformed to the body of Christ (Philippians 3: 20, 21; John 2: 3).

What does he mean by saying that you are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you?

a- The church, on the level of the congregation, and on that of the member, is the throne of God, where He sits and works, and for the realization of His pleasure.

b- The church is His kingdom, through which He sends the fruits of the Spirit, of love, joy, peace, and longsuffering (Galatians 5: 22, 23).

c- Through the church, God leads His people in the midst of sufferings and afflictions, granting them the comforts of the Holy Spirit.

d- As a sanctuary for the Lord, the church should not be used except for what is his. Even our body members are members of Christ.

e- The church is the subject of His love; beloved by Him.

f- The body is a tool, moved by the spirit and the brain. What is intended by the spirit, will be shared by the body, whether the will is holy or evil.

“For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 3: 8). I do not wish you to stand fast in us, but in the Lord¹.

- ❖ Although Paul was not actually ‘nobody’; Yet, if compared to God, he is nobody².
- ❖ No one should say in his heart: “God does not care for the sins of the body”. According to the apostle: *“Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are”* (16, 17). So *“Let no one deceive himself”* (18).

Someone may say: My soul is the temple of God, and not my body; quoting the following testimony: *“All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass”* (1 Peter 1: 24). What a bitter interpretation! Calling the body grass on account of that it dies. But, you should understand that, what dies for some time, would not also rise by sin. According to the apostle: *Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God?”* (1 Corinthians 6: 19). So, do not ever disregard the sins of the body, on the assumption that your bodies are from God. If you disregard the sin of the body, Are you not disregarding a sin you commit against the temple of God? Your body itself is the temple of the Spirit of God who is in you. So beware of what you do with the temple of God!

Just imagine, what would be worse than to commit adultery within the walls of the church? ... You are now the temple of God in your coming in, and in your going out; if you dwell in your homes; if you wake up;... In all that you are a temple of God! So beware, lest it will forsake you, and you would be destroyed!

Speaking about the sin of adultery, and about taking the sin of the body lightly, the apostle says: *“Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own”* (1 Corinthians 6: 19). You were bought at a great price; If you chose to disregard your bodies, do not disregard your price¹!

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ It is obvious that we are the temple of God if we do good. If someone is a temple of God; What is in the temple would necessarily be God’s ... No temple of God would be where an abundance of iniquities are².

(Father Valerian)

¹ *Sermons on New Testament Lessons, 54: 4.*

² *Sermons on New Testament Lessons, 95: 6.*

¹ *Sermons on New Testament Lessons.*

² *Homilies, 11: 4, 5.*

- ❖ He who believes in Christ will receive the Holy Spirit who dwells in Him by the washing of the new birth, by which he would become spiritual. But such a person, if he, again, serves the covetousness of the world, he would become carnal. The apostle Paul says, that those who became spiritual according to the confession of their faith, may probably live as carnal; and insult the Holy Spirit dwelling in them.

(Theodore, Bishop of El-Missa)

“If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are” (17)

It is befitting of us, therefore, to watch over the holiness of the temple of God through receiving the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, that is realized by the true faith, the sound teachings, and the experience of the new life; As diversion from faith and the corrupt behavior would defile the temple.

He does not say ‘You are the temples of God’, but says: “*You are the temple of God*”; representing one unit embracing numerous diversified living stones (1 Peter 2: 5).

Certainly in the divine world, there is a specific place for God, where He chooses to dwell – the church, the icon of heaven; which testifies to His salvation work and His exalted love.

- ❖ The righteous man could be called ‘heaven’, as about him is said: “*for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are*” (7). If God dwells in His temple, and the saints are His temple, the expression “Who are in heaven” in the Lord’s prayer, would truly mean “who are in His saints”¹.
- ❖ I wish the Christians who are called for the eternal inheritance would understand the words: “Who are in heaven” in the Lord’s prayer, as “Who are in the saints and the righteous”. God, being not limited by a certain place; heaven, although higher than the material bodies in the world, yet, being material as well, it would accordingly be limited to a certain space.... Thus if we assume that God exists in the highest reach of the world, the birds would then be better off than us, as they live closer to God. It is not written that ‘The Lord is near to the tall, or to those who dwell on the mountains’, but “*The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart*” (Psalm 34: 18); as a reference to humility. ... So, if the wicked are called ‘earth’, the righteous, on the other hand, are called ‘heaven’, and about them is said: “***For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are***” (1 Corinthians 3: 17). Therefore, if God dwells in His temple; and he called the saints ‘His temple’, the expression “Who are in heaven” would mean “Who are in the saints”, and it would be

¹ Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, 2: 5.

fitting to correlate the righteous and the wicked, spiritually, as heaven and earth, materially¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Paul so says to provoke the consciences of those who have corrupted their bodies by wicked life; and specifically that person who had sexual relationship with his father's wife (1 Corinthians 5: 1-5)².

(Amrosiaster)

6- LET NO ONE BOAST OF THE WORLDLY WISDOM:

“Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise” (18)

“Let him become a fool that he may become wise”. Namely, let him not glorify his arrogant human wisdom, but let him bow with humility before God, who will grant him the heavenly wisdom. Man should not walk by his self wisdom, which is contrary to the wisdom of the gospel; but he should walk by the spirit of the gospel; and, by a sound mind, he should seek the salvation of the whole world.

The scholar Origen and St. Cyprian believe the meaning of this verse to be: if there is among you, one who thinks of himself as being wise; let him not hesitate to become a fool in the sight of this world, to become truly wise. While others believe that it means, If someone is famous for having wisdom in his generation, boasts of that, and counts himself as a philosopher, knowledgeable, and learned; Let him, instead, hold fast to the gospel, to be accused by others as foolish. According to them, all temporal wisdom is of no value, if compared to the philosophy of his salvation. The apostle warns against self-deception; when man thinks of himself as wiser than the others, like Deophretes.

By becoming a fool in the sight of the world, the true believer, who is wise in God's sight, will find his pleasure in having a fellowship with Christ, expelled out of the camp, carrying the disgrace of the cross. For the sake of His love, even of His adversaries, while denied by his ex-friends, to be included among the poor in spirit, the expelled, and the denied. This is the narrow way of Christ, that will lead him directly to heaven itself.

- ❖ He commands man to become as though dead to the world, For this kind of death will never harm, but will rather benefit, as it becomes the cause for life. He also commands him to become a fool in the sight of this world, to bring him forth to the true wisdom. He, who despise the outer wisdom, would become a fool in the present world, knowing for sure that it does not contribute to his understanding of faith¹.

¹ Sermon on the Mount 2: 17.

² CSEL 81:38.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 10: 2.

❖ To explain his command to hasten to withdraw from it, he says: As the wisdom of this world is foolishness of God; And as it, not only contributes to nothing, but would rather conceal faith, we should withdraw from it, being harmful¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ According to the apostle, Be a fool in this world to become wise. ... Do not hold fast to your point of view; ... Do not proclaim a decision in issues you are asked about; but rather manifest humility in simplicity and faith, ... You should only care, for these issues to be holy, wise, and of benefit; to proclaim the law of God; ... And seek the view of your spiritual guide in these issues².

(St. John Cassian)

❖ Those of light bodies (see Psalm 114: 6); who, although wise in this world, they have forsaken their knowledge, and have chosen to become like babes, will learn the wisdom that is difficult to acquire through the labor of study³.

(Mar Isaac the Syrian)

“For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written: ‘He catches the wise in their own craftiness’ (19)

What is the wisdom of this world, but getting preoccupied with vain philosophies at the expense of their true faith; or being enslaved by the Jewish literalism at the expense of their inner liberty; The vain philosophy presents the spirit of pride and haughtiness; while the Jewish literalism presents a destruction of the soul.

“He catches the wise in their craftiness” is quoted from the book of Job (5: 13). The wise assume that they would succeed by their self-wisdom ; But, through forsaking the Lord, they would drink from the cup they fill, and would destroy themselves. The pagan wise men assumed that they could destroy faith; Yet they only destroyed themselves, while the believers were justified and conquered.

By so saying, he does not mean to scoff all the philosophical and scientific studies in all the diverse ranges of knowledge. God granted us the mind and discretion to recognize the facts and the studies that testify and glorify the work of God (Psalm 92: 4; 111: 2). But here, the apostle warns us against the wisdom of the ancient philosophers that touch our relationship with God, and that oppose God’s proclamations to us.

Every true knowledge and wisdom, if in harmony with the song of our salvation, are blessings from God; Not that the church would become the judge in scientific things; but that

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 10: 3.

² Institutes 4: 41.

³ Ascetic Homilies, 72.

the hearts of scientists would adopt the true spirit of humility, the living faith, and the enjoyment of the blessings of salvation.

- ❖ The wisdom of this world that completely lacks the grace of God, is utterly human in its features¹.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

“and again, the Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile” (20)

The apostle quoted this phrase from Psalm 94: 11. God knows that the thoughts of the wise in their own sight, being futile, are unable to satisfy their depths; and being vain, they would lead to their destruction.

- ❖ Being haughty, they assume that they can please God by themselves, and not by what is from God, who is the God of knowledge. God knows the consciences and thoughts of the wise, that they are futile (20); in case they are from men, and not from Him¹.

(St. Augustine)

7- ALL THINGS ARE YOURS:

“Therefore let no one glory in men, for all things are yours” (21)

How miserable is he who seeks glory from men; As God alone is the Grantor of glory; He who unite with God will not only enjoy glory, but will understand that everything is his, for his salvation, edification, happiness, and his eternal glory.

The Jews and the Greeks used to boast of referring themselves to certain famous religious or philosophic leaderships; of whom were Halil, and Shemei for the Jews; and Plato, Zenon, and Aristotle for the Greeks. And as it so seems, that tendency started to infiltrate into the church in Corinth, the apostle opposed and rebuked them on having such an erroneous tendency.

The apostle calls us not to seek glory from man; as even the saintly apostles are ours, sent by the Philanthropic God to work to our account.

We should love them for being teachers who present to us the blessings of the Lord; if we hold fast to God’s call to us through them. Not only Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and the rest of the apostles, are ours, all work together for the sake of our edification in the Lord, but everything is for our good. ... The world is a bridge made by God, for us to cross over it to Him; ... Life is a grant from Him which will bring us over to a greater eternal life; ... Death is a crossing over to the perpetual comfort in heaven; ... The present things are blessings that support us in our sojourn; ... And the future things are a glory that we joyfully anticipate.... Everything here in this world and in the age to come are ours.

¹ *Comm.. On 1 Cor. 184.*

¹ *City of God 17: 4.*

There is a great difference between how the true spiritual believer, and the natural man, look at things. The spiritual man sees in everything a gift from God to him, and in them he smells the fragrance of Christ; Whereas life of the natural man will turn into struggles, dissensions, and continuous debates; referring himself to this or to that leader or teacher.

The spiritual man sees in the world, with its rejoices and grieves, causes to thank God, and to receive every affliction as a fellowship in the sufferings of the Crucified Lord; Whereas the natural man, will be enslaved, his senses and feelings will be captivated by the world; and the temptations and afflictions will destroy him.

The spiritual man anticipates the moments of death with joy, longing to see Jesus, the Lord of glory, face to face; and to have a deeper fellowship with the heavenly creatures and the saints; Whereas the natural man fears death on account that it destroys all his hope.

The spiritual man sees the present life as a time to taste the exalted care of God with every moment of his life; Whereas the natural man sees it as a time to enjoy authority, honor, and riches; or sees it as a bitterness, he does not know how to get rid of; when he longs for the death he does not find.

The spiritual man anticipates the life to come as a fact, the deposit of which he now experiences and tastes its sweetness; Whereas the natural man assumes that it is a fantasy invented by religions to destroy the liberty of man, and to deny him the pleasures and joy of the world.

It is not befitting of the believer to boast of his reference to a certain teacher, because this teacher, all teachers, and everything is his. The glory, joy, and peace of the believer, are all gifts from God Himself, who works through the teachers.

❖ The believers possess everything in existence; whereas the non-believer, actually possesses nothing, and everything he has will be taken away from him¹.

(The scholar Origen)

❖ Because human reason is unwise and weak, man should not boast of being referred to anyone but to God whose word would never change. Any thought of human issues outside God is foolishness².

(Ambrosiaster)

“Whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come – all are yours” (22)

The Lord Christ presented His life delivered for the sake of man, to be enjoyed and acquired by the believer, who should understand that everything is his. As we have seen, the apostles with all their different gifts are His; ... the world was created for his sake, not to be

¹ *Comm.. On 1 Cor., 2: 17: 12-14.*

² *CSEL 81: 41.*

enslaved by it, but to be used to his account; ... Life is his, as a bridge to cross over to eternity; ... And even death is his as well, longed for by the believer to cross over to the world to come, and to enjoy the glory prepared for him. In truth, the believer, seeing his life as an enjoyable journey in the company of His Christ with whom he exchanges love, **he sees everything as his**: time, eternity, life, death, apostles, and the kingdom of Christ, who let us in need of nothing, granting us Himself.

❖ **We should hasten and not delay, by the abiding grace of love, to ascend to the third stage of sonhood, the highest stage, to believe that everything that the Father has, is ours**; following the lead of the divine Son who says: “*All things that the Father has are Mine*” (John 16: 15).

This is what the blessed Paul proclaims, saying: “*Whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come – all are yours*”. And we are also exhorted by the commandments of our Savior who says: “*Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father is perfect*” (Matthew 5: 48).

We should exert all our energies to ascend in perfect longing, from fear to hope; and from hope to the love of God, and of the virtues themselves. And thus, steadily crossing over to the love of goodness itself, we would hold fast to goodness, as much as the human nature can afford¹.

(Father Sherimon)

❖ The true son would say together with the Lord Christ: “*All things that the Father has are Mine*”; He, who is not tempted by the erroneous anxiety, is not confused, and has no worry, would be liberated from disturbance, would be happy in his heart, successful in everything, would consider everything as his, and would every day hear the proclamation of the apostle: “*Everything is yours*”; whether things present or things to come; And he would as well hear Solomon’s proclamation: “*The believer gets the whole world with all its riches*”. He gets therefore a hundredfold as his reward, of diverse, precious, and immeasurable things¹.

(Father Abraham)

❖ **Will God’s promise of hundredfold be realized in this world?**

This reward of hundredfold promised by the Lord will be realized in this world for the perfect, saying: “*Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit everlasting life*” (Matthew 19: 29). Let our faith not be disturbed by doubts, because this will be truly realized. This text has been used by many as a chance to confuse some, claiming that

¹ CASSIAN: *Conferences* 11: 7.

¹ *Cassian: Conf.* 24: 26.

these things, namely, the hundredfold, will be realized in the ‘thousand years’ (unfortunately interpreted that the Lord Christ will reign 1000 years¹ with the believers on earth, something that does not conform with the Spirit of Christ, who already spiritually reigns on our hearts) ... But, what is more reasonable and obvious, is that the world sufferings and the earthly pleasures would be lighter upon whoever follows Christ, by receiving brothers and partners in life with whom he is spiritually connected; to acquire, even in the present life, a hundredfold better love than the kind of love that comes with blood relationship, which is short-term and easily dissolved. Monks, on the other hand, enjoy a lasting union of intimacy, and possess everything in a collective way between them, that everyone sees what belongs to his brethren as his own, and what is his as their own. If this is compared with the kind of love based on blood relationship, we shall certainly find it hundredfold sweeter and stronger.

We could also acquire a kind of chastity by which the soul is bound with the Lord Jesus Christ as a Groom, a happiness exalted hundredfold more than that which is realized through sexual union.

And instead of the joy experienced by man through his possession of a field or a house, he enjoys the joy of riches hundredfold, being the son of God, who possesses everything that the eternal Father has, putting in his heart and spirit the example of the true Son who says: “*All things that the Father has are Mine*” (John 16: 15). He would gain everything for himself, listening daily to the proclamation of the apostle: “*All are yours*” (1 Corinthians 3: 22).

Therefore, we could realize the hundredfold through receiving kinds of things of greater value ... If we are given instead of a certain weight of bronze or iron, the same weight of gold, we would have more than a hundredfold greater value. In a similar analogy, if, instead of despised earthly joys, we are granted an equal amount of spiritual joy, and happiness of an extremely precious love, we would be hundredfold better off¹.

(Father Abraham)

“*And you are Christ’s , and Christ is God’s*” (23)

The Lord Christ is the Cornerstone in you; He gathered you together from the world, to form out of you a people for Himself, and sons to God; He is yours, and you are His.

“***Christ is God’s***”. Becoming the body of Christ, He offers us to God His Father, the One with Him in essence, a gift of His blood given on the cross. It is as though the apostle asks us, instead of referring ourselves to this or that apostle, with the spirit of dissension and bigotry, to understand that the catholic church, from Adam to the end of time, would be unified together, both of men of the Old Covenant or the New one; both ministers or

¹ للأسف يفسر الألف سنة، على أن السيد المسيح سيملك ألف سنة مع المؤمنين على الأرض، وهذا يخالف روح المسيح، لكن المسيح حاليًا يملك على قلوبنا ملكًا روحيًا.

¹ Cassian: *Conferences* 24: 26.

ministered, to be offered by Christ to God the Father. In other words, God's building is an indivisible unit; all work together on one foundation; Every living stone in the building considers the whole building as his; and that he would be introduced to God the Father, by the One Christ, as one indivisible unit.

"You are Christ's". The true believer understands his enjoyment of Christ, and the deliverance of his whole being to the Lord Christ, his Savior. He presents all his gifts, abilities, possessions, and inner energies, to the account of the Lord Christ. He is dedicated with his whole heart to the One who died for his sake.

Having become for Christ, He carries the believers as members of His body who bear His righteousness, and are sanctified by His Holy Spirit. Having reconciled them with the Father, paying His precious blood as a price, He brings us over into His bosom to see Christ as God's.

❖ We are indeed "*Christ's*", being His work; And "*Chris is God's*", being His Son. Although it is the same saying, yet with different meaning.; For the world is ours, having been created for our sake; But Christ is God's, being His origin, His Father; And we are Christ's, being created by Him. Now he says: If they (the apostles) are yours, why do what is contrary to this; referring yourselves to their names, and not to Christ, and to God the Father¹?

❖ He actually talks to them, being sons of high origin, have teachers, and are heirs of everything.

We can also say, in other words: The death of Adam and the death of Christ are for our sake; The death of Adam was to correct our situation, While the death of Christ was to save us².

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ We are Christ's, being His work, physically and spiritually³.

(Ambrosiaster)

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 10: 4.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 10: 4.

³ CSEL 81: 41.

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 3

I AM GOD'S FIELD; I AM GOD'S TEMPLE

- ❖ Who am I in your sight, O my God?
You wish for me to be mature, to walk by the Spirit and not by the weakness of the body.
To have in me no place for covetousness.
To know no envy, and to practice no malice.
To know nothing but the true love.
- ❖ By love, I become God's fruitful field.
Many have planted me, and many have watered me.
How can I forget the labor of the prophets, the strife of the apostles, and the care of the shepherds?
Yet, It is You alone who give me the increase.
I owe you everything in me.
So, come, O my beloved, to Your paradise, the work of Your hands.
To pluck from the fruits of Your Holy Spirit.
From the trees of love, joy, and goodness;
Of longsuffering and compassion;
Of faith, meekness, and self-control. ;
To offer Your Father Your righteousness, that You have granted me.
- ❖ Who am I in Your sight, to grant me Your righteousness, and present to me Yourself?
You have provided me with everything: the prophets, the apostles, life, all are mine;
Even Yourself, O the Creator of everything, is mine;
So why should I refer myself to this or to that?
And why should I rejoice if someone is referred to me?
- ❖ By love, You have set out of me a holy temple for Your Holy Spirit;
You, the foundation on whom the whole building is set;
Your Holy Spirit sets stones of gold, silver, and precious stones.

CHAPTER 4

THE APOSTLE'S PATERNAL CARE

In the three last chapters, the apostle Paul exhorted the church to enjoy unity, based upon the exalted love of God, **through the salvation work of the Son** (Chapter 1); **the fellowship of the Holy Spirit** (Chapter 2); and receiving **the care of God the Father** for His church, His field, and His building (Chapter 3). The apostle intends for them not to be preoccupied with dissensions, **but with God**, the whole Love. Now, he is committed to defend himself; not to draw their sight to his person, nor for the sake of temporal glory he covets; but **to confirm this church unity**. He is the minister of the One Christ, the steward of the mysteries of God; a father to them in Jesus Christ, whose pleasure is not in having a group of them referred to him; but in the faithful realization of his mission, and in the preoccupation of the believers with the Lord, their Savior.

This chapter presents to us a live portrait of the commitment of the minister for faithfulness; faithfulness to God, being the steward of His mysteries; faithfulness to the incarnate Word, to care for the ministry of salvation; faithfulness to the church, to bear her humble features; and faithfulness to the ministry, to present a paternal compassion and commitment.

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1- A STEWARD OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD:

Speaking about the church unity, the apostle Paul reveals the true role of the apostle, the minister or the teacher; that any of them is a mere servant of the Lord Christ and a steward of the mysteries of God; and that he is only preoccupied with is the enjoyment by his congregation of the salvation work of the Lord Christ; and to be faithful in his stewardship of the mysteries of God; saying:

“Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1)

By saying *“consider us”*, he refers to himself, to Apollos, and to any apostle or teacher in the church. And by saying: *“Let a man”*, the apostle proclaims that his mission is

to work to the account of Christ, not only in the life of the believers, but in that of every man. He wishes to be considered in the sight of all mankind, a servant of Christ and a steward of the mysteries of God.

(1) The apostle confirms that his main task is to **minister to the account of Christ**; not to seek an honor nor glory for himself. He is not a master who governs and reigns, but a servant who works to the account of his master, a steward who consummates the will of his master, and not a master who manages according to his whims. He is a simple laborer taking his orders from his master, and rejoices to see his master's children represent a united heavenly family.

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the Shepherd of the church and her Founder: "*I build My church*"; She is His work, and not any body else's. He would well understand this, he who knows the value of the dowry He offered for her: "*knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver or gold; ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*" (1 Peter 1: 18, 19). ... Who, then, can work the vineyard of the Lord, or tend to His flock?!

Jesus Christ in His care, is not in need of assistant shepherds; But, out of His limitless love for man, He called on him to partake of this task; We may be called 'shepherds', Yet, it is not us who do the work, but the 'shepherd' Himself in us; He still is the sole Shepherd!

(2) He is the "***steward of the mysteries of God***", who offers the divine mysteries and the word as food for the souls; not from him, but from what is his master's. What are the mysteries of God but the mystery of love that binds the heavenlies with the earthlies together in a glorious eternal unity. It is not the minister's right to claim the wisdom or the knowledge, in what does not concern the salvation of his brethren. He has no right of abusing their love for him, nor trust in his person, to present to them anything but the heavenly mysteries of God. He should entrust every task to its specialists: politics to the politicians, science to the scientists, and law to the men of justice. Being a steward of the kingdom of the divine grace, a preacher and a minister of the word, he should present it as a heavenly banquet to every man.

In response to someone who said that he does not believe that the bread and wine would be transformed into the body and blood of the Lord, on the hands of an evil priest, the bishop instructed him to seal half of the offering loaf with a seal of gold, and the other half with a seal of wood; and then asked him if he could distinguish which is which. Not able to do that, the bishop advised him never to judge a priest, whether he is gold or straw; as it is only God who judges him. He should receive blessing from the hand of the priest however evil he may think he is... And in case he is truly evil, his judgment by God would be harsher than any one of his congregation.

❖ If you look at the worthiness of men; think about the prophet Elijah. In the old, by his prayer, fire came down from heaven on the altar, to let the people believe; Whereas for us,

believers, God works in a hidden way. What happened in the old was a symbol, and a warning to us as well.

You should then believe that the Lord Jesus is the One present during the prayers of the priest ... For, having said “*Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them*” (Matthew 18: 20); How much more He would grant us His presence when the church (the priests) consummate the mysteries?!

(St. Ambrose)

(3) As a steward of **the mysteries of God**, he is worthy to be honored in the Lord; Yet, not an honor for pride and authority, but an honor to the account of the owner of the mysteries Himself.

(4) As a steward of the mysteries of God, he should understand that his main task is to offer these mysteries, **and not to interfere into the daily lives of the believers, and to bind them to himself in a human way.**

(5) The Greek term came as ‘oikonomos’, meaning the manager or **the master’s agent to ordain the affairs of his household**, who is responsible for providing it with its needs, in proper quantities, in the proper time. With the wealth of his master in his custody, he has many duties, for which he has to give a periodic account of his stewardship to his master.

(6) The mysteries of God **is the gospel**, namely, the divine teachings concerning the salvation of the world, through the sufferings, crucifixion, and resurrection of the Lord, which He practically proclaimed to us.

(7) As the Corinthians assumed that they were rulers of prominent status, and intended to move the apostles according to their whims, the apostle confirmed to them that he and his fellow apostles count themselves as workers for Christ, from whom they get their instructions to realize His will; Only from Him they get their reward; And nobody, whatever the pressure he uses, or the seductions he gives, can change their way of ministry.

Paul, and his fellow apostles, are proud to be called “**servants of Christ**”. So it is befitting of the priest to realize that his duty is to share with Christ the washing of feet; and not to think that he is a ruler, nor to accept setting a group to be referred to his name in the church; that may cause dissensions.

As a steward, he has no right to conceal the divine mysteries from the congregation, but to reveal it to all. And he is committed to the following:

- To dedicate all his energies and time to the account of His _____, and not to anybody else.
- To be faithful on the stewardship (1-2); not to scatter, nor to corrupt it (4).
- To understand that he is appointed by the Lord Christ Himself, and not by men.
- Not to care for the judgment of anyone but His _____ Himself, to Whom he will give an account of his actions (3-4).

- To be preoccupied by the day of the Lord, and not by that of men.

The scholar Origen distinguishing between the “*servant of Christ*” and the “*steward of the mysteries of God*”, says: [There is great difference between the two; As it is between someone who reads the Holy Book to become a servant of Christ; and another, committed to go deep into the Holy Mysteries to become a steward of the Mysteries of God. Paul has been a steward of the mysteries of God when he entrusted Luke to write his gospel, and when he sent Timothy (1 Timothy 1: 1-4) to separate the true teaching from fantasies, in the Ephesian church. I may dare also to say that Paul worked as the servant of Christ in Corinth; while he became the steward of the Mysteries of God in Ephesus¹].

As a servant of Christ and a steward of the Mysteries of God, he distinguishes himself from the false apostles, who, by serving themselves, and seeking their self-honor, they divide the one church.

- ❖ Paul so said because some Corinthians have offended him, claiming that he did not preach anything different from what the other apostles have preached. Calling himself a servant of Christ, and a steward of the Mysteries of God, he refers in a perfect practical way to the false apostles; by refusing to say that they are preaching Christ, for their preaching is not conforming to the apostolic tradition².

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ “*Let man so consider us servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God*”. A steward manages the affairs of His well, without referring what is his to himself; but, on the contrary he refers what he has to His Do you need an example of faithful stewards? Listen to what Peter says: “*Why do you look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness, we had made this man walk?*” (Acts 3: 12). And to Cornelius who fell down at his feet and worshipped him, he said: “*Stand up; I myself am also a man*” (Acts 10: 24). And the apostle Paul is not less faithful, when he says: “*I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me*” (1 Corinthians 15: 10).

“Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful” (2)

What does he mean by being faithful but for the minister to be committed to present the divine commandment as a befitting food to the divine household, namely to the church of God; to present Christ the Word on the table for the souls to get satisfied, and to become His one body.

¹ *Comm.. On 1 Cor. 2: 18: 10-16.*

² *CSEL 81: 41.*

According to the apostle Paul, every minister or every believer is committed to be a faithful steward in the testimony of the divine truth with the spirit of strength, courage, and wisdom.

He should be **faithful to God the Father**, to enter, together with his brethren, into His divine bosom as His children.

He should be **faithful to the Lord Christ** for all to enjoy the fellowship of His sufferings and His crucifixion, and for all to experience the power of His resurrection.

He should be **faithful to the Holy Spirit**, to conform humanity a living icon of the heavenly Groom.

He should be **faithful to the church of God**, to work with the spirit of sanctification and purity, and to testify to his faith by his works in the Lord.

And he should be faithful to his ministry, lest the gospel of Christ would be blamed. He should walk along the moderate royal path; and lead the flock of Christ according to the mind of Christ, and not according to his own mind.

If the apostles fear all the time of being asked by their divine _____ concerning faithfulness in their stewardship; How much more particular should we be in our lives and ministry, to be able to answer Him on the great day of the Lord.

❖ If Paul so utters about himself, Peter, and Apollos, How much more would it be true concerning ourselves? We should be aware and alert to be found faithful stewards¹.

(The scholar Origen)

The true minister feels that, being a steward of the Mysteries of God, he would be indebted to Him for all his capabilities, gifts, and knowledge of the truth; and, being **unable to enjoy the feature of faithfulness without divine help**, he would never cease to pray for the grace of God to work in him.

❖ Having been provided with everything by God, You have to feel that you are indebted to Him².

(St. Ambrose)

As a steward of the Mysteries of God, the minister feels the commitment to faithfulness on two aspects: The first is that, being a steward on the heavenly storehouses of God, he should not present false food, but heavenly food. On another aspect, having been entrusted on the souls of His Master's children, the blood of any soul that perishes because of slothfulness on his part, will be sought from his hands. That is the significance of stewardship of the minister of God.

¹ *Comm.. On 1 Cor.,2: 18: 25-17.*

² *On Theodosius.*

- ❖ A bank cashier should not be slothful concerning the deposits of his customers, but, being entrusted by them, he should rather care for keeping these deposits safe¹.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

“But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact I do not even judge myself” (3)

Here the apostle Paul confirms that he does not care for the criticism and opposition of those who formed diverse parties in the church under the name of Paul, Peter, Apollos, and Christ; As he does not seek his own glory, but that of His Lord who seeks the salvation of all souls.

The measure by which the apostle Paul recognizes his faithfulness is neither the people’s judgment, nor even his personal one; But he is preoccupied by the great day of the Lord, when God reveals the hidden secrets.

By saying: ***“It is a very small thing”***, the apostle reveals that he does not completely disregard them or their judgment, but, compared to the judgment of God, there would be no point of comparison.

“A human court”; Any court before the great day of the Lord is a ***“human court”***.

- ❖ It is obvious that Paul, having such a pure conscience, was not worrying about himself².

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ The apostle Paul accuses the Corinthians of exaggerating in commendation, and of judging others, a right they do not have³.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

“For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this, but He who judges me is the Lord” (4)

Delivering himself completely to God, the _____, the Helper, and the Judge; and not being even preoccupied with judging himself, Paul bears a holy feeling in the Lord. On one aspect, and by a spirit of humility, he is belittled before his own eyes; Yet at the same time, he does not feel guilty. In humility he proclaims that he is not justified; as the righteousness he enjoys is a gift from the divine grace.

Proclaiming that he does not feel guilty, saying: ***“I know nothing (of unfaithfulness) against myself”***, does not mean that he is faultless, but he is confident that the Lord will judge him through His mercy and exalted grace. However faithful he is, he still feel inadequate; Yet the lord consummates his weaknesses and justifies him. ... Why then should the Corinthians judge him? ... As though he says: [As for me, I do not count myself as evil or

¹ Comm.. on 1 Cor., 188 PG 82: 255.

² CSEL 81: 42.

³ Comm.. on 1 Cor.,186.

unfaithful in my stewardship]. Having a good conscience, he does not doubt that God will justify him (Romans 5: 1). Although he does not count himself as without weakness, yet he is keen not to lose his crown on the great day of the Lord (1 Corinthians 3: 14-15).

Despite the opposition of those he ministered, the apostle remains filled with the spirit of hope and surety that the ministry to Christ will never fail, and that God's plan will certainly be realized.

❖ Paul knows that although his heart was still prone to sinning, yet his actions were upright¹.
(The scholar Origen)

❖ Do not you see that he is not puffed up, but is humble in every way; He so remained until he has reached the top.

(St. John Chrysostom)

2- THEY SHOULD NOT JUDGE THEIR MINISTER:

“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveals the counsels of the hearts; and then each one's praise will come from God” (5)

The apostle, who cares for his own salvation, for that of his brethren, and for the unity of the church, seeks to put everything in its right place. On one aspect no one is to judge him, not trusting even his own internal decision; as the search of hearts is within the authority of God alone. And on another aspect, God Himself left His own judgment until His great day, when He, alone, is capable of presenting the heavenly reward and the glory that would never fail nor be corrupted. ... So why should we take by force the authority of God by judging others. Let us leave the judgment in the hands of Him who is capable of revealing the hidden things of the hearts. Let us not rush things; time is short; the great day of the Lord is soon to come; and the glory is set for us. ... As though he is saying: [If God Himself is waiting for the last day to praise those who walk faithfully, and to grant them the heavenly glory, Why should you be preoccupied with judging and condemning His ministers, as though you find pleasure in the perdition of others?!

As we can only see what is outside, and no one can reveal the inner intent and motives of others to judge their faithfulness, it is befitting of us therefore to wait until the great day of the Lord, when the hidden things will be revealed, and the praise will be from the Lord and not from men (see also James 5: 7).

❖ If I am unable to judge myself, how can I claim to have the right to judge others¹?!
(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

¹ Comm.. on 1 Cor.,2: 18: 49-51.

¹ COMM. On 1 Cor., 187.

- ❖ God will judge in the right time. ... A judge would be offended if someone claims to have the right to utter a verdict before knowing that of the judge¹.

(Amrosiaster)

The enemy tries his best to divert the sight of the church away from the true Groom to the friend of the Groom, by either commending or reviling him. The church, being the bride of Jesus the One Groom, she has no one but Him; and has no other way but to let the Groom's love and the thought of His coming, prevail over her mind and emotions, and fill her heart and life on every side. The enemy, on the other hand, not enduring to see a soul preoccupied with Jesus Christ, does his best to divert us away from the Groom toward someone else; even though a friend of the Groom. He lets us be preoccupied with the good shepherds, glorifying and praising them; and not giving the glory to God who has given men this authority and this possibility; And with judging and criticizing the wicked. By that the bride's mind is diverted from loving the Groom to judgment by commending or reviling others².

- ❖ Ham, son of Noah brought the curse upon himself by laughing when he saw the private parts of his father; whereas his two brothers who covered him up, got the blessing¹.

(St. Ambrose)

- ❖ We should not put our hope in the shepherds because of their good work; but glorify our heavenly father who made them that way. As to the wicked shepherds, whom the Lord referred to, as the scribes and the Pharisees, He drew our attention that, despite their evil doing, they still have their good points.

Concerning the good shepherds, the Lord said: *"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven"* (Matthew 5: 14-15).

As to the wicked shepherds, He counseled their herds, saying: *"The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their work; for they say and do not do"* (Mathew 23: 2, 3).

O flock of Christ, When you listen, even to the wicked shepherds, hear the voice of Jesus, to feed in security.

Among the good shepherds to whom they should not only listen, but should follow their lead, is the apostle who says: *"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ"* (1 Corinthians 11: 1). He draws his light from the eternal Light, namely, from the Lord Jesus Christ, set on a

¹ CSEL 81: 43.

² للمؤلف: الحب الرعوي، إدانة أبي الكاهن.
¹ للمؤلف: الحب الرعوي، إدانة أبي الكاهن.

lampstand, glorified on His cross. And: “*God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world*” (Galatians 6: 14). Seeking nothing for himself, but what is for Jesus Christ, he asks those whom he has begotten through the gospel, to imitate him (1 Corinthians 4: 15); while he strongly rebukes those who caused dissensions in the church under the names of the apostles, saying: “*Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*” (1 Corinthians 1: 13).

The good shepherds are those who do not seek what is for themselves, but what is for Jesus Christ; And the good flock are those who, despite imitating their good shepherds, yet they do not put their hope in them, but in the Lord who saved them by His blood. Even if they submit to evil shepherds, who preach the teachings of Christ without doing them, their flock should do according to what they hear from them, and not according to their works; and they would never forsake the pastures of the church because of the evil shepherds. ... In the catholic church one would expect to find both good and evil shepherds¹.

(St. Augustine)

❖ If a king gave such an honor to one of his subjects, to put in prison or to release whomever they see worthy of either, he would be the subject of envy and respect by everyone. How much more would be, he who got from God that great honor, that surpasses the exaltation of heaven from the earth; although some may not appreciate enough what they have got.

Let us therefore forsake the foolishness of ridiculing such a great work, as without it, salvation could not be achieved, and we would not get the good things He promised us. ... If no one would enter into the kingdom of heaven, unless he is born from the water and the Spirit; And he who does not eat the body of the Lord, and drink His blood, would be denied the eternal life; ... And if all these things are consummated by the holy hands of the priests, how could any one, without them, escape the fire of hell, or be able to get those crowns prepared for the winners?!

(St. John Chrysostom)

The scholar Origen noticed that the apostle Paul did not say: “then each one’s praise (or revile) will come from God”; **For God does not intend to revile anyone, nor wish for anyone to perish, but to praise and to glorify.**

❖ Why did Paul refer only to the praise from God, and not to any condemnation? I seems to me that what is worthy of praise would reach the ears of God, and not otherwise; And I could even say that God receives well the things worthy of praise; while the other things would cross over to the devil².

¹ للمؤلف: الحب الرعوي، إدانة أبي الكاهن.

² Comm.. On 1 Cor., 2: 18: 106-112.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ Confess that I do not know how to conform between the different statements that came in the holy Scripture; namely: *“Those who are sinning, rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear”* (1 Timothy 5: 20); And: *“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone”* (Mathew 18: 15); Except to say that, as no one can be sure, what his behavior will be tomorrow; for the minds of men are unpredictable and unsettled; the apostle, inspired by an exalted wisdom exhorts us, saying: *“Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveals the counsels of the heart; and then each one’s praise will come from God”* (1 Corinthians 4: 5).
- ❖ How great will be our sin, if we use their way when they rebuke us for something wrong we said, intending to wound us rather than to mend our fault; which results from the bitter animosity even between those bound together by a close relationship and intimate friendship, when they *“think beyond what is written, that none may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other”* (6). *“And if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another”* (Galatians 5: 15).

(St. Augustine)

It is obvious that his talk about *“the hidden things of darkness”* (5), does not mean what some used to practice secretly in the idol temples in the darkness of the night; But he means the hidden things, namely the secret intentions, motives, and plans of the heart; that seem as though in a hidden dark place, away from the sight of the human eyes. Those would stay hidden until they are revealed by the Mighty Judge on the great day of the Lord.

“I have applied all this to Apollos and myself for your benefits, brothers and sisters, so that you may learn through us the meaning of the saying: ‘Nothing beyond what is written’, so that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another” (6)

The apostle applied all that to Apollos and himself, with the intention to hide the true identity of the Corinthian suspects, to protect them against the reproach by others, hoping that they may repent and return to reason. Both he and Apollos, being faithful ministers of Christ, and bearing the same mind, they would not count this message as being personal from him, but bears the thought of the gospel preached by both of them.

What should the Corinthians learn from them?

It would be befitting of them to see the plan of the two saints Paul and Apollos, God’s work in their lives, their ministry, and how they worked with all their energies, with the spirit of love, humility, and harmony together; not seeking to become the head of the church, nor to become the cause for dissension. It would be befitting of the ministers and the congregation in Corinth, instead of forming groups under their names, to walk according to their spirits.

3- THE MINISTERS SHOULD NOT BE PUFFED UP:

After talking about man's commitment not to judge the ministers of Christ and the stewards of the Mysteries of God, the apostles revealed the bitterness of his soul concerning how some ministers became puffed up. He asks them what is the basis of their pride? What makes a believer differ from another, or even from a non-believer? ... If all what he enjoys is a divine gift, it would be foolishness and ignorance of the teacher or the believer to refer what he has got to his own ability, but it is befitting of him to praise God, saying: *"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Your name give glory, because of Your mercy, and because of Your faithfulness"* (Psalm 115: 1).

"For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now, if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?" (7)

Here the apostle addresses his talk to some teachers who have got certain gifts like the word of sermon or knowledge of the gospel of Christ. He asks them why should they boast what God has given them to bear the spirit of humility and not pride?! If God has distinguished some with certain gifts, they are free gifts, not given to them for their worthiness nor for the sake of their strife or cleverness, but for the sake of the edification of the holy congregation. Hence, it would be befitting of the gifted teacher to thank God who distinguished him with certain gifts, and not pay it back with haughtiness and denial, but with thanksgiving and humility.

- ❖ It is not possible by the will of any man or by his intention, however his zeal and longing for virtue may be, to achieve the reward of perfection and the honor of the upright purity; Nor that this will would be enough, as long as he still is in the body that wars against the spirit, unless he is supported by the mercies of God.

And in order to reach such a great goal he seeks, he has to understand that ***"every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights"*** (James 1: 17); ***"For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now, if you indeed receive it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?"*** (7)¹.

(St. John Cassian)

- ❖ We would not pray to God to lead us not into temptation if our will is enough to protect us... We would be provided with the will, and would become wise through His divine gift, Yet we need to pray to be able to realize what we want. Once you start to practice this true wisdom, you will find a reason to be thankful: *"What do you have that you did not receive?... And if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?"* (7).

¹ *Institutions 12: 10.*

Now, knowing for sure, from whom you have received it, Ask Him, by whom you were given, that the gift becomes more perfect.

(St. John Chrysostom)

Finding them assuming that they are reigning like kings, wiser even than the apostle themselves, and in need of nothing, the apostle Paul exhorting them in a gentle way toward humility, says:

“You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings without us – and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you!” (8)

He refers here to fullness with food in celebrations and feasts; Assuming their happiness and riches to be in the temporal philosophies and wisdom, or in the spiritual gifts they were given (1 Corinthians 14: 26); and have become rich, reigning as kings, and enjoying many honors and glories; they, by the spirit of pride counted themselves as in need of nothing.

The apostle Paul wishes that they would reign in truth; As, once they reach the kingdom, they would become a crown of his rejoice in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 2: 19).

4- THE TROUBLES OF MINISTRY:

Having rebuked them for their pride and haughtiness, the apostle began to reveal to them what the apostles and the true ministers of Christ endure for their sake.

“For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men” (9)

The apostle quoted this from what was happening in the Roman amphitheaters, where those condemned to death were presented to wrestle with voracious beasts, or to fight one another; and the one who wins had to enter into a second, and a third fight, that end in his death. Sometimes they were committed to enter the arena naked for the amusement of the spectators who were thrilled to watch them die from their deadly wounds. It was said that those who were thrown to the voracious beasts in the morning, were counted as being lucky, compared to those who were left until noon to fight until death against one another. The Roman emperors used those parades as a sort of entertainment and distraction for their people.

The apostles, like their Lord, were counted as not worthy to live, were condemned to death, to rid the world of them. Some believe that the apostle Paul wrote this, and in his mind a custom that prevailed in many pagan countries at the times of serious calamities and plagues; to choose the most evil and the least in social status, to be offered as human sacrifices to idols. And in the early eras, as the Christians were looked upon as the cause of

those natural calamities, or of the defeat before enemies, they were offered as sacrifices to appease the wrath of their gods. They were counted as “*the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things*” (13), not worthy of living, and should be got rid of.

While some believe that he means here “the evil angels”; as the devil and his angels find their pleasure in scoffing the believers, and in seeing them tortured.

The apostle probably proclaims here that all men, even non-believers, could not deny the longsuffering of the apostles, and their receiving the condemnation of death with rejoice; Even angels would marvel to see the work of God’s grace in them.

The Lord Christ allows for His disciples and apostles to go through these troubles, to make them a spectacle both to angels and to men, to show their faithfulness, and to proclaim the grace of God that grants them the strength and endurance, to bring them over to the heavenly glories.

❖ Paul was worthy to become a spectacle to angels, having strived to gain the reward of Christ; he struggled to set the angelic life on earth, by wrestling against the spiritual wickedness. The whole world indeed looked up at him to follow his lead¹.

(St. Ambrose)

❖ While the angels marveled at the endurance of the apostle; some men rejoiced to see them grieve, while some others, although with some compassion, yet, with nothing to offer to help them².

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

“We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored!” (10)

The apostle Paul meant to rebuke them in a mild way; as he was neither fool nor weak or dishonored; And they were neither wise nor strong or distinguished; although that was their point of view concerning him and themselves. He does not contradict this, nor protest against their accusations against him and his fellow apostles, but receive them for Christ’s sake.

By saying “*You are wise in Christ*”, he means that for the sake of Christ, he sees them wise, or on their way to get the spiritual wisdom.

❖ Those who love Christ are counted foolish by the world³.

(Ambrosiaster)

“Even to the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, beaten, and homeless” (11)

¹Episcopal Election at Vercelae 63: 71.

²Comm. On 1 Cor., 189. PG 82: 258.

³CSEL81: 47.

“**To the present hour**”, namely even after their ministry among them and in several other churches, the apostles still hunger, thirst, poorly clothed, and beaten like slaves (see also Peter 2: 20). They had no place of residence, and work by their hands for their daily needs, despite their great commitments and responsibilities toward the whole world. What a painful portrait for the apostles of the King of kings!

This extremely dark portrait of the true ministers of Christ, who, for the sake of ministry, are not only accused of foolishness, weakness, and dishonor (10), but they also suffer hunger, thirst, nakedness, beating, and homelessness. Yet this portrait would become immensely splendid, if the minister realize that what dwelt upon him is nothing compared to what dwelt upon his Lord, who “*had nowhere to lay His head*” (Luke 9: 58; Matthew 8: 20)). Feeling that he partakes of His hunger, thirst, nakedness, and passion on the cross; beside being rejected even by His own; would turn his own sufferings and troubles into a fellowship of glory on the cross.

By saying: “*to the present hour*”, the apostle confirms that the sufferings and afflictions are not temporary nor are past events, but are continuous during the ministry; an integral part of the apostolic work; And speaking in the plural tense, he meant to say that it is not special for a certain person, but are common to all the apostles and ministers.

Through their complete option, the apostles desire to partake of the sufferings of their Lord. They fast to feel hunger and thirst; and through continuous moving and traveling, their clothes are worn out, and could not afford to replace them. Paul felt no shame to stand before kings and rulers with his worn out clothes; that did not keep him as well from entering into the house of the Lord to worship; In the sight of God they were honor and glory for Paul. He was not ashamed to say that they were homeless, driven away from one place to another; beside having no household to provide him with the peace and comfort of family life.

While the Corinthians thought of themselves as kings (8), the apostle was beaten as a despised slave (1 Peter 2: 20); like His Lord Jesus who was beaten on His way to be crucified like a slave (Matthew 26: 67).

“And we labor, working with our own hands; being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure it” (12)

What an amazingly gentle portrait! Man, after falling, usually becomes arrogant and intends to avenge himself and defend his honor by paying revile back with revile. But by the grace of God which opens his heart, the believer does not oppose his adversaries, but loves them, bless those who revile him, and offer goodness to those who persecute him. By that he practically proclaims the mind of His Savior, who confronted the evil of humanity with love and longsuffering. It is only God’s grace that grants him the fellowship in the features of the Lord Christ.

- ❖ We are keeping the commandments of Christ; If we endure harm and deprivation of profits; If we bless when reviled; If we do good when persecuted. Paul was just one man, Yet, great was the multitudes he drew over to follow his lead!
- ❖ The Christians usually take a position contradictory to others for the sake of forgiving their adversaries; It is written: *“being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure it”*. Listen to Steven praying for his persecutors, saying: *“Lord, do not charge them with this sin”* (Acts 7: 60).

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ The Lord of Glory commands us, saying: *“You have heard that it is said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy’. But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you ... that you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect”* (Matthew 43-45, 48).

But, how could we endure all the previously mentioned things, unless we keep the commands of the Lord Christ, to love our enemies and persecutors?!

As mercy, love, and endurance could not be more perfect than when directed to enemies, the Lord of Glory ended His commands by saying: *“That you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect”*. Yet, we should take into consideration that the perfection of God differs from of our that of our souls as men¹.

(St. Augustine)

“Being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now” (13)

The word ‘defamed’ came in the Greek version as (blasphemed). God is defamed when He is blasphemed through denying His existence, badmouthing His attributes, His divine care, love, and grace; opposing the belief in Him, His teachings, and commandments, or despising all these things. While man is defamed when someone harm him in his person, honor, behavior, or possessions.

For more understanding of this phrase, we should have in mind some of the customs that prevailed in the pagan world at that time. When a great calamity dwelled, the mob used to pick up some lowly, despised, and miserable persons; put crowns of flowers on their heads; scourge them seven times; then take them to the temple, and offer them as atonement sacrifices to appease the wrath of the idols. After burning them alive, they scatter their ashes on the sea, while the mob cry out “Be atonement for us!”

¹ *Sermon On The Mont, Book 1: 21 (69).*

Paul believes that the apostles of Christ, the Atonement for the whole world, are treated like those condemned, worth nothing except to become atoning sacrifices offered to the devils, for the sake of peace and general good.

The words “**filth**” and “**offscouring**” in Greek refer to offering a salvation sacrifice for purification; as well as to the garbage collected from a household to be thrown away to make the house clean. According to the scholar Origen, our Lord, presenting Himself an atonement sacrifice for the sins of mankind; His sacrifice surpassed those of His apostles in this concern.

By saying “*the filth of the world*”, Paul means that, being considered the meanest and most lowly creatures, he and his fellow apostles had to be thrown away for the sake of purifying the world!

After saying that to the Corinthians, he talks to them with the language of love and compassion. **As a father figure and not a ruler, he is committed to warn and to rebuke them to mend their ways.**

“I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you”
(14)

As though he says: [I am not fishing for any fault on your part; and not seeking from you even the necessities of life (1 Corinthians 9: 15); but, as a father who seeks to deliver himself for the sake of his very beloved children. I do not write to you to shame you when you compare my sufferings with yours, or to overcome you in debate; but as a father, I refuse to see you in any shame or disgrace.

❖ Paul in this case acts like a good physician trying to appease the pain, following the surgery he conducted to heal his patient of his bitter ailment¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

5- PAUL’S PATERNAL CARE:

“For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel” (15)

As a father, he write to them, not to rebuke them, nor to reveal their faults like enemies, but, through his fatherly heart he seeks their edification, covets for their reform and sanctification, not for their judgment or condemnation.

Warning them, he discerns between them and their sins: he loves them as his children, yet he could not stand their sins, and seeks their sanctification in the Lord.

The apostle also discerns between the instructor and the father; They are in need of instructors to guide them and train them on the truth; but their effort would never be compared with the feeling of the heart of the one who begat them in the gospel, and brought

¹ CSEL 81: 49.

them forth to the sonhood of God. He laid the foundation, having established the church there, then others would come to build on that foundation.

It is as though he is calling them to enter into his heart to find in it the exalted warm love in Jesus Christ. He bears for them a spiritual love, on account of that they have received the faith in Christ on his hands and by his preaching. He laid the evangelic foundation, then others would come after him to consummate the building. He would therefore be as though he has begotten them, then left them to others to raise and guide them.

The term “**instructor**” here refers to teachers in general. And by the school “in Christ” he means that, as spiritual guides, they would bring them forth to the true Teacher, and the divine Instructor, who, alone is capable by His Holy Spirit to renew their depths.

Saying “*ten thousand instructors*”; refers to the great number of ministers and teachers in Corinth.

St. John Chrysostom presents to us a marvelous portrait of the concept of spiritual fatherhood of a true minister, of which I quote the following phrases, expressing his living amazing experience¹.

❖ I have nobody and nothing more beloved than you.

No! Not even light! I would rather, with pleasure, offer my eyes ten thousand times and more, for the sake of the return of your souls!

I treasure your salvation more than light itself ...

As what would be the benefit of the sun rays to me, if grief blinds my eyes because of you? ...

What hope would I have if you do not progress?

On the contrary? Hearing good news about you, I feel as though I have got wings ...

Consummate my joy ...

I so love you that I feel dissolved in you ... You are everything to me: my father, mother, brothers, sisters, and children¹.

(**St. John Chrysostom**)

Talking about the practical fatherhood of the apostle Paul to all humanity, **St. John Chrysostom** says in his sermons²:

[You see someone who journeyed the whole universe, whose goal and ambition were to bring every man over to God, which he realized with every particle of his strength. **It is as though the whole human kind became his children**; and he was in a hurry to reach every single one of them.

¹ *IN Acts, Hom 3.*

² *Sermon 3.*

¹ راجع للمؤلف: القديس يوحنا الذهبي الفم، 1980، ص 169 الخ.

He was continually on the move, with a perpetual zeal to call all humanity to the kingdom of heaven; presenting care, counsel, promises, and prayers, and driving away the wicked spirits persisting on destruction.

He used his personal possibilities, appearance, epistles, sermons, works, and disciples, to raise up the fallen, and to support those who strive; He counseled the repentant, comforted the suffering, warned the stubborn, and persisted on watching the opponents and the adversaries. **Partaking of the effort with the divine Leader and the healing Physician, he extended the hand of help to attack, defend, or instruct, according to the situation in the field of work; He was everything to those preoccupied in the battle].**

❖ The father is the one who sowed the seed of the gospel in their souls; Whereas the instructors are those who took over the raising of the newborn children to help them grow¹.

(The scholar Origen)

❖ Paul tells the Corinthians that nobody loves them as much as he does².

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ Not seeking what is his own, but what is Jesus Christ's; and exhorting those who were born by the gospel to follow his lead, he strongly rebukes those who cause dissensions under the names of the apostles, those who say: "*I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos, or I am of Cephas... Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*" (1 Corinthians 1: 12, 13).

(St. Augustine)

Our sonhood to God is realized through the work of the Holy Trinity: The **Holy Spirit** grants us the sonhood by binding us to the Only begotten Son, and sets out of us members of His body; The **Word** descended to dwell in us, and we in Him, to enjoy sonhood through Him; Whereas the pleasure of the **Father** is in realizing the salvation by His Only begotten Son, to be worthy of our sonhood to Him.

❖ Now, as we have received, in the gospel, the three Persons, and the three Names, through Whom the new birth, or the new renewal of believers is realized, He who is born from this Trinity, is born from the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.... Concerning the Spirit, the gospel says: "*That which is born of the Spirit is spirit*" (John 3: 6); Paul gives birth "*in Christ*"; and the Father is "*the Father of all*"

❖ In the holy Scripture, it is proclaimed when conception and delivery are considered good to be coveted by the saints of God. The prophet Isaiah cries out: "*By Your fear, O Lord, I*

¹ *Comm.. On 1 Cor., 2: 21: 9-11.*

² *CSEL 81: 49.*

conceived”; and the blessed apostle boasts that he became a father of the largest family on earth; having begotten entire cities and countries; not only the Corinthians, but everyone in the range of Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum (Romans 15: 19); his children fill the world, born in Christ through the gospel.

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

Adam Clark quotes Rabbi Shimoth telling about a certain girl who, having lost her parents, a guardian who took over the responsibility of raising her, was so faithful and honest to God, that once the girl reached the proper age, he intended to take her in marriage. When the official asked the girl the name of her father, the girl kept silent for a long time, and in response to her guardian’s persistence to have an answer, she said: I know no father but you, **for he who would raise a child in a good life is far better than any biological father!** ...

This could be the feelings of the apostle Paul who cared for raising the people he ministered in Christ, providing them with the gospel and the new birth in the holy water of baptism.

“Therefore, I urge you, imitate me” (16)

He asks them to imitate him, just as he also imitates Christ” (1 Corinthians 11: 1), As though he says to them: [Being the disciple of Christ, I wish you, as my children, not to be my disciples but the faithful disciples of Christ Himself]. In full faithfulness, the apostle, sitting in and walking toward the heavenlies, asks them to imitate him, to bear the same experience, and to walk the same path.

He is not seeking from the ministers and the congregation to keep his commandments; but as children, to imitate their father and bear his spirit. Indeed we may find many who teach and instruct; but few are who present themselves as a practical role model to be followed by those they minister.

According to **Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus**, the apostle here asks them to imitate him in his humility and endurance of suffering, to find their glory in accepting the difficulties with joy, and not in gaining any gifts¹.

❖ Paul says to the Corinthians:[Be humble as I am. Endure sufferings like I do; You will be rewarded not for the gifts you got, but for your sufferings².

(The scholar Origen)

❖ Paul wishes to see them follow his lead in those things. The way he endured difficulties from non-believers for the sake of their salvation; and still endures, as long as he preaches

¹ Pg 82: 259.

² COMM. On 1 Cor., 2: 21: 12-14.

the free gift of God's grace day and night, so that they would abide in his faith and teachings, and would not receive the evil teachings of the false apostles¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

6- SENDING TIMOTHY TO THEM:

The apostle rebukes those who spread the rumor that he had no intention to visit them, and that, sending Timothy, the young man, instead, was out of disregard toward them.

“For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church” (17)

What St. Timothy was to present to them is not something new, but to remind them of what they have already heard and saw in the apostle Paul; what he preached in Corinth and everywhere; namely, the one evangelic truth, the way of every era, convenient for everyone; as the Lord Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrew 13: 8). The apostle Paul did not say that Timothy will teach them, lest they become offended because of his young age, but said he will remind them of what he has already taught them.

❖ By saying *“my ways in Christ”*, Paul means his good works that took a steady form, which he demands the Corinthians to remember, as those good works bear a self testimony, and needs nobody to teach them².

(The scholar Origen)

❖ Paul's love for Timothy is indeed obvious in every situation (1 Corinthians 4: 17; 16: 10-11; Hebrew 13: 23).

(St. John Chrysostom)

7- A PROMISE TO VISIT THEM:

“But some of you, thinking that I am not coming to you, have become arrogant” (18)

❖ Some Corinthians were offended because Paul did not come to visit them; not that they wanted him to do, but because of their arrogance, they assumed that he counted them unworthy of his visit. Paul actually wished he could, but he was preoccupied with more important things¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

¹ CSEL 81: 49-50.

² Comm.. On 1 Cor., 2: 21: 20-22.

¹ CSEL 81: 50-51.

“But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of the arrogant people, but their power” (19)

He talks here about some teachers who thought high of themselves, walked with the spirit of arrogance, and spread the rumor that Paul despise the Corinthians, and refuses to visit them. He actually plans to visit them, yet he cannot confirm it because he is just a tool in God’s hand who leads him according to His will. Then he tells them that when he comes; He will not enter into a debate with those arrogant teachers who spread the false rumor, because his mere presence among them will be a convincing, and strong response enough. While he promises to visit them, to let them prepare for his visit by mending their ways in the Lord; At the same time he confirms that he only moves according to the will of God.

- ❖ It is not the nice talk that proclaims the presence of the kingdom of heaven, but the power; Whenever there is power in the words, the kingdom is there in them¹.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ Paul presents his promise to visit them by the will of God, who alone knows more than man whether this visit would be of benefit for Corinth. In case it is not realized, the Corinthians should know that it is not according to God’s will².

(Ambrosiaster)

“For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power” (20)

The kingdom of God is the enjoyment of the resurrected life in Jesus Christ, that transforms the believer as though into a heavenly being who bears the spirit of power.

- ❖ We would become equal to the angels; When the kingdom is presented to us, we will be counted as united with Christ. We know that without the virtue we would be lower than the irrational animals; Therefore it is befitting of us to try to become humans, and rather to become angels, to enjoy the promised blessings through the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ¹.
- ❖ If we will, and with the help of God working in us, we can, with our Spirit compete with the Spirits of the heavenly Spirits, and we can even surpass them².

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Preaching the kingdom of God is not enough for salvation, but it is befitting of man to walk the path that befits the kingdom³.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

¹ *Comm. On 1 Cor., 2: 22: 6-8.*

² *CSEL 81: 51.*

¹ *In Philip., Hom. 7.*

² *In Grn., PG 54: 104.*

³ *PG 82: 259.*

❖ It is befitting of us not to deceive ourselves with the false security of the assumption that faith alone, without responding to it by good works, could save us on the great day of judgment¹.

(Caesarius, Bishop of Arl)

“What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?” (21)

What is the rod that the apostle Paul threatens to use, but his apostolic authority to chastise. which he gave them the choice between using it, in case they persist on their arrogance and opposition; or the use of the spirit of gentleness and compassion, if they reveal a repentance and a return to the truth. As far as he is concerned, he prefers the second option and not the first one; yet it is up to them to choose.

In the episode of Ananias and Sapphira, and that of Elymas the sorcerer, it is obvious that the apostles had the authority of the public chastisement of the disobedient, to make them an example to all.

❖ The apostle teaches and follows the lead of his Lord, presenting the saying according to the needs of his listeners; sometimes using the knife, and scalpel; and other times the simple medications.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ Using the rod does not imply the absence of love; but love is hidden behind its stokes, even if not recognized by the one stricken¹.

(The scholar Origen)

❖ Paul refers first to the rod, to follow it later by comfort and the spirit of meekness².

(St. Ambrose)

❖ By the rod, Paul means the committing power of the Spirit, which God allowed him to use against the sorcerer³.

(Severian, Bishop of Gebalah)

¹ *Sermons 209: 3.*

¹ *Comm.. On 1 Cor. 2: 23: 6-8.*

² *Synagogue at Callinicum 41: 4.*

³ *Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.*

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 4

GRANT ME THE SPIRIT OF FATHERHOOD O FATHER OF ALL MANKIND

- ❖ In Your divine bosoms I find the warmth of love
There I join every believer in the spirit of true unity
And covet to have all mankind with me.
- ❖ You counted me as Your minister and the steward of Your divine Mysteries.
To what ministry should I be committed, but to preach with love?
And what faithfulness should I present to You, but to practice love.
Grant me the wide-open heart.
To bear the icon of Your love.
And to bring every soul over to you.
Grant me to be Your ambassador by practical love.
O the true Love.
- ❖ In Your bosoms I would get preoccupied with what preoccupy Your heart.
I would get preoccupied with the salvation of every soul.
And I would have no chance to condemn neither a minister or the ministered.
Nor, as a busybody, to seek in to know what lie in their hearts.
Nor to hasten the day of Judgment.
Nor to rob the chair of Your judgment.
Grant me the simplicity to see in everyone the splendor of Your glory.
To see You in everyone; which would bring joy to my soul.
And the thought of judgment would not crawl into my heart.
- ❖ Instead of judgment, I shall present a sacrifice of thanksgiving to You.
I see You the source of every spiritual gift to me, to every minister, and to every believer.
My heart praises You with a new song.
And my soul sings to You an exalted song.
And my tongue keeps on thanking You.
You did not let me and my brethren need anything.
You did not let us lack Your gifts.
But You give abundantly and without measure.
- ❖ With every song of thanksgiving, I shall present a praise of love.
I covet for all to reign even without me.
For all to be glorified at my expense.
For all to find comfort in the midst of my suffering for Your sake.

Let them be rich; My riches are rather the fellowship of Your poverty.
Let them be glorified; My disgrace is rather the fellowship of the disgrace of Your cross.

- ❖ They condemned You to death, O Grantor of life.
Why then, should my soul moan if they count me a spectacle for their entertainment?
And why should I bother if I become a spectacle to angels and men?
Let me be expelled, and even die together with You.
And count Your disgrace my exalted glory.
- ❖ Grant me the spirit of fatherhood, O Father of all mankind.
To embrace all in my heart, O You who embrace me in Yours
To love everyone more than the temporal light.
To partake of Your love, O You who delivered Yourself for my sake.
- ❖ What should I seek from You, O Father?
But to become an icon of love for You.
That all inside me would be a fatherhood of love and wisdom!

DIVISION 2

**DEALING WITH THE ETHICAL
CORRUPTION**

(Chapters 5 and 6)

THE ETHICAL CORRUPTION

Caring for the unity of the church through the cross and the spiritual behavior, specially the humility, the apostle cared for the sanctification of every single member; As the true unity would not be realized without the sanctification, where all unite in the One and Holy God. In great firmness he sought the separation of the corrupt leaven; confirming that it is the duty of the church to judge those inside, and not those outside; saying: “*Put away from yourselves the wicked person*” (5: 3).

The apostle sees **the church as though in a feast**, perpetually celebrating the true Passover. Christ is her Passover, namely her perpetual feast; And the feast would not be celebrated with a corrupt leaven. Our joy would not be realized with the presence of corruption, **destructive to peace with God**.

With this, the apostle Paul connects between **the church unity and the sanctified life and the perpetual joy**. These three things present a practical portrait of the heavenly life; and the church would realize her identity as an icon of heaven

CHAPTER 5

A HORRIBLE CRIME

After dealing with the dissensions that dwelt upon the church of Corinth, the apostle Paul referred to a case of a horrible crime that did much harm to them all.

Before discussing the issue of “*the leaven of wickedness*” that should be purged out, the apostle Paul made clear two points: The first is his fatherhood in Christ Jesus (4: 5), that caused him for the sake of the salvation of souls. The second is that **the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power** (4: 20)

Our life is an enjoyment of the righteousness of Christ, that we get from Him, and practice for His sake. Being a daily experience lived by the church as the bride of the Righteous Groom, she is keen on purging out the corrupt leaven, not for the sake of punishment, but rather for chastening the corrupt member, until he gets rid of his corruption and enjoys the righteousness of Christ through the true repentance.

1- Seriousness of the case	1
2- Cutting off the corruption	2 - 6
3- Purging out the old leaven	7
4- Not keeping company with the sexually immoral	8 - 13

1- SERIOUSNESS OF THE CASE:

“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles – that a man has his father’s wife” (1)

The word “**sexual immorality**” (porneia) bears the wide meaning of the word, and impurity, and particularly the sexual immorality in its horrible form.

Some believe that the woman in question was a Gentile proselyte; And according to the Jewish law, she is not bound to any of her past relationship, even to her non-believing husband, whom she has the right to divorce to marry a believer¹.

Even if it might have been an individual case, yet it is befitting of the church to stand firm against such a corruption. Here we can feel how the apostle Paul could not endure the smell of sexual immorality emerging from a member of the church, whether he is a leader or a layman. If purity or sanctity is the eye by which we can behold the Holy One; sexual immorality will dim the eye of the heart, and keep it from beholding God.

- ❖ Keep your body pure, and your heart safe; to be able to behold the Lord your God.
- ❖ Love peace and purity, to be worthy to behold the face of the Lord your God.

¹ Adam Clarke Commentary.

- ❖ The way the incense give pleasure to the nose, purity would bring gladness to the Holy Spirit, and let Him come to dwell in man.

(Mar Ephram the Syrian)

- ❖ Purity is the adornment of virtues, the dedication of sex, the bond of chastity, the fountain of purity, the comfort of the soul, and the crown of intimacy.

Purity has no need to search for something to adorn it, as it is splendor in itself; It recommends us to God, and unite us with Christ.

In contradiction, the perpetually hated impurity, puts an ugly and filthy stain on him who has it, sparing neither his body nor his soul of its defilement. Because once it prevails, it makes man utterly under the yoke of its covetousness ... It usually starts with seduction, and ends with a great destruction of the soul that it seduced¹.

(St. Cyprian)

The apostle did not blame the step-mother, probably she probably did not yet receive faith in Christ

If the wage of sin is death, Why then did the apostle say “*such sexual immorality*”? (1). The church discerns between falling in sin on purpose and falling in it out of weakness; and between falling in sin with a stranger and falling in it with someone whom the law forbid him to marry, like the daughter, the son, a parent, the mother’s husband, the father’s wife, etc.

- ❖ We learn from this, that there are several kinds of sexual immorality, some of which are more serious than others; And when condemned by God, He will take into consideration the factors of seriousness, and give the punishment accordingly. In this particular case, the apostle teaches us that, even if a legal marriage is carried out, and it is against the law of God, God will count it as sexual immorality, and is worthy of judgment².

(The scholar Origen)

Some believe that what that person committed is rejected even by the Gentiles; and according to the Mosaic Law, is worthy of death; So how could a Christian believer commit something like that?

- ❖ Beside the fact that that man was worthy of death according the Mosaic law, those who supported him are guilty as well³.

(Ambrosiaster)

2- CUTTING OFF THE CORRUPTION:

“And you are arrogant! Should you not rather have mourned. So that he who has done this would have been removed from among you?” (2)

¹ كيفية الطهارة وفوائدها، ف. 3.

² Comm.. On 1 Cor., 2: 23: 15-20.

³ CSEL 81: 52.

So it seems that that adulterer was a prominent leader with eloquence, that they were proud of him instead of mourning and removing him.

Whereas some others believe that another group of people, hearing about that incident, began to gloat against the first group, instead of caring for the salvation of his soul and mourning for him. This feeling was one of the fruits of dissension, for one group to gloat against another for their weaknesses, instead of caring for the sanctity of the whole church.

“Removing him from among them” means sending him away, and depriving him from the membership of the church.

- ❖ Notice how the apostle Paul touches their pride, yet without offending them, that they may even seek to cooperate with him¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

“For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the man who has done such a thing” (3)

The apostle, having been the first preacher of that city, considered himself, although absent in body, as though present in spirit,. And when a church council gets together to deal with this case, he counts himself, being responsible for that church, to be present with them in spirit as the head of their council.

- ❖ Notice his enthusiasm and zeal; how he did not allow them to wait for him to come to take part; He hastened to cut off the contagion before it has the chance to spread to other parts of the body².
- ❖ That was the meaning of being present in spirit; the way Elisha was present with Gehazi and said to him: *“Did not my heart go with you?”*(2 Kings 5: 26). How amazingly great the power of this gift, that makes them all together as one person, and qualifies them to know what is afar, and to say: *“I have already pronounced judgment as though present”*³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ when you are gathered together, along with my spirit with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ” (4)

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, being the Head of the church; and with His authority everything is done. His presence with his spirit to judge that adulterer, probably means his apostolic authority that he got from the Lord.

¹ CSEL 81: 52.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 15: 3.

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 15: 3.

- ❖ So as not to think of him as too authoritative, and of the tune of his voice as indicating some sort of haughtiness, **he cared to make them partners in judgment**¹.
- ❖ By saying: “*When you are gathered together in the name of the Lord*”, he means His name in which you gather together, and with my “*spirit*”. Again he sets himself as their head until the verdict is issued; and hints that they had no choice but to cut off that adulterer as though he is present with them; and that, taking into consideration that the apostle is aware of all the particulars and the details, no one of them would dare acquit him².

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ It was befitting of the Corinthians to remove that man from among them, not only through a unanimous consent, but also **in the power of Christ**, of which Paul was an agent³.

(Ambrosaster)

“Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (5)

Some believe that, by feeling isolated from the church, the adulterer, becomes in such a bitterness of the soul; that his body would get emaciated, as though on the verge of death, returns to himself in repentance, and hastens to enjoy the salvation of his soul..

While others believe that Paul by an apostolic authority, seeks from the Lord Christ to allow for that adulterer to be delivered to physical ailments and troubles, to become on the verge of death, and under the authority of Satan, that it would be a chance for his heart to return to his Savior.

The ‘Telmud’ refers to the following stages of isolation:

- ‘niddy’: by which one is banned from eating together with others for a certain period, mostly 30 days.
- ‘cherem’: by which he would be considered ‘Anthema’ (Accursed) for the period of 90 days.
- ‘shamata’: by which he is perpetually isolated from the holy congregation.

The western fathers believe that the Holy Book presents to us only two kingdoms; namely, the kingdom of God and that of the devil. Being delivered to the later kingdom refers to his isolation from the church, the kingdom of God, to belong to the kingdom of the devil which he has chosen by his persistence on his evil, and his refusal to repent; That when he realizes his situation, he would probably repent and return to the kingdom of God.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 15: 3.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 15: 3.

³ CSEL 81: 53.

This way refers to chastising the person in question or letting him go through affliction, like that when God said to Satan, concerning ‘Job’: “Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life” (Job 2: 6); And when the apostle Paul said: “Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Timothy 2: 20).

Concerning the adulterer in question, Paul did not say to deliver him for the destruction of the **body**, but “for the destruction of the **flesh**” (5); by which he refers to bringing to death the works of the corrupt flesh, about which he says: “The works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness” (Galatians 5: 30). While the **body** would partake of the eternal glory with the soul; the corrupt **flesh** would never inherit the kingdom of God. Destruction of the flesh or that of the body does not mean its death; as the apostle, in his second epistle to the Corinthians (2: 7) eventually sought from the congregation to receive the adulterer back into their fellowship.

❖ He did not mean to despair from him; but by saying: “*deliver such a one to Satan*” (5), he opens before him the door of repentance; like when a little pupil is sent to the school principal for punishment.

He says: “*to deliver such a man for the destruction of the flesh*” without mentioning his name; as it happened, albeit not on the same basis, in case of the righteous ‘Job’ who ultimately earned a splendid crown¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

Was it not within the authority of the apostle Paul to chastise? Responding to this question, **St. John Chrysostom** says:

❖ In this particular case, it was not for the sake of chastisement, as much as it was for learning. He showed that he has authority in other situations, when he said: “*Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?*” (1 Corinthians 4: 21); And again when he said: “*I write these things while I am away from you so that when I come I may not have to be severe in using the authority that the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction*” (2 Corinthians 13: 10). Why then has he delivered him to Satan? Probably to make his shame greater, and his anguish and punishment more effective².

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ When someone is banned from partaking of the collective prayer, no one has the right to pray with him before he consummates his chastisement on a sound basis, and enjoys the reconciliation and amnesty for his offense, by the head of the congregation in the presence of all the brethren. Through such a policy they would isolate themselves from praying together with the person concerned, who, according to the apostle “is delivered to Satan”;

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 15: 4.

² In 1 Tim., Hom. 5.

So, if anyone through an evil emotion creates a fellowship with him in prayer, before being received by the head of the congregation, he would even fall into a greater disobedience, would share the curse that has dwelt upon him for the sake of correcting his offense, and would deliver himself by his own free will to Satan as well¹.

(St. John Cassian)

- ❖ The followers of Many who criticize and do not recognize the Old Testament for such corrective ordinances, ought to meditate in how the apostle, concerning the sinner who was delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, applied that chastisement, not out of hatred, but of love, as clear from his saying: *“that his spirit may be saved”* (1 Corinthians 5: 5)².

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ If what dwells upon us is through God or allowed by Him, whether it presently appears to be sad or joyful, **It is all for our benefit from a divine Father and Physician exalted in compassion.** Men are as though under the care of, and humiliated by teachers here in this world, that when they depart to the other life, they would be in a better condition of purity. Here they get a light chastisement, so that, as said by the apostle, *“they are delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that their spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus”* (1 Corinthians 5: 5)³.

(Father Cerinus)

3- PURGING OUT THE OLD LEAVEN:

“Your boasting is not a good thing. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?” (6)

Even though his sin was an individual case, yet, having been in a position of leadership, he represented a leaven that would corrupt the whole lump, namely, would bring corruption to the church of God.

- ❖ Unless that person is isolated, the spirit of the church would not be saved in the day of judgment; because he would be a serious source of contagion¹.
- ❖ The way the sin of one individual may prove contagious to many if not dealt with on the spot once it is discovered; the sin of many would also be as serious in case it is discovered

¹Institutes, 2: 16.

² كان يقصد الرسول أن يعزل هذا الشخص وأمر بعدم مخالطته (1 كو 5: 11-13). ويبدو أن هذا الأخ قد حزن حزناً مفرطاً حتى كاد أن يبتلع من الحزن، لذلك كتب الرسول في رسالته الثانية مطالباً بمسامحته (2 كو 5: 8).

³ Cassian: Conferences 7: 28.

¹ CSEL 81: 54.

and not dealt with; or if they pretend not to see it. A sin may seem as though is not a sin, if it is not corrected or avoided by the person concerned¹.

(Ambrisiaster)

- ❖ That should not be taken in a literal sense. What Paul means is that the person concerned should be isolated from the church, and committed to live in the outer world governed by Satan. This way he would learn to fear the Lord, and escape from the future greater punishment².

(Theodore, Bishop of Messisa)

- ❖ Paul delivers to Satan those who blaspheme with their complete free will³.

(St. Jerome)

- ❖ He does not mean to deliver him to the authority of the evil one, but rather to the evils of this life, like ailments, grief, sufferings, and the other situations referred to Satan. Paul means that the person concerned should be sent away to confront the troubles of life⁴.

(Severian, Bishop of Gebala)

- ❖ From this we learn that Satan will snatch those who are separated from the body of the church, whom he sees deprived of the grace⁵.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

- ❖ “*A little leaven*”: I am reluctant to complete the phrase; but I rather wish to advise you to keep the leaven itself in a better condition, lest it would corrupt the whole dough, as it actually did¹.

(St. Augustine)

“Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was crucified for us” (7)

He seeks purging out the old leaven, for the whole church to become pure and sanctified in the Lord; and not to embrace any corrupt or unclean members; and of each one of its members to keep the life of purity in the Lord.

Having killed the Lord Christ (the true Passover), the Jews used to keep the feast with unleavened bread for seven days; As for us, we should keep our feast, not just for seven days, but rather for all the days of our life, unleavened and away from corruption. It is befitting of us to bear the likeness of our Savior’s death, by bringing ourselves to death to sin; and to

¹ CSEL 81: 55.

² PAULINE Commentary from the Greek Church.

³ Against Rufinus, 7.

⁴ Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.

⁵ PG 82: 262

¹ Ep. 211: 3.

enjoy the power of His resurrection, through our enjoyment of the new holy life in the Lord, in and out.

He seeks of them, to purge out, not just the corrupt leaven under consideration here, namely, the “sexual immorality”, but every corrupt leaven, namely every sin; On account of, once they have received the new birth, they became “unleavened bread”, with no place for corruption in them; It is no more befitting of them to go back and allow for evil to enter again into their life, and corrupt their new nature – the new man, created in the image of Christ.

As the Jews were committed to take away every trace of leaven from their houses, to celebrate the feast; It is befitting of us, as well, to take away every corruption in our life, as long as we perpetually celebrate Christ our Passover. And the way the lamb was a symbol of the Lord Christ, the Lamb of God who bears the sin of the world, The leaven symbolizes the corruption that should be taken away from the heart.

❖ As the Jews were always forgetful of the goodness of God on them, God, connecting those things, not just to a certain time of the year, but to how they should eat it; He commanded them to eat the Passover with a belt on their waist, and sandals on their feet (Exodus 12: 11); and in case they were asked why, they would say: we were ready to depart from the land of Egypt to the promised land; we were ready to start our exodus. ... That is the historical symbol.

As far as we are concerned, eating our Passover – Christ, who was slain for our sake (7); We should eat Him with a belt on our waist, and sandals on our feet. Why? So that we, as well, would be ready to depart from here¹.

❖ Let us explain why the leaven was taken away on all aspects, its hidden meaning. It is befitting of the believer to escape from every evil. The way dough gets corrupt if it contains old leaven; We, as well, in case there is evil in us, our punishment will be great².

❖ I have a strong conviction that the saying concerning the leaven also applies to the priests, who may allow for the old leaven to remain inside, and are slothful to take it away from within the church; ... all the covetous and the violent persons who are denied the kingdom of heaven. Covetousness is certainly an old leaven; that however simple it may seem, yet if it enters into any household, it would make it impure³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ Because of this new beginning of the new life; ... Because of the new man whom we are commanded to put on, and to put off the old man (Colossians 3: 8-10), we are committed

¹ *In Ephes., Hom. 23.*

² *In 1 Cor., Hom. 15: 8.*

³ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 15: 11.*

to keep the old leaven away from corrupting the dough; as Christ our Passover is crucified for our sake (5; 7) ¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ There is a double meaning for the old leaven here: On one aspect, it refers to the false teaching against which the Lord Christ warned His disciples (the leaven of the Pharisees) (Matthew 16: 6-12; Psalm 8: 15; Luke 12: 1). And it also refers to the sin of sexual immorality dealt with here. Paul teaches that Passover is a sacrifice, and not mere exodus as many people would think. As the sacrifice comes first, then it would be possible to move on from the old life to the new one. Hence, the cross is the absolute truth, referred to by the Passover of the Old Testament².

(Ambrosiaster)

“Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (8)

The apostle warns us against taking the simple sins lightly; as it, like an old leaven, would corrupt the whole lump, whether on the individual or the collective level.

Our Christ, the Lamb without blemish, the pure Passover, died for our sake, for us to be pure; the Holy of holies Himself died for our sake, to be holy saints for Him.

The apostle Paul presents to us a new concept of the Christian life; that it is a continual and perpetual feast of Passover; as long as we receive His crucifixion and death, and experience His resurrection every day. The church life is a perpetual joyful celebration, being a fellowship with Christ, the true source of our joy.

- ❖ It is a feast that extends all our life long. He did not say: ***“Let us keep the feast”***, concerning the Passover feast (the Pentecost), but he refers **to all the time as a feast for the Christians**; because of the exaltation of the goods we receive¹.
- ❖ Because it is a feast that extends along all our time, Paul says: ***“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”*** (Philippians 4: 4). As nobody puts on filthy garments on a feast day, I wish we, as well, do not do likewise. A spiritual marriage is realized; as the Lord says: ***“The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son”*** (Matthew 22: 2)².

¹ Ep. 55: 5.

² CSEL 81: 55.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 15: 6.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 15: 6.

❖ If the one with filthy garment was shamefully sent away from a human wedding, how much more accuracy and purity would it require from us to attend such an exalted heavenly wedding¹?!

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ The happiness of our feast, O brethren, is so close to us, and whoever reveres it would never fail to reach it; as the ‘Word’ is near; He who is everything for our good.

Our Lord Jesus promised to be always with us, saying: “*I am with you always, even to the end of the age*” (Matthew 28: 20).

Being the Shepherd, the High Priest, the Way, the Gate, and everything for our sake; He, as well, is our Feast, as according to the blessed Paul: “*For indeed Christ our Passover, was crucified for us*” (5: 7).

He, whom we anticipated; has shined upon the Psalmist who says: “*I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy, for You have considered my trouble; You have known my soul in adversaries*” (Psalm 31: 7).

He is indeed a true Feast, as He saves us from evil; which man reaches through adopting the good talk, and justifying his mind through submission to God¹.

(Pope Athanasius the apostolic)

❖ The way a little leaven leavens the whole lump, the wicked evil corrupts man; Hence Paul wishes that we avoid, not just the evil works, but all the cares for sin; So that by faithfulness, our life would be purified; and truth would take away all deception from it².

(Ambrosiaster)

4- NOT KEEPING COMPANY WITH THE SEXUALLY IMMORAL:

“I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people”

(9)

While some³ believe that the apostle refers here to an epistle he previously sent to them; Others⁴, like **St. John Chrysostom, Theodoret**, most of the Latin, and all the German scholars, believe that he refers here to what he wrote in the same epistle, concerning this issue.

❖ Paul means that it is better to die (to go out of the world), than to keep company with believers who commit such a sexual immorality; as death would put an end to it without delay⁵.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 15: 6.

¹ للمؤلف: الحب الإلهي، ص 630.

² CSEL 81: 56-57.

³ Ambrosiaster: CSEL 81: 57.

⁴ Theodoret of Cyrus: PG 82: 263.

⁵ CSEL 81: 56-57.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ While sexually immoral non-believers would not harm the church; those among the congregation of believers would corrupt it from within; hence they should be avoided and isolated¹.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ It is obvious that, if we should not eat together with them, we would rather be committed not to share with them the banquet of God (Communion)².

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

“Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world” (10)

While the sexually immoral people, sin against themselves by losing their own purity; the covetous and the extortioners, on the other hand, sin against their brethren. As to the idolaters, they sin against God.

“But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner – not even to eat with such a person” (11)

- ❖ There could be some people who are not true children of the church; like those referred to in verse 11; ... who are so called, because they have gained the grace of being born again, yet they are not true children, being unworthy of the Father they have forsaken and have become under the authority of someone else³.
- ❖ I wish we do not drive the grace away from ourselves; We have been instructed to “*withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly*” (2 Thessalonian 3: 6), who is considered as great evil, and should be isolated from the body of brethren; by which it would be a collective punishment for all. Here he says: “***do not even eat with such a person***” (11). Now, as the majority of people do not any more consider keeping company with the sexually immoral and the covetous people a great evil, everything became corrupt and confused.

If we are commanded to withdraw from him who was getting help while being slothful; what would be the case with the others?

If you fail to appreciate how horrible it is to be isolated from the congregation. Just hear what happened to that person who boasted his sin and reached the climax of evil; he,

¹ *Comm. On 1 Cor., 2:26: 23-26.*

² *PG 82: 263.*

³ *In Titus. Hom. 1.*

who committed the sin of sexual immorality – not even named among the Gentiles --, who did not feel his wound until it got corrupted; Having been isolated from the congregation, like a body member severed from the rest of the body, made him eventually bow down and so humiliated, that Paul said concerning him: “*This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man; ... On the contrary you ought rather to forgive him; lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow; I urge you to reaffirm your love to him*” (2 Corinthians 2: 6, 7) ¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ The apostle presented to us a long list of iniquities including the drunkards; and ended it by warning against eating bread together with those who commit them².
- ❖ It is pitiful to be reminded of the seriousness of eating food with those known to be greedy even in their own homes³.

(St. Augustine)

For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside?” (12)

Some scholars used this particular phrase to attack the concept of the monastic life, as being a non-evangelic sort of life; involving a retreat from the world, shutting oneself up, and not testifying to the gospel before others. Yet, this view could be referred to misunderstanding the truth of the evangelistic monastic thought; As monasticism since its beginning is a setting up the soul toward heaven, and the spaciousness of the heart with love toward all mankind. The monk, even in the solitude of his cell, lifts his hands up toward heaven, bearing all men in his heart, and wishing for the salvation of all. **St. Anthony**, the great father of all the monastic family in the whole world, used to open his cave before many of the pagan philosophers, and has gained some of them to the Lord Christ. The spiritual monks have ministered to many in the church and in the world.

- ❖ Brethren, this is my mission, to talk to Christians, “*for what have I to do with those who are outside?’* (12) ¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ The apostle asked: “*What have I to do with those who are outside?’* .Indeed, those are out of range of where the words of our mysteries are uttered; are not under God’s roof, but under that of the evil one. And being captivated by his will, they do not realize that all

¹ In 2 Thess., hom. 5.

² Ep. 22: 3.

³ Ep. 39.: 5..

¹ Sermons on New Testament Lessons.

virtues are found in moderation; and that any diversion from it in any direction would turn them into iniquities¹.

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

- ❖ While a Bishop can do nothing with non-believers, yet, as far as a believer who commit these iniquities is concerned, he can keep him away, not only from partaking of the holy sacraments, but even from talking with anyone of the congregation; so that he would eventually feel ashamed of himself, and repent².

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ As long as it is not possible for us to know for sure, the real intent of others who store up and treasure the temporal things; and that they could be doing that with a simple heart; It is therefore befitting of us to listen to the words of the Lord, saying: “**Judge not, that you be not judged; for what judgment you judge, you will be judged, and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you**” (Matthew 7: 1)

I believe that we can learn from this commandment that we should assume the best possible purpose for the actions of the others, that we may doubt their intention.

But when saying “From their fruits, you can know them”, he means the fruits that could not be doubted, like fornication, blasphemy, robbery, drinking, etc. which the church is allowed to judge; according to the words of the apostle: “*For what have I to do with those who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside?*” (12). We should for example, not judge someone for eating a certain kind of food, perhaps with a good intention and without covetousness. That is why the apostle commands those who commit themselves to abstain from eating meet and drinking wine, not to judge those who do; saying: “*Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat; and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats*”; and also says: “*Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls*” (Romans 3, 4)¹.

(St. Augustine)

“But those who are outside, God judges; Therefore, put away from yourselves that wicked person” (13)

The church with her spacious heart, doe not judge those who are outside, but prays for their sake to God to reveal to them the true holiness through His rich grace. Yet she is committed to live pure and sanctified, and firm with those who are inside. The higher the leader’s rank, the firmer will be his chastisement if he errs.

¹ On Virginitiy, 8.

² CSEL 81: 58.

¹ Sermon on the Amount 2: 59.

❖ Do your best to put away from yourself the wicked person; because when he departs, Christ will dwell in you¹.

(The scholar Origen)

¹ *Comm.. On 1 Cor., 2: 26: 57-59.*

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 5

TAKE AWAY MY CORRUPTION TO REJOICE IN YOU, O MY PERPETUAL FEAST

- ❖ By my own free will, I allowed my enemy to crawl inside my heart.
To have authority over my will;
That I walk with what is not befitting of me as a true son of Yours.
- ❖ Together with every slothfulness on my part;
with every sin I commit;
I insult my sonhood to You, O the whole Holiness.
- ❖ Say a word;
By granting me the spirit of strength;
I shall not allow the corrupt leaven to corrupt the whole lump of dough of my life.
I shall drive away every corruption inside me.
To become to You the unleavened bread of truth, with no corrupt leaven.
And exult with a perpetual Passover, O my true Passover.
- ❖ I always behold You on the cross, O the Lamb of God.
Giving Yourself up as a Passover, to bring me out of the land of bondage.
Bringing me over from the bitterness to the sweetness of freedom.
You are the Passover of us all.
You have transformed our life to a perpetual incessant feast.
You have set inside me a non-ending wedding.
You have transformed my wailing into joy.
- ❖ Grant me by Your Spirit, not to receive anything unclean in my depths.
To become in truth Your Icon, O Holy One.
To be sanctified, and not to judge anyone of those outside.
But to judge myself inside.
- ❖ Grant Your church the Spirit of strength and holiness.
By Your Spirit, take away every defilement.
Not to judge, but to chastise.
Not by the spirit of revenge, but with the tears of compassion.
You cut off evil, and weep for the sake of the wicked.
You do not endure the smell of corruption.
You do not wish for the perdition of anyone.
Judge it Yourself, O the true firm love.

CHAPTER 6

IT IS WRONG OF CHRISTIANS TO SUE ONE ANOTHER BEFORE UNBELIEVERS

In the previous chapter, St. Paul showed that the church has no right to judge those who are outside, but only those inside. Now, the apostle deals with the issue of “temporal tribunals”. Is it right for a believer to sue his brother in a civil court?

In this chapter the apostle rebukes them for breaking brotherly love by resorting to law before unbelievers against one another, for the smallest of matters that the church could sort out. And as the wise Solomon says: “*A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city. And contentions are like the bars of a castle*” (Proverbs 18: 19). Taking refuge in brotherly love is better than in a strong city.

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1- CHRISTIANS RESORTING TO PAGAN COURTS OF JUSTICE:

“Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?” (1)

While calling the pagan judges “**unrighteous**”, he calls men of the church “saints”; as it is befitting of the Christians to bear the Holy Spirit, and walk in holiness.

By resorting to pagan courts, the brethren would waste time and money, break down brotherly love, would be moved to anger, use unbefitting cruel words, lose their inner peace and joy, disregard their mission as ambassadors of the Lord Christ; and insult the church, home of the saints.

- ❖ The apostle did not wish for them to be judged by those from outside; and did not intend for the shortcoming by those who have learned the good behavior and righteousness, to be a stumbling block to those who are outside the church¹.

(Theodore, Bishop of El-Missa)

Why did he call the pagan judges ‘unrighteous’, when some of them could be just?

God is the true source of justice; with love in His justice, and justice in His love. He desires for all to be saved, and to come to the truth. That is why, the pagans, even though they might practice temporal justice, yet, having isolated themselves from the truth, they do not care for their own salvation, nor for that of those they judge, and are therefore counted as “unrighteous”.

“Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you not worthy to judge the smallest matters?” (2)

- ❖ The twelve apostles will judge the twelve tribes of Israel, if they did not believe in Christ and rejected Him. The rest of the saints will judge the Gentiles who do not forsake idol worship, and believe in the true God².

(Severian, Bishop of Gebalah)

- ❖ The non-belief of the world will be judged by the example of faith of the saints³.

(Ambrosiaster)

“Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?” (3)

The apostle shows them the seriousness of their behavior; For, if the believers, by their holy life, will judge the world and the wicked angels, on the great day of the Lord; How much more, would they judge the temporal little things? It is as though, resorting to temporal courts involves an insult to the saints.

The Lord told us that His twelve apostles will sit on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 28: 19). And in another place we hear about the ten thousands of saints who will come with the Lord to execute judgment on the great day of the Lord (Jude 13, 14; 1 Thessalonians 3: 13). **This does not mean that they, themselves, will do the judgment; but will sit on the chairs of honor to watch the judgment of the evil world.**

The believers, glorified on the great day of the Lord, will be like a queen who sits on the right hand of the King; the King will judge the wicked angel in the presence of the queen as though partaking of His work. Some believe that the believers, getting more honor than the

¹ Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.

² Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.

³ CSEL 81: 59.

angels, enjoying the salvation work of God, and partaking of His glory, they will be honored by the saintly angels.

It is said about the saints that, after appearing to be judged by the Lord, they will reign together with Him, but will not partake of the judgment. It refers here to their enjoyment of the glory as a strong testimony against the non-believers and the wicked angels.

The judgment of the wicked angels began by the cross, *“having disarmed principalities and powers, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it”* (Colossians 2: 15). He gave the church the authority to destroy the kingdom of the devil and to drive him out of many. In this same way, the true believers are given the authority to judge and destroy the kingdom of the devil and his hosts.

❖ The apostle does not talk here about the real angels, but about the false priests and teachers of the people, who will be judged because of their vain teachings concerning Christ¹.

(Severian, Bishop of Gebalah)

❖ Paul refers here to the devils who were angels before².

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

❖ Having *“labored more abundantly than they all”* (1 Corinthians 15: 10), Paul truly counts himself among the judges, when he says: *“Do you not know that we shall judge angels?”* (3)³.

(St. Augustine)

“If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, Appoint as judges those who are least esteemed by the church to judge?” (4)

By those least esteemed, he probably means the believers who have no positions of leadership; In the Jewish society, there were five levels of courts of justice:

1- **The greater court of the Sanhedrin**, of 72 elders, held in Jerusalem; with the highest religious judiciary authority.

2- **The lesser courts of Sanhedrin**, of 25 members, held in the major cities outside Jerusalem.

3- **Benches of three members.**

4- **Authorized or Authentic benches.**

5- **Unauthorized benches**; so called because they do not get their authority from the Sanhedrin; but their members are selected from the adversary parties, to make decisions in their disputes without entering into official courts.

¹ Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.

² PG 81: 60.

³ City of God 20: 5.

The “**least esteemed**”, although literally translated as (those who not trusted); yet they would be better than the pagans who oppose the evangelic truth. It is as though the apostle says to them: If you have no one among the church leaders who is fit, Chose those who are thought to be “Least esteemed” to judge in your inner disputes.

- ❖ The apostle requests choosing as judges, wise believers from among those who are properly tested in several positions; and not those preoccupied with preaching, who have to move here and there ... And in case they do not find such wise judges, let them choose others who are among the least esteemed, so that the affairs of the Christians would not be displayed before the sight of non-believers¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ He means that, as much as possible, we should not deliver ourselves to be judged by those from outside. ... Even if there is no wise among us, it would be better to put things in the hands of the least esteemed².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? (5)

- ❖ The Corinthians, who used to boast of their philosophies and wisdom, and who were assumed to be better than any others; because of the dissensions among them, of which the church suffered, they could not find even one wise man who is able to judge the cases of the brethren without resorting to the pagan courts. That is why he rebukes them saying: “*Is it so, that there is not a wise man, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?*”³.

(The scholar Origen)

“But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!” (6)

- ❖ We have the leaders of the church to whom we should resort in our disputes, so as not to be called before the courts of unbelievers⁴.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ This does not, in any way, contradict what came in his epistle to the Romans (Chapter 13), where he exhorts them to honor those in authority. While he does not want us to oppose the temporal authorities; yet he prefers not to resort to them⁵.

¹ *The Work of Monks*, 29.

² *In 1 Cor.*, Hom. 16: 6.

³ *Comm.. on 1 Cor.*, 2: 27: 20-22.

⁴ *Comm.. on 1 Cor.*, 2: 27: 27-28.

⁵ PG 82: 266.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

- ❖ It is a double charge here: Going to court; and standing before unbelievers. If it is wrong to go to law against a brother; Doing it before unbelieving would be unforgivable¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

2- LET US ENDURE INJUSTICE, AND NOT PRACTICE IT:

“Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?” (7)

It is as though he says to them: In case there is no wise man among you to judge between brethren; The injustice that would probably dwell upon any one of you through the intervention of the church, would certainly be less harmful than to resort to pagan courts against brethren. The peace of heart together with some endurance of a little injustice, would be better than to enter into controversies and contentions before courts; particularly if the judge is a pagan who hates and opposes faith; and would most probably use the chance to abuse the situation.

Because resorting to pagan courts involves a loss of the brotherly peace, love, mutual trust between believers, and the fear of God. Hence he adds: *“No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren”* (8); probably referring to the one who committed sexual immorality with his father’s wife.

- ❖ It would be befitting of the Christian not to sue anyone altogether; Yet, in case of something too serious to disregard, let him resort to the church².

- ❖ Attacking those who initiate contentions, Paul says, that they would not only be worthy of punishment because of the wrong they do, but because they contribute, as well, to what the other party would do, when they have to resort to the unbelievers to give them justice³.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ Being God’s ministers, by observing His commandment, not to enter into contentions, but uprightly proclaim the truth; We would, as well, save our adversary from the evil consequences of going to pagan courts, even against his will⁴.

(St. Basil the Great)

- ❖ We say again: the crime is double, probably triple, or even quadruple:
 - 1- You do not know how to endure, which is wrong.
 - 2- You are doing wrong.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 16: 6.

² CSEL 81: 62.

³ CSEL 81: 62.

⁴ The Long Rules, 9.

3- You resort to the wrong party for justice.

4- You do such thing against a brother¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

3- THE UNRIGHTEOUS WILL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD:

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (9,10)

The apostle Paul fears that they might be deceived; And what is more serious is to be deceived, not by someone from outside, but by their own hearts and erroneous thoughts; or by the leaders who were supposed to lead them along the true royal path.

The apostle presents ten categories of people who deny themselves the enjoyment of the privileges of the children of God; namely to inherit God together with Christ (Romans 8: 17). He presents the truth clear and loud, that such sinners who persist on not repenting, will not inherit the kingdom of God. Those who practice the work of the devil will not enjoy the gift of God, the eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6: 23). It is befitting of them not to deceive themselves; as it is impossible for man to sow what is for the flesh, and reap what is for the Spirit.

The apostle warns them against **three risks**:

a- To lose the kingdom of God

b- To have their soul fall into the nets of deceit.

c- To go to hell.

❖ Listen to what he says ... Do you not see how all kinds of evil are defeated; and how it is pitch dark and corruption of everything true²?!

❖ Seeing how getting drunk, and reviling, are serious offenses, he remind us of when Christ Himself delivered to hell the one who says to his brother “*You fool*”³ (Matthew 5: 22).

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ We should not be deceived by seeing them called by the name of Christ, without having the necessary works associated with it. We should not also be deceived by seeing them perform signs and wonders; For the Lord, Himself, who performed miracles to non-believers, warning us against the false assumption that wherever there is the seen miracle, there would be the unseen wisdom, says: “*Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord,*

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 16: 7.

² In Titus, Hom. 5.

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 16: 8.

have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matthew 7; 22). ... Knowing only those who practice righteousness, the Lord did not let His disciples rejoice in performing miracles, like casting out demons, saying to them : “... *You rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven*” (Luke 10: 20); namely in the city of Jerusalem, where only the righteous and the saints will be.... And as said by the apostle: “*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?*” (6: 9)¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Do not be deceived, O brethren; The corruptors of households will not inherit the kingdom of God².

(St. Agnatus, the illuminator)

- ❖ To have God reign in His kingdom, it has to be purified of every sin and adultery³.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ If someone says that he does not care for the kingdom of God, but he only seeks the eternal comfort, he should not deceive himself; As there are only two places and not three: In case man is not worthy to reign together with Christ, he will definitely perish together with the devil⁴.

(Caesarius, Bishop of Arl)

- ❖ We should wrestle against those iniquities we referred to, in order to reach the well established life. In our journey, we are committed to practice piety, mercy, humility, perfect righteousness of life, purity, reason, peace, faith, and love. You will not get the promised inheritance, unless you uproot from your life the iniquities that weigh down your bodies¹.

(Father Valerian)

4- OUR LORD WILL JUSTIFY US OF OUR SINS:

“And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (11)

After being miserable and sinners by nature, they were washed by the water of baptism, perpetually glorified by the Holy Spirit, and justified by the blood of Christ alone, to be qualified to enjoy the Holy God in His glory, and the eternal dwelling in heaven.

¹ *Sermon on the Amount 2: 84.*

² *Ad Eph. 16.*

³ *Comm.. on 1 Cor., 2: 27: 67-69.*

⁴ *Sermons 47: 5.*

¹ *Homilies, 2: 6.*

Some of them who were washed by the water of baptism (Timothy 3: 5; Hebrew 10; 22), pledged to walk as is befitting of the children of the Holy One; **were sanctified, namely, they isolated themselves from idol worship to dedicate the heart to the Holy God; and were justified namely, they became the subject of pleasure of God in the righteous Christ.** That was what they enjoyed in the name of the Lord Jesus, and what they gained by the power of His Holy Spirit.

He started **by the washing in the water of baptism**, where we get the second birth; and followed by the sanctification, when the Spirit of God works daily in us; then finally by bearing the righteousness of Christ, we become justified before God the Father.

❖ The Corinthians have gained all the benefits of purity in their baptism, which are the foundation of the truth of the gospel. As in baptism, the believer is washed and purified of all his sins, and becomes righteous in the name of the Lord; and by the Spirit of God he becomes a son of God by adoption. By these words, the apostle Paul reminds them of the greatness of the grace they have got in the true tradition. ... Yet, having started to think against the law of faith concerning baptism, and consequently denied themselves of all those benefits, the apostle is trying to bring them back to their past way of thought, in order to resume what they have previously gained¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ The salvation of Israel has been through the sea; and the salvation of the whole world is realized through the washing by the word of God (Ephesians 5: 26)¹.

(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

❖ To understand the significance of the “Jordan” that quenches the thirst and waters the gifts, it is for our benefit to refer as well to Naaman the Syrian who was healed of leprosy.

There is no other river that takes away leprosy, except “the Jordan”, if man enters into it with faith, and washed himself in Jesus Christ!

That is because, those who are washed in it, would be saved from the shame of Egypt (the love of the world); Joshua crossed through it after leaving Egypt and the wilderness behind. ... They would be able to ascend up to heaven (Elijah crossed the Jordan before ascending up to heaven). ... And they would be purified of the horrible leprosy (as was Naaman the Syrian). ... By all that they become qualified to receive the Holy Spirit².

❖ No one was purified in the Jordan except Naaman the Syrian who was not from Israel.

¹ CSEL 81: 63-64.

¹ Cat. Lect. 3: 6.

² هنا يربط العلامة أوريجانوس بين ثلاث أحداث خاصة بالأردن: عبوره ببسوع، وعبوره بإيليا، واغتسال نعمان السرياني.

See, Those who are washed by the spiritual Elisha, namely, our Lord and Savior, are purified in the sacrament of baptism, and are washed from the shame of the letter (of the law).

You were told to get up, to go to the Jordan, and to get washed, for your body to be renewed.

So did Naaman the Syrian; he got up, went forth and got washed (a symbol of baptism); and his body became like that of a little boy (who is born in the font of renewal).

(The scholar Origen) ¹

❖ To shame them more, he as though said to them: [Just meditate in the evils from which God saved you; and in the many experiences, and proofs of His great compassions toward you.

He did not limit it to your salvation; but added other great benefits as well: He **washed you up** ... sanctified you; ... and justified you. ... If salvation is a great gift, Yet He filled you as well with innumerable **blessings**, which you have got in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, not in any other name; Yes, and by the Spirit of our God¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ After reading those phrases, he asked them to meditate in the words “*but they were washed*”; having been still opposing that in their hearts, namely, in the inner temple of God in them; and still allowing the defilements of such covetousness, before which the kingdom of God is closed².

(St. Augustine)

5- NOT EVERYTHING LAWFUL FOR US ARE HELPFUL:

“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not beneficial. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any” (12)

Someone may protest, saying: [Is it not my right to defend myself against my brother, if he is unjust, even it requires to stand before pagan courts?] The answer is in this verse: “*All things are lawful for me, but not all things are beneficial*”.

This same principle applies to eating meet of what was offered to the idols and then sold in the slaughterhouse. All food are indeed lawful, Yet it is not befitting of the believer to be greedy or drunkard; then lose his authority on his belly, mind, will, and balance.

He talks to us here about the law to which the Christian man is submitted, which are:

- **The law of freedom:** “*All things are lawful for me*” (12; 10: 23).

¹ Origin: Comm. Jos 6: 47, 48; In Luc-hom 33.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 16: 9.

² Ep. 39: 5.

- **The law of conquest:** “*I will not be brought under the power of any*” (12)
- **The law of the son:** Walk as is befitting of me (12)
- **The law of perpetual growth:** Walk by what edify me (10: 23, 24)

❖ All things are lawful; yet it is obvious that all should be based on self-control¹.

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

❖ By saying “*all things*”, Paul means those things included under the natural law, that are considered lawful by Paul’s fellow apostles. It does not refer to the law of Moses who banned many things because of the hardness of those unbelieving and thick-necked people².

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ Not being under the law, we have the freedom of choice; Yet we are committed to realize that, while some choices are sound, others are wrong³.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

❖ While talking about the gluttonous, he has in mind sexually immorality, which is intensified by gluttony and non-moderation, tendencies he attacks with all his strength. ... To those who say: [I have the right to live in luxury], he responds by saying: While doing that, you are not acting as though you have authority on anything, but you rather submit to the authority of many things. You do not have authority even on your own bellies, but submit to their authority. The same thing could be said concerning the riches and likewise⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

6- SANCTITY OF THE BODY:

“Foods for the stomach, and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body” (13)

As God did not create the body for sexual immorality, but to serve God and His glory, as a tool for righteousness for holiness (Romans 6: 19); It is not befitting of us to use it for defilement. The body is for the Lord, glorifying the Lord by its ministry; and the Lord is for the body, having given Himself up for the sake of sanctifying it, for the sake of its resurrection and glorification together with the soul.

¹ *Stromata* 3: 40: 5.

² *CSEL* 81: 46.

³ Pg 82: 267.

⁴ *IN 1 Cor., Hom. 17: 1.*

There will be time when the body will not be in need of food, when it bears a new nature, and come to have the right to enjoy the heavenlies.

The apostle presents to us a Christian concept of the body, being:

- A member in the body of Christ (13, 15; 12: 27)
 - A tent for the human spirit (2 Corinthians : 1, 6)
 - An earthen vessel with a treasure in it (2 Corinthians 4: 7)
 - A living sacrifice to God (Romans 12: 1)
- ❖ We are committed to control the belly and keep it under the guidance of heaven; as, according to the apostle, God will ultimately destroy all what is for the belly¹.
(St. Clement of Alexandria)
- ❖ Being dedicated to God, the body will get a spiritual reward, for the sake of the worthiness of the rational soul that controls it².
(Ambrosiaster)
- ❖ “*Foods for the stomach*” (13). He does not mean here the stomach as a member of the body, nor the food in itself, but he means the gluttony; like when he says: “*whose god is their belly*” (Philippians 3: 19). Gluttony, being a strong carnal lust will turn us into slaves of the belly, and will never lead us to Christ, Rebuking them for it, he says: “*God will destroy both it and them*” He does not talk about the stomach, but about the exaggerated and incessant lust for eating. He is not against food, but sets certain guiding lines for enjoying it, saying: “*having food and clothing, with these we shall be content*” (1 Timothy 6: 8)³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

7- THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IS THE SOURCE OF OUR RESURRECTION:

“And God both raised up the Lord, and will also raise us up by His power” (14)

To clarify how “*the Lord is for the body*”; By His resurrection He granted the body the power of resurrection; He granted it non-corruption instead of corruption, eternity instead of death, and the spiritual nature instead of the earthly nature. The way we were clothed in the image of the earthly first Adam, We shall be clothed in the image of the heavenly second Adam.

The hope in the resurrection that came to be our right in Christ, raised from the dead, will keep us against delivering the body to the bondage of corruption and covetousness.

¹ *Paedagogus* 2: 5.

² *CSEL* 81: 65.

³ *In 1 Cor., Hom.* 17: 1.

As the Lord Christ became our representative, God the Father raised Him up as a deposit for our resurrection, which is realized through the resurrection of Christ; to partake of His glory.

- ❖ Once again, do you realize his apostolic wisdom? As he perpetually baste the faith upon the resurrection of Christ. ... If our body is a member of Christ, and Christ is raised up; the body will certainly have to follow the head¹.
- ❖ You should not be disturbed to hear him referring the resurrection of Christ to the Father; as though Christ has no authority of His own; As He Himself says: “*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*” (John 2: 19); and, “*I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it again*” (John 10: 18); And Luke says in the book of acts: “*To whom He has also presented Himself alive*” (Acts 1: 3). Then how would Paul say that? Because all the works of the Son are to the account of the Father; and the works of the Father are to the account of the Son”; He says: “*Whatever He (the Father) does, the Son also does in like manner*” (John 5: 19)².

“.
(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ The Redeemer put on the garment of death;
He likened the people of the place.
When His light shined on the inhabitants,
Praises to the divine Judge were heard.
Hearing the voice of the compassionate Son,
Adam rejoiced and presented thanksgiving.
The way John the Baptist did in his mother’s womb,
When the Virgin Mary visited her,
Adam did in the land of mortality.
Punishment came to an end, the doors were opened,
And the authority of the sting of death is no more;
For the Lord, intending, by His infinite compassion to remove their hand off His creatures,
He descended to the city of the dead;
To loosen the shackles off the captives of sin,
and to break the chains of the sinners.
- ❖ The Savior came, and the tragedy is no more;
The doors of compassion were opened before the good believers.
David took his guitar to sing his psalms and poems.
To say: The living came to the dead to give them their life back.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 17: 2.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 17: 2.

Praise the Lord, O all inhabitants of the earth.
Praise the Lord; For the living came to dwell among the dead¹.

(Mar Jacob El-Serougi)

❖ I was anointed by the divine sacrament ... with which I unite, and which I enjoy up to this shining day; ... He who is raised from the dead on such a day, gives help to my weakness, life to my soul, makes me put on the new man (Ephesians 4: 23, 24); and includes me among the new creation, those who are born from God ... to be prepared to die together with Him, and also to be raised with Him.

Yesterday (the good Friday) ² the Lamb was slain; the door posts were sprinkled with His blood ... And the angel of perdition passed over with his horrible sword ... Yet we were kept safe by the precious blood.

Yesterday, I was crucified together with Christ; And today I am glorified together with Him.

Yesterday I died together with Him; And today I am granted life with Him.

Yesterday I was buried with Him; And today I am raised up with Him.

(St. Gregory the Nezenzian)

8- OUR MEMBERSHIP IN THE BODY OF CHRIST:

“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!” (15)

The believer looks with reverence at all the members of his body, being the members of Christ and the temple of His Holy Spirit. And so being, they should not be members of a harlot.

As the soul unites by faith with Christ, all the being of man would become a member in the secret body of Christ. His body, as well as his soul, would unite with the Lord Christ..... What an honor the Christian has! His body became a member in the body of Christ.

❖ All of you are members of the body of Christ; Having been united with Him through your second birth by the Spirit, You have hope to be raised as He did¹.

(Father Theodor, Bishop of Missah)

❖ Nothing is more terrifying than this expression! He did not say: “Shall I take the members of Christ and make them united with those of a harlot”, but elaborately said: “... *and make them members of a harlot*” ².

¹ مار ملاطيوس برنابا: مختارات من فصائد مار يعقوب أسقف سروج، 1993، ص 226-228.
² كان الحديث في ليلة عيد القيامة، أي يوم السبت ليلاً، فيقصد بالأمس أي الجمعة العظيمة.

¹ Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 18: 1.

- ❖ Although the fear of punishment would surely be enough to keep them chaste; yet intending not to let fear be the only motive, he, together with the threat, used the following mental proofs¹.
- ❖ He talks to them as children of a noble origin².
- ❖ Everything belong to the Lord: the body, the soul, and the spirit ... Notice how he presented all to meditate in Christ! How he lifted us up to heaven, when he says “*You are the members of Christ*”, “*You are the temple of the Spirit*”! ... So do not any more be members of a harlot; for this is not at all your body, but Christ’s³!

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? ‘For the two’, he says, ‘shall become one flesh’” (16)

God said to Adam: “*Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and be united to his wife, and they become one flesh*” (Genesis 2: 24; Matthew 19: 5).

- ❖ Sexual corruption makes the two one in nature, as well as in sin⁴.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ He, who commits sexual immorality and impurity, would dishonor his matrimony as well as his wife; he sins against his body, namely, against his wife, for they have both become one flesh¹.

(Occuminus)

“But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him” (17)

No sin is as horrible as sexual immorality, as it makes man a foreigner to the Lord Christ, through his union with a harlot, and becoming one flesh with her. No union could be made between Christ and adulterers. The sin of sexual immorality dishonors the head of the believer, and that of his Lord Christ.

He who is joined to a harlot, , will become with her one flesh but not one spirit; as they do not enjoy the work of the Holy Spirit.

Whereas he is joined to the Lord, and receives the Spirit of the Lord in him, will become one with Him (John 15: 1-7; 17: 21; 3: 6).

- ❖ The Spirit of God sets a fellowship between God and men, when we unite with the Lord².

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 18: 1.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 18: 1.

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 18: 3.

⁴ CSEL 81: 67.

¹ Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.

² CSEL 81: 67.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ Washing us from every sin and purifying us, we are brought over to a good relation with His righteousness and that of His Father; well expressed by the apostle, saying: “*He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him*” (17)¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ The Word became flesh; and the flesh of man exalts to the glory of God².

(Father Peter Christologus)

- ❖ Joining together makes the two one, and they will no longer be two³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

9- SERIOUSNESS OF THE SIN OF SEXUAL IMMORALITY:

“Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body” (18)

No sin is as horrible as that of sexual immorality, by which the flesh of man is joined to that of a harlot, and become one with her. Let us flee it, the way the young man Joseph did, from the covetousness of his Egyptian mistress.

- ❖ Only by swift fleeing can we protect ourselves from such vicious woman, and from such evil bondage¹.

(St. Ambrose)

- ❖ Notice how Paul did not say that we are committed to hate sexual immorality, but to keep ourselves away from it, as from evil’s harm².

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

- ❖ He did not say “Do not commit sexual immorality” but said “*Flee sexual immorality*”; namely, with zeal, to get rid of evil... Now, how about greed and violence, etc.? I assume it is obvious that this applies to all of them; Yet as there is nothing worse than sexual immorality, he showed the seriousness of this sin by saying that the one who commits it will make his whole body unclean, like someone falling into a sewage well³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ The demon of sexual immorality strives to ignites the carnal lust in the souls of monks in particular, to make them retreat from their vow of monasticism, by convincing them that it

¹ THE Harmony of the Gospels, 2: 4.

² Selected Sermons (frs. Of the Church), 145.

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 18: 1.

¹ Cain and Abel 1: 20.

² PG 82: 270.

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 18: 2.

is of no benefit. And once he manages to defile the soul, he prepares it to say and to listen to evil talks, by which the sexual act would become as though live before their eyes¹.

(Father Oghris the monk)

10- THE BODY AS A TEMPLE FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT:

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” (19)

By submitting to the Lord Christ with His Holy Spirit, our bodies would become a temple for the Holy Spirit. As he who commits sexual immorality dishonors the temple of God Himself, it is therefore befitting of the believer to keep the sanctity of this temple, and not to err against the One dwelling in it.

By saying “***your body***”, and not ‘your bodies’, it is obvious that he speaks of all the congregation of believers as one body; that they are a temple for the Holy Spirit. As though the church has become the “*mercy seat*” through which God used to talk to Moses and the people of Israel (Exodus 25: 22).

❖ The way man becomes as though a spirit, although he is still confined to a body; when his whole life is ordained by the soul and the spirit; God will be glorified in him¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ According to ‘Plato’, the body of man is like a prison; Whereas, according to Paul, it is the temple of God, being in Christ².

(The scholar Tertullian)

“For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (20)

God who created both the body and the spirit, is glorified in the whole being of the believer; in whom both the body and the spirit are used to the account of His kingdom. The way a slave, bought at a price, becomes a possession of his master; we, being bought by the blood of the Lord Christ, are no longer our own possession, but that of our Redeemer, to whose account our body and our spirit are dedicated.

❖ ***“Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit” (20)***. He says all these things, not to flee sexual immorality just in the body, but also in the spirit and in the mind; to refrain from every evil thought, lest God’s grace would be taken away from us¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ إلى أناتوليوس Anatolius عن الأفكار الثمانية، 3.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 18: 4.

² On the Soul 54: 5.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 18: 3.

❖ “*You were bought at a price*” (20); Therefore do not deliver yourselves to worldly covetousness; As for your sake the Word became flesh; and for your sake the Son of God became the Son of Man, that you, the sons of men would become sons of God¹.

(St. Augustine)

❖ He who is bought has no right to make his own decisions; That will be up to the one who bought him. We, having been bought at such a very high price, It is befitting of us to serve our Lord the more; lest by dishonoring Him who set us free, we would fall again into death².

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ Let us therefore glorify God, and bear Him in our bodies and spirits.... How can we glorify Him in the body and the spirit? We would glorifies Him in the body, by fleeing sexual immorality; by refraining from gluttony, and from getting drunk; by not caring for outer shows; and by not seeking more provisions than what are enough for our sustenance. The same could be said for a woman, who does not care for fragrances and make-ups, who is satisfied with the way God created her, and adds nothing on her own³.

❖ **I wish women do not care for the vain and worthless outer appearance. I wish they do not let their husbands admire only their physical beauty, which he would get used to with time, and would become an easy prey to a whore who may captivate him from this same angle. But if he loves your good nature and humility, he would never be attracted to a whore in whom he would see the contrary of what you have. So, do not attract him by fun and unbecoming attire, lest you would be preparing the poison for him⁴.**

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ We glorify God and bear Him in a pure body, blameless, without wrinkle, and in good shape. I wish those who are saved by the blood of Christ, submit to the law of their Savior in complete abidance as His ministers. Let us then care not to offer anything defiled nor unclean in the temple of God; lest, if dishonored, He would forsake the place where He dwells¹.

(Cyprian the martyr)

¹ *Sermons on New Testament Lessons.*

² *CSEL 81: 69-70.*

³ *In 1 Tim., Hom. 4.*

⁴ *In 1 Tim., Hom. 4.*

¹ *The Dress of Virgins, 2.*

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 6

BY YOUR SPIRIT, I WALK AS IS BEFITTING OF BEING YOUR SON

- ❖ By Your Holy Spirit, You granted me sonhood to Your Father.
Together with You I got down into the River Jordan.
For Your Spirit to dwell in me, and conform me as your icon.
Yes, Grant me Your fiery Spirit, to perpetually renew my nature.
To make me walk as is befitting of being Your son and a member in Your body.
- ❖ You, being the Ruler and the Judge, have accepted to be judged.
Let me judge no one.
Nor condemn any one.
But joyfully, I would love and gain even him who does me injustice.
My love for my brother is greater than gaining any human reward.
Let me endure his injustice, for I cannot endure his eternal perdition.
- ❖ You, the Holy One, walked together with me along my earth;
You have shared with me my life here.
Grant me Your sanctity working in me;
For without sanctity, I would not be able to behold You.
Nor can I cross over to Your kingdom.
No trace of sin in me can cross over to Your heaven;
As Your heaven is a divine sanctuary.
- ❖ You are God; So who can dare to oppose You?!
You have the right to do whatever You will;
By Your love, You became a slave, and did not seek anything for yourself.
Allow me to follow Your lead.
Allow me to bear Your Spirit.
Allow me practice nothing but what is according to Your will.
- ❖ You, the eternal Word, became flesh for my sake.
Oh, how much joy, and how much honor; My Lord bears a body like mine!
How could I despise the body after all that?
How could I dishonor it?
When shall I see it share the glory of resurrection with Your body?
When will it, together with the soul, cross over to enjoy the heavenly glories?
My body is a divine gift, whose value I shall realize when it becomes a glorified body.
- ❖ You are the resurrection and its Grantor.
Come into my grave, and carry me over to the new life.

Who can take away my death, and grant me life, but You?
Who can destroy my corruption, and grant me non-corruption?
Who can take away the weakness and humiliation of the body, and grant it strength and honor?

Glory be to You, O rich in Your giving.

- ❖ You are the Head who ordains and sanctifies all the members of the body.
Sanctify me by Your Spirit.
That sexual immorality would have no place in me.
Nor the defilement can approach my life.
Set out of me a temple for Your Holy Spirit.
Where You will dwell, together with Your Father and Your Holy Spirit.
Where You will set a new heaven.
Where there will be an incessant joy.

DIVISION 3

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

(Chapters 7 to 10)

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

The church in her holiness, cares for the social unity of the congregation, for the sanctification of every single member, and that of the family.

In the previous chapters, the apostle Paul dealt with the problems that were prevailing in Corinth at that time, as declared by those of Chloe's household (1 Corinthians 1: 12). Now he answers some questions sent to him on the hands of their representatives.

1- Questions **concerning marriage, virginity, and physical relationships among married couples** (Ch. 7)

2- Questions whether it is allowed **to eat food that was dedicated to pagan idols** (Ch. 8)

3- **The rights of the apostle and the preacher of the gospel** by the congregation (Ch. 9)

4- The position **of the believer toward attending banquets in an idol temple; toward meet sold in the public market; and toward an invitation to eat in the house of a pagan friend** (Ch. 10).

CHAPTER 7

MARRIAGE AND VIRGINITY

A LOOK AT MARRIAGE AND VIRGINITY IN THE APOSTOLIC ERA:

A question directed by the Corinthians to the apostle Paul was whether it would be befitting of the believer to refrain from marriage in the situations prevailing in Corinth at that time. According to the **Jews**, marriage was an essential and important issue; And whoever refrain of it is committing a crime. **Many philosophers**, on the other hand, looked at marriage as a source of a multitude of problems, yet it is an unavoidable evil.

According to the laws of '**Lycurgus**', the unmarried people were banned from attending the public sport events; According to the laws of '**Sportans**', they were punished; And according to '**Plato**', they were not worthy of any honors. Yet many Greek philosophers defended celibacy.

Some wrong views of the body led to two extremes: The first, considering the body as an element of darkness, and all-lusts, delivered it to sexual immorality. While the second, defiling the physical relationship in marriage, called the married people to refrain from intimate relationship.

The scholar Origen, and before him his **mentor St. Clement of Alexandria**, defended the legitimacy of marriage against the 'Encratites', of whom the majority were "Mercionites" and 'Montanists', to whom St. Paul referred as "**followers of the doctrines of demons**" (1 Timothy 4: 3); because they called for the cancellation of marriage, and for the adoption of a life of monasticism (based on viewing some food as being unclean)¹. In some writings by the scholar Origen against the 'Mercionites', he said that nothing created by God is unclean; but would become as such, only through the evil thoughts and intentions of men. And concerning their call to cancel marriage, ordained by the divine care², **Origen** defended the Christian marriage, describing it as a model of the union between the church and Christ.

We can summarize what came in this chapter about marriage and virginity in the following points:

a- The apostle Paul, who lived dedicated to ministry, a virgin without burning with passion, proclaims the exaltation of the virgin life (1, 8), practiced by the unmarried and the virgin. Yet virginity is not a goal in itself, but a dedication of energies and potentials to

¹ *Comm., In Rom., 9: 2.*

² *De principiis 11: 7.*

ministry or preaching. Wishing that all would follow his lead, it is not that marriage is a sin, but for God's sake by those who are given this gift. He says: "***But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord – how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world – how he may please his wife***" (33).

b- No one within marriage, should abstain from physical relationships as something unclean; Yet abstention could be for a certain time to give oneself to fasting and prayer, with **the consent of the both parties.**

c- If a husband or a wife receives Christian faith, and his or her partner is willing to live with him or her, they should not be divorced, as the unbelieving party is sanctified by the other; otherwise their children would be unclean. Yet this should not mean allowing the Christian to marry a non-believer; but it only concerns those who were already married before one of them received the Christian faith.

d- It is not befitting of the one married to regret his marriage; And the unmarried can stay that way; but if he gets married he is committing no sin. "***Those who cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion***" (9). "*Each believer has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that*" (7).

According to **Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus**, To the Corinthians who asked the apostle Paul, whether the married Christians, once they are baptized, would continue enjoying the physical intimacy between them, he responded by commending chastity and condemning sexual immorality; yet allowing intimate marriage relationship¹.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1- Marriage is better than burning with passion | 1 - 9 |
| 2- Allowing a husband or wife to remain living with a non-believing spouse | |
| | 10 - 16 |
| 3- Each one should remain in the same calling in which he was called | |
| | 17 - 24 |
| 4- Virginitly is a better choice | 25 - 35 |
| 5- Man's position toward his virgin | 36 - 38 |
| 6- Widows are allowed to do whatever they choose | 39 - 40 |

1- MARRIAGE IS BETTER THAN BURNING WITH PASSION:

"Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman" (1)

Beside the divisions under the names of certain leaders, the church in Corinth suffered controversies because of concepts of sex, physical relationships, and marriage. On one aspect Corinth before Christianity, used to boast of having the temple of 'Aphrodite' with the

¹ PG 82: 271.

corruption practiced by the dedicated priestesses to the account of the temple; **which was considered by some at that time, as a sign of civilization and progress**; and that chastity and purity were some kind of backwardness not befitting of such a great city as Corinth.

And on another aspect, because some others considered marriage as some kind of free adultery and of uncleanness and satisfaction of carnal covetousness, allowed by society, That led certain false teachers to call for refraining from marriage altogether, their call came as a show of vain holiness and piety.

Because many controversial views appeared beside those extremes, some Corinthians wrote to the apostle Paul, in his capacity as the founder and the one responsible of the church there, demanding straightforward answers to their questions.

❖ Having been unhappy with such teachings by those false teachers, the Corinthians wrote to the apostle of nothing else¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ Some say that the apostle directs this response to the priests; but, from what comes after that, I believe he does not; or he would not have presented it in a public note; If it concerns the priests he would say instead: “It is good for a priest not to touch a woman”².

(St. John Chrysostom)

He started his answer to their questions by setting a general principle: “*It is good for a man not to touch a woman*”. Here, he presents his own appreciation of the life of virginity, which he considers a better way of life; although not a commitment to all.

❖ Where the evils of some make it necessary to have committing laws, Virginity occupies its place equal to angels³.

(St. Cyprian)

❖ All human words are unable to add a greater honor to such an exalted grace as virginity.

❖ Virginity has never been separated from the Grantor of the attributes of Divinity... All dictionaries of language, and styles of eloquence, are despised, if used to commend it.

❖ Virginity is man’s companion in his spiritual work, and his helper to reach the exalted goal of life ... It is the practical way in the knowledge of the divine life ... It grants men such a strength to liken the spiritual natures⁴.

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

¹ CSEL 81: 70.

² IN 1 Cor., Hom. 19.

³ كيفية الطهارة وفوائدها، 7.

⁴ فلسفة البتولية، 1، 2، 5.

The scholar Origen considers virginity as the greatest perfect gift next to martyrdom. In the sacrifice of virginity, man is the priest through his mind, and he is the sacrifice through his body, like Christ on the cross. **Virginity represents a distinguished linking bond between heaven and earth**, as God could unite with humanity only through a “holy” body He took from a virgin woman without matrimonial relationship¹.

“Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband” (2)

Beside the life of fellowship and family cooperation, one of the goals of marriage is to protect the sexual instincts against diversion; as each one of the married couple has the responsibility of caring for the other. The divine wisdom presents marriage to us as a practical way against sexual immorality with all kinds of unbefitting covetousness; by letting man have his own wife, and the woman have her own husband.

❖ No one should think that I am trying to belittle the value of marriage as a system; As I am well aware that it is covered by the blessing of God².

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

❖ Virginity is not a despise of marriage ... As the relationship between man and woman is like that between Christ and the church³.

(St. Agnatius the Theophorus)

❖ As in the beginning man thought that they are two; **Look how God attached and united them together to become one flesh by the sacrament of matrimony**; saying: *“Therefore, a man leaves his father and his mother and be united to his wife, and they become one flesh”* (Genesis 2: 24).

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ How could we express the extent of matrimonial happiness, made by the church, and sealed by her blessing⁴?

(The scholar Tertullian)

“Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband” (3)

❖ God allows for us to get married, as not every man is able to reach the level of exaltation, and commitment to absolute purity⁵.

¹ راجع كتاب: الزواج والبتولية عند العلامة أوريجينوس، القمص تادرس يعقوب ملطي، ترجمة الدكتور جورج بطرس، 1996.
² فلسفة البتولية، 8.

³ Ad Polycarb 5: 1.

⁴ To his Wife 2: 9.

⁵ In Gen. 3: 6; 5: 4.

- ❖ If you seek to live in a greater purity, and assume by refraining from having a relationship with your wife to whom you are united, that you are not doing her any harm; Beware that by so doing you destroy her, for she may not be able to endure your purity. You are committed to have a physical relationship with her, not for your own sake, but for hers¹.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ That is why he considers it as a debt which should be fulfilled, to show that no one of them have the authority over himself, but each serves the other ... Now, If the husband or wife has no authority over their own body, they would also have no authority over their possessions. It is a great equality of honor; that none of them has his own authority or right².

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ The husband and the wife are committed to submit one to the other in this matter; having become one flesh and one will according to the law of nature³.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ Human laws commits women to be chaste, and would be punished if they are not. Because it was men who set those laws, they did not put themselves on equal level, but gave themselves more rights. The apostle Paul, on the other hand, through an inspiration of the divine grace, was the first to set a law of chastity that applies to men as well as to women⁴.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

“The wife has no authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband has no authority over his own body, but the wife does” (4)

The husband does not have authority over his own body, but presents it to his wife; and the wife likewise, does not have authority over her own body, but presents it to her husband. Therefore sexual immorality and polygamy constitute breaking of the law of matrimony, as once each of the two parties in marriage has delivered his body to the other party, he or she has no right to deliver it to a third party.

“Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control” (5)

As far as the married people are concerned, they became in collateral possession, each presents his body to the other as a possession.

¹ *Comm., on 1 Cor. 3: 33: 23-25.*

² *In 1 Cor., Hom. 19: 2.*

³ *CSEL 81: 71.*

⁴ *PG 83: 271.*

Neither of them has the right to refrain from body relationship without consent of the other, lest this would be considered as a deprivation of his partner's right (5); Getting attached to a third party would therefore be a deprivation as well. There could be an abstention for a time to give themselves to fasting and prayer, with consent, and with no pressure of one party on the other)5).

Notice that the apostle does not say 'for fasting and prayer', lest that would mean that the bodily relationship is unclean; but says, "***that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer***". And he also says, "***But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment***" (6); lest those who do not abstain from bodily relationship to give themselves to fasting and prayer, may think that they have broken a divine commandment ... It is the way of perfection, only for those who can do it.

- ❖ It is not big deal for faithful married people to practice for a few days what the widows and the virgins do all the days of their life, to flare up their zeal, and to put their lusts under control¹.

(St. Sugustine)

- ❖ The secrets of matrimony should be practiced with sanctity and within reason, and not with extreme lustful ways².

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ I am not ashamed to say these things, as long as Paul, himself, was not ashamed to say: "***Do not deprive one another***" (5); which sounds more shameful than what I say; But he does not care for words as much as for putting works in their proper place as though swords³.

- ❖ Why is the reference to such things? Because great evils, like adultery, defilement, and family collapse result from this kind of abstention. Now, if men, while having their own wives are prone to practicing sexual immorality, How much more would they do if they do not have this comfort? ... You can live with a wife, and care for prayer; Yet by chastity, prayer would be more perfect; Not saying 'to pray', but "***to give yourselves to prayers***"; What he talks about is not because of defilement, but to give oneself more to prayer" ... Do not you see the powerful meaning he intends to confirm, that chastity is better? And yet he does not commit those who are unable to reach it¹!

(St. John Chrysostom)

"But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment" (6)

¹ Lent 209: 3.

² On Prayer 2: 2.

³ In 1 Thess., Hom. 5.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 19: 3.

As a concession, and not as a divine commandment; lest he, who does not keep it would be counted as disobedient to God. It is only meant for those who seek perfection, which is not for all.

❖ This means that you should not commit yourselves to what is beyond your abilities, lest through your mutual abstention you may fall into sexual immorality; *“lest Satan may tempt you because of your lack of self-control”* (5) (What is sought from someone as some kind of perfection, differs from what is sought from the weak). That is why he added right away: *“But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment. For I wish that all men were even as I myself”* (6, 7)¹.

(St. Augustine)

❖ *“But I say this, ... not as a commandment”* (6); It is not a commitment, but is left to those who love chastity ... *“For I wish that all men were even as I myself”*².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that” (6, 7)

Understanding that how he is, is through divine care, the believer lives in perpetual thanksgiving to God with no murmuring.

❖ By saying that marriage is a gift from God, Paul gives peace of mind to those married³.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

❖ *“For I wish that all men are even as I myself”* (6), namely, practice chastity. Not intending to commit them to be within narrow limits by demanding very strict things, he presented only a moderate virtue¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ Indeed, those who forsake all the world works to minister to God in serious chastity, occupy an exalted position before Him; yet, according to the apostle Paul: *“Each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that”*. Therefore, by praying for your sake, some are fighting against your unseen enemies. And you, as you fight the barbarians on their behalf, are fighting their seen enemies².

(St. Augustine)

¹ *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany, sermon 1: 22.*

² *In Galat., Hom. 2.*

³ *PG 82: 274.*

¹ *In 1 Tim., Hom. 10.*

² *Ep. 198: 5.*

- ❖ By uniting man and woman in matrimony, God bestows on them a divine gift. Recognizing that, Paul proclaims that marriage according to the Word of God is equal to the purity of the holy virginity; saying: *“I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that”* (6, 7). Those whom God unites in matrimony, abide in their thought and action to the commandment saying: *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it”* (Ephesians 5: 25) ¹.

(The scholar Origen)

“But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am; But if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion” (8, 9)

Some believe that calling the lust ‘fire’ and “burning with passion” was quoted by the apostle from the following story of Rabbi Emram²:

A group of captivated women were brought to ‘Nehardea’ where they were put in the attic of Rabbi Emram’s house until someone comes to redeem them; and to keep them from escaping, the ladder to the attic was taken away. Seeing that one of those women was exceptionally beautiful, Rabbi Emram could not help but bring the ladder to climb up to her. But still half way up the ladder, his conscience rebuked him for such shameful conduct, unfit for a respectable man like him, and he started screaming: ‘Fire! Fire! In Emram’s house!’ When the neighbors came running to help quench the fire, he had to come down the ladder. Responding to his fellow Rabbis, saying to him: You brought shame on all of us, by your false alarm of fire; he said to them: **‘It is better for me to shame you here in Emram’s house in this world, than to shame you in the life to come’**. Striving to get the sinful lust out of his system, it did come out as a pillar of fire, to which he said to the devil: **‘You are fire; and I am flesh; yet I have overcome you’**.

- ❖ The apostle’s goal is keep away sexual immorality, and not to create obstacles on the way of those seeking the exalted life¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ If you believe that it is necessary to find a way to cure lust; You should not object to calling it a kind of disease².

(St. Augustine)

¹ Frag: On 1 Cor., 34, 37.

² Tract kiddushim, foll, 81.

¹ CSEL 81: 72.

² AGAINST Julian, 15.

2- ALLOWING A HUSBAND OR WIFE TO REMAIN LIVING WITH A NONELIEVING SPOUSE:

“Now to the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband” (10)

. Saying: *“I command them, yet not I but the Lord”* (10), means that it is a divine commandment, and breaking it is a sin.

- ❖ Because it is a command from Christ that a wife should not be divorced for any reason except sexual immorality (Matthew 5: 32; 19: 9; Psalm 10: 11; Luke 16: 18), he says: *“Not I but the Lord”*¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ This commandment was given to us to understand that no one should divorce his partner in marriage, if they are both believers².

(St. Augustine)

“But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife” (11)

- ❖ God allows for divorcing the wife because of ‘adultery’ or sexual immorality. But what does ‘adultery’ mean here? Does it mean its narrow concept, namely committing actual defilement, or what the Holy Book means when it speaks generally about other hateful things like idolatry and greed; in which case, adultery would mean every breaking of the law because of the evil lust. And to be more accurate let us search the saying of the apostle, saying: *“Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord. A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to depart from his wife”* (10, 11).. It could happen that she departs from him because of sexual immorality on his part, as this is the only cause she is allowed to depart from him; likewise, the man should not depart from his wife except for the same cause. Or else, why should the apostle goes on saying: *“And a husband is not to divorce his wife”*?

The apostle did not add “because of sexual immorality”, as it is self-understood. The same rule applies to both the wife and to the husband.

If he happen to depart from his wife (because of sexual morality), he should remain unmarried or be reconciled to his wife, which is a good thing to do; That is why the Lord commanded the husband not to divorce his wife except for sexual immorality; But in that case, He did not **command**, but **allowed** him to do that. This is like if a wife marries before

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 19: 4.

² Question 83.

the death of her husband, she would be found guilty of sexual immorality; but after his death she is allowed to marry.

It is noticed that in the law of marriage, man submits to the same rules put on the woman. The apostle says: “*The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does* (7: 4); and he also says: “*And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does*”. Thus, as long as both of them submit to the same rules, that is why, the woman should not depart from her husband except for the cause of sexual immorality, the same way like her husband¹.

- ❖ The woman is not allowed to remarry as long as her ex-husband is still alive; likewise the man is not allowed to remarry as long as her ex-wife is still alive.

It would indeed be a more blessed marriage, in which the two parties – whether after or before begetting children, for not caring to have earthly seeds – could be able to refrain from having a physical relationship; yet that should be by mutual consent, otherwise it would involve breaking of the Lord’s command not to depart from one another. But if it is done by a mutual consent, and they live together a spiritual and not a carnal kind of life, it would not appear accordingly as an act of divorce².

(St. Augustine)

“But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her” (12)

By the rest he means those, one of whom received the Christian faith while the other did not. It would be up to the non-believer party to remain or to depart ... Here he is speaking about marriage before receiving the Christian faith, and one party receives it and not the other. In that case the believer should not doubt the sanctity of his marriage, as the unbeliever will be sanctified in the believer; And so will be their children.

- ❖ It is obvious that the believing woman connected to an idolater, is together with him one flesh. Her purity, in this case, will overcome the impurity of her husband; and the same thing could be said if it is the other way round; the purity of the believing husband will overcome the impurity of his unbelieving wife. How could it be that the impurity is overcome and the relationship could be allowed to remain, while, in the case when a believing wife commits adultery, her man would not be condemned if he departs from her? Because here, there would be hope that the lost party may be saved through marriage, and because the fault here is on one side and not on both. While in the other case marriage is already lost.

But the case here is not about two persons not yet united by marriage, but who are already married. He does not say: If someone intends to take for himself an unbelieving wife,

¹ *Sermon on the Amount 1: 16: 43.*

² *Sermon on the Amount 1: 14: 39.*

but says: “*If any brother has a wife who does not believe*” (12) ... What then? Is an unbelieving Greek (or a Gentile) sanctified? Definitely not! He only says “he is sanctified by his wife”; which does not mean that he is sanctified in himself; in order to give peace to the believing wife, and to give the chance to the unbelieving man to find the truth if he wants¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ The apostle says this concerning the case of a Gentile couple; one of whom became a Christian. As it is usually the case that the pagan hates Christianity; and the Christian does not like to be under the influence of idolatry; the apostle says: “If the two of them are happy together, they could remain married².”

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ Paul does not mean to say that the believing wife is committed to marry a non-believer, But she is allowed to remain with him, in case they are already married³.

(Severian, Bishop of Gebalah)

❖ As marriage is a divine gift, It would not be as such if it is done to a non-believer. The Spirit of God would not be given to dwell in non-believers⁴.

(The scholar Origen)

“And a woman who has a husband who does not believe. If he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by his wife; and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy” (13, 14)

❖ The wisdom of this commandment by the apostle is that remaining with her would probably give her eventually the chance to believe; He says: *‘For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by her husband’* (14).

I believe that unbelieving wife or husband have become believers through their believing spouses.

“Otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy”, because of the faith of one or both of their parents. And the sanctification of those children would not be possible if the marriage was dissolved by the departure of one of the parties. But the believing partner, by enduring the non-believing one, would give him or her the chance to believe. This endurance of the weak is a counsel of the Lord who says: “Whatever more you spend, when I come again I will repay you” (Luke 10: 35)¹.

¹In 1 Cor., Hom. 19: 4.

²CSEL 81: 75-76.

³PAULINE Commentary from Greek Church.

⁴Comm. On 1 Cor., 3: 34: 42-45.

¹Sermon on the Amount 1: 16: 45.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Because the husband and the wife are one. The way wine and water are, once they mix together; the unbelieving partner may corrupt the believer. That is why, he who is not yet married, is committed to be very cautious; either not to get married altogether or to marry in the Lord¹.

(The scholar origin)

- ❖ The children of believers, being designated for sanctification and salvation, By the deposit of this hope, Paul supports the marriages to continue².

(The scholar Tertullian)

- ❖ When the children are pure, saints, and uncorrupted by disbelief, the favor for that would go back to the faith of their parents³.

(Severian, Bishop of Gebalah)

“But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace” (15)

- ❖ The Christian husband would not be blamed to depart from his wife, even if their marriage is legal, as long as the wife refuses to live with him on account that he became a Christian⁴.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Marriage that is set without prayers is not committing; And it would not be counted a sin to dissolve it for the sake of God. Whereas the unbelieving partner would be at fault against God and against marriage, if he or she refuses to live in a marriage holy to God. In that case, he or she has no right to go to court; because whoever forsake marriage, is doing it because he hates God, and is therefore, not worthy to be listened to¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ The believing partner should not be the cause for divorce; but in case the unbelieving partner wishes to depart, the believing partner would, in this case, be innocent and guiltless².

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

¹ *Comm. On 1 Cor., 3: 36: 2-5.*

² *On the Soul 39: 4.*

³ *Pauline Xommentary from the Greek Church.*

⁴ *Questions of Dulcitiu, 1.*

¹ *CSEL 81: 76-77.*

² *Pg 82: 278.*

- ❖ If your unbelieving partner treats you badly because of your new faith, it would be better for you to depart. That is what is meant by saying: “*God has called us to peace*” (15); Because in this case, it is the other party who is the cause for divorce¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife? (16)

It would be befitting of the Christian who is already married to a non-believer to continue carrying his cross, and to go on living with his partner, not for any temporal benefit, nor to satisfy any carnal or social desire, but for the hope of the salvation of his or her partner. But in case the other party wishes to depart, that would be a sign from God, for his believing party does not know for sure whether he will ever be able to save him or her.

3- EACH ONE SHOULD REMAIN IN THE SAME CALLING IN WHICH HE WAS CALLED:

“But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all churches” (17)

It is obvious that the diversity of races, cultures, and religions, together with the prevailing corruption, in the city of Corinth, were circumstances that caused confusion among those who received the Christian faith, and raised questions concerning the following issues:

- ❖ What would be my position toward my partner in marriage (husband or wife), who refuses to partake of my new faith?
- ❖ What would be my position toward my partner in marriage, if he or she is willing to keep their marriage without receiving faith?
- ❖ What would be my position toward my partner in marriage, if he or she treats me badly because of my new faith?
- ❖ If I were uncircumcised before receiving the Christian faith, do I have to be circumcised?
- ❖ What would be my position in Christianity, whether I was before receiving faith, a noble or a slave?

These questions and others needed clear and straightforward answers from the apostle Paul, for all to be sure that they walk the sound and secure evangelic path; Or, in other words, could the familial, social, or cultural circumstances become obstacles on the way of the enjoyment of the proper evangelic life?

¹ IN 1 Cor., Hom. 19: 4.

- ❖ It would be wrong to assume that the circumstances prevailing when someone receives the Christian faith, could constitute an obstacle on his way to enjoy a sanctified life¹.

(Theodor, Bishop of Messisa)

“Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision.. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision” (18). Circumcision is nothing and un-circumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandment of God is what matters” (19)

- ❖ We deserve no reward, neither for being circumcised, for it is a commandment of God; nor for being un-circumcised, for it is the way God has created us².

(Severian, Bishop of Gebalah)

“Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called” (20)

No outer circumstances could stand in the way or a true believer to testify to the evangelic truth; whether he is a Jew or a Gentile, married or celibate, free or slave. He could testify to the new resurrected life through the situation he is already in. In Christ Jesus, all could unite together as members of His body, with no discrimination between man and woman, a Jew and a Greek, barbarian and Scythian, slave and free (Colossians 3: 11). The grace of God is not to be limited by such things.

Let him or her go on doing the work he was doing before receiving faith, as long as it does not constitute a sin. Instead of getting preoccupied with changing his or her situation, let the believer put in his heart to testify to his Christ with thanksgiving and joy for his new life, in the same circumstances and location he is actually in.

The true believer is someone who thanks God, and who realizes that all things work together for his own good, whether he was before receiving faith, circumcised or un-circumcised, married or celibate, free or slave; Nothing should preoccupy him except the hand of God working for his edification, and choosing his crown.

The worst for a believer is to let the devil strike him with the sin of murmuring; to covet to be in circumstances other than what he is already in. Whereas the true believer is always thankful; feels that he is being carried on eternal arms; and has a heavenly Father who, by His divine wisdom, plans for him what would surpass any human thought.

The Jew should not grieve because, before receiving Christian faith, he carried in his body, the sign of the Old Covenant; And the Gentile should not be disturbed that he received the new faith while un-circumcised; on the wrong assumption that circumcision is necessary for his salvation.

¹ Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.

² Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.

Circumcision or un-circumcision are both nothing; but keeping the commandment of God as a heavenly Father, namely, walking with the faithful and obedient spirit of sonhood is what matters.

- ❖ The situation in which we were called is nothing in itself. Namely, the unmarried could live pure, and could also plunge in sin with his whole being. The same thing also applies to the married. If it is only the Christians who could lead a virgin kind of life, it could be said that virginity is a pure divine ordinance. But the Marcionites practice it as well ... *Virginity* is only honored if clothed in the life and behavior of the church, together with a pure knowledge of the truth¹.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ Paul says that because, as far as God is concerned, there is no difference between either way².

(Severian, Bishop of Gebalah)

“Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it” (21)

If you were a slave when you were called to faith; whether bought for a price, or born that way, This will not lessen your value in the sight of God. But if you find a chance to gain your freedom, rather use it for the sake of temporal benefit, and to use it for edification.

- ❖ Paul encourages the slaves to serve their earthly masters well, to show that they are worthy of being given their freedom. A Christian slave who does not faithfully practice his work, blaspheme the name of Christ, and does nothing for the sake of God³.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ Who will set me free from this cruel bondage (to sin), except Him who said: *“If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed”* (John 8: 36)⁴.

- ❖ Paul believes that a Christian slave should not use his new faith as an excuse to flee from his master⁵.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

- ❖ ***“Circumcision or un-circumcision are both nothing, but keeping the commandment s of God is what matters. Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned”*** (19-21). As these things contribute

¹ *Comm. On 1 Cor. 3: 37: 35-43.*

² *Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.*

³ *CSEL 81: 79.*

⁴ *HOMILIES ON Exodus 13 Fathers of The Church 71: 374.*

⁵ *Pg 82: 279.*

nothing to faith, Do not be concerned or confused, as faith overshadows all these things.

...

“And if you can be made free, rather use it”. Some interpret this as [If you can free yourself, do it]; which contradict with Paul’s way of thinking. ... How could a slave be free? ... Faith sets you free, not only from the bondage of sin, but also from the outer earthly bondage, even if you continue to be a slave. That is amazing! As one could become free from covetousness and the ailments of thought, once he disregards riches, anger, and likewise¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“For whoever was called in the lord as a slave is a freed person belonging to the Lord, just as whoever was free when called is a slave of Christ” (22)

In case you are called to faith while a slave, do not be preoccupied with your bondage and feel bitter; but look forward to the freedom promised to you by the Lord, to live by the spirit of strength and joy. And if you are free, you are called as Christ’s slave under that amazing bondage of love, leading us by His Holy Spirit to the glory of His Kingdom. Our bondage to the Lord Christ reveals to us His amazing plan to grant us the true eternal freedom.

❖ He who is saved from sin is truly free ... Anyway, Even a free man is actually Christ’s slave; For being set free from God is the gravest of sins².

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ Paul intends to show that both slaves and free men are equal. All of us are free by Christ, who set us free from the authority of the devil. And by our own free will, we are Christ’s slaves; For through freeing us, He led us to His kingdom³.

(Oecumenius)

❖ That is Christianity; In bondage, we are granted freedom⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men” (23)

Buying a slave, although his master owns his body, yet he cannot have authority over his inner depths; Whereas the lord Christ has bought us by His blood to set our inside free.

❖ How can a free man become a slave? When he does an evil service to men, either for the sake of greed or for a wish of material benefits ... Such a man, even if he is a free man, he is more a slave than anyone else ... Joseph, although he was a slave, yet, while in

¹ In 1Cor., Hom., 19: 5.

² CSEL 81: 6.

³ Oecumenius: Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.

⁴ In 1Cor., Hom., 19: 6.

bondage, he was more free than free men; and accordingly did not surrender to the seduction of his mistress, his owner, who, although a free woman, she was not as free as her slave, whom she was begging and supplicating to respond to her evil desire¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Christ came to restore back to Himself, those He created, and were serving that master to whom they sold themselves through sin².

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ The price of man is the blood of Christ; as it is written: “*You were bought at a price, do not become slaves of men*” (23). Hosts of the evil one are attempting to get us back to the bondage from which we were liberated³.

(St. Cyril the Great)

- ❖ Having been bought at such a high price, that only Christ can pay; we are committed to serve more, and to try to pay something back to the one who bought him. As God bought us, it is befitting of us not to become again slaves of men, namely, those who receive well the nonsense of men⁴.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ What price is greater than when the Creator shed His own blood for the sake of His creation⁵?!

(St. Jerome)

“Brethren, let each one remain with God in that calling in which he was called” (24)

As faith exalts over all situations. “*So let each one remain with God in that calling in which he was called*” (24).

Some believe that some slaves, having received faith, assumed that it is their masters’ duty to set them free, as they became brethren in Christ Jesus. What the apostle confirms here is that, it is befitting of the slaves not to get disturbed, even if their masters do not set them free; As the Christian faith commits the master to treat his slave like his brother, to love, appreciate him, and be compassionate toward him, even if he does not set him free.

4- VIRGINITY IS A BETTER CHOICE:

“Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy” (25)

¹ In 1Cor., Hom., 19: 5.

² Homilies on Exodus 6.

³ Homilies 21 Fathers of Church 46: 344-345.

⁴ CSEL 81: 80-81.

⁵ Homilies 21 Fathers of Church 48:220.

Concerning virgins, he would rather see them remain that way (25, 26). Yet saying: “*I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy. I suppose therefore, because of the present distress-- that it is good for a man to remain as he is*” (26); does not mean that the apostle has some doubt concerning the matter; but he intends not to present a committing commandment, lest all virgins would refrain from marriage, for fear of breaking the divine commandment. Here he presents, to those who seek the perfection of virginity, a way as a concession, not as a committing commandment.

With all faithfulness, the apostle proclaims that he got no commandment from the Lord concerning that issue; but he gives judgment as an apostle, to whom the Holy Spirit proclaims and inspires the truth.

- ❖ It is clear that Paul so says, not because he got an order to teach what concern virginity; But as the Lord has not told him that those concerned are committed to practice chastity (virginity), he gives his own judgment, commending it, but not committing them to it¹.

(Severian. Bishop of Gebalah)

- ❖ Here, although Paul has reached an exalted wisdom, yet he is reluctant to dictate chastity in a direct way, for fear that it would be unacceptable to his listeners; That is why he presents it as a concession and not as a committing commandment².

(Oecumenius)

- ❖ Certain ordinances are presented as divine commandments; while other ordinances are left more flexibly to the discretion of men. The first category are commandments that touch salvation; while the others are for the sake of a better life, which, we may be saved, even if we do not keep them. They are not committing in any way, but practicing them is optional¹.

(The scholar Origen)

“I suppose therefore, because of the present distress – that it is good for a man to remain as he is” (26)

- ❖ The apostle Paul teaches that virginity is a better option, not only because it pleases God, but on account that it is a reasonable way to follow in the present distressful circumstances².

(Ambrosiaster)

¹ *Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.*

² *Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.*

¹ *Comm. On 1 Cor., 3: 39: 2-6.*

² *CSEL 81: 82.*

“Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife” (27)

Marriage, although sanctified, as it is a bond in which each party is committed to certain duties toward the other party, no one should seek to be loosed from it.

- ❖ Here he does not speak about her who chooses virginity, or else she would be doing wrong ... The evil is not in the matrimonial relationship, as much as it is in the hindrance of the seriousness of life¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you that” (28)

It so seems because certain groups of people appeared (at that time) who defile the look to marriage, and even forbid it (see 1 Timothy 4: 3), the apostle intends to confirm that he does not count marriage as a sin; Yet, he who realize that life is a short stage before crossing over to heaven, would rather not be preoccupied with the responsibilities of marriage, but would dedicate his energies to work to the account of the kingdom of God.

- ❖ The virgin is spared from the earthly troubles, and, by her purity, is liberated, anticipating the blessed Groom¹.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ He who marries does not sin, as he is doing something allowed; But if he refrains from marriage, he would be worthy of commendation, and of getting a crown in heaven; On account of that his choice requires great self-control to avoid doing what is not allowed².

(Ambrosiaster)

“But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they have none” (29)

Virginity is not set on a defile look at the matrimonial physical relationships, but, because the time is short, it is set on a dedication to worship and ministry. Although the world is a God’s beautiful and sanctified creation, yet many do not use it to work to the account of the kingdom of God. So is the case of marriage; some refrain from it, not because of any defilement in it, but for the sake of worship or ministry, because the time is short.

As life is only a passing-over stage; even those who are married are like those who are not; life of both pass quickly with all its pleasures and sufferings. A believer, therefore, should not put his heart on his bodily comfort.

¹ In Cor., Hom. 19: 7.

¹ Comm. On 1 Cor., 3: 39: 51-52.

² CSEL 81: 83.

❖ Listen carefully, O saintly brethren to the apostle of Christ say to the church: “*Even those who have wives should be as though they have none*” (29). We know many married brethren who gave fruition through grace, who for the sake of Christ’s name practiced a complete self-control by mutual consent, without forsaking the marital love. Yes, the less the former relationships (the physical), the more the other will grow¹.

(St. Augustine)

❖ Those who know that the end of the world is close at hand, know for sure that they will shortly have comfort; and would comfort one another by this hope¹.

❖ By confirming that the end of the world is close at hand, the believers would rather not get preoccupied through having children, but to dedicate themselves to the ministry of God. However, there would probably be expected pressures, and the fear of falling into the shackles of the devil².

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ Those who are physically unable to beget earthly children are committed to have fruition in their souls, and beget spiritual children. Our works are our children; So if we could consummate good works every day of our life, we would not lack the spiritual seed³.

(Caesarius, Bishop of Arl)

❖ Let us possess and not be possessed; let us hold and not be held; let us be masters of, and not slaves to our possessions, according to the words of the apostle (29-32). Do not let those possessions hold your hands which should hold God. Let your love not become preoccupied by anything; as by it you cross over to God, and to stick to Him who created you⁴.

(St. Augustine)

“those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess” (30)

Although the believer should live his life with all its grieves and joy, buying and selling, etc. Yet it is not befitting of him to put his heart in these things, and become their slave, but keep his heart lifted up toward heaven; with the understanding that all events are temporal and temporary.

“and those who deal with this world as though they had no dealings with it.. For the form of this world is passing away. But I want you to be without care. He who is

¹ Sermons on New Testament Lessons.

¹ CSEL 81: 85.

² CSEL 81: 83-84.

³ Sermons 51: 3.

⁴ Sermons on New Testament Lessons.

unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord – how he may please the Lord” (31, 32)

On another aspect, the believer in his spiritual strife, wrestles against the requirements of his body; And in case he marries he will most probably have to wrestle, as well, against the requirements of the other party, instead of dedicating himself to worship and ministry. As an example, if the believer, for the sake of his ministry, may wish to travel, watch, or fast for extended times, the other party may stand in his way, not being ready or wishing to let him do it. That is what the apostle means by saying: *“I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord – how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of this world – how he may please his wife”* (32, 33).

❖ Paul wishes for them to be free from worry. Yet, being preoccupied with the things that belong to the Lord is not worry, It is salvation¹.

(Oecumenius)

❖ Although Paul allows for marriage, and counts it as worthy of blessing; Comparing it to his own position, caring for what belong to God, he confirms that the two things are not contradictory².

(St. Cyril the Great)

❖ When the ultimate Judgment is over, and this heaven and this earth pass away, there will be a new heaven and a new earth. The world will pass away by changing its form, and not through its absolute destruction; Hence the apostle says: *“For the form of this world is passing away; but I want you to be without care”* (31, 32)³.

(St. Augustine)

❖ Here Paul shows how virginity is better than marriage; not that sex is something good or bad; but the main issue here, is that it takes the worry away from the mind, and let it concentrate on the worship of God⁴.

(Severian, Bishop of Gebalah)

❖ It is impossible for him who cares for the world, and has his heart preoccupied with pleasing other people, to keep the first and greatest commandment of the Lord: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and al your strength”*. For how could he realize that, while his heart is divided between God and the world, and when he turns the love that should be directed only to God, into human emotions? *“He who is unmarried cares for the*

¹ *Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.*

² *The Long Rules 5.*

³ *City of God 20: 14.*

⁴ *Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.*

things that belong to the Lord – how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares for the things of the world – how he may please his wife” (32, 33) ¹.

- ❖ Having to choose between two masters, being unable to serve both together; The wise man would choose the one of more benefit to him. Likewise when we are confronted with the choice between two situations, being unable to have them both; ***“the unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord –how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares for the things of this world – how he may please his wife”*** (32, 33). I say again that the sound mind would choose the thing of more benefit to him².

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

“But he who is married cares about the things of the world – how he may please his wife. There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both In body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world -- how she may please her husband” (33, 34)

- ❖ The unmarried woman resorts to the safety of the stronghold of virginity, protected by God from the storms of this world. ... That is why, to be qualified to behold Him, whether we are in virginity, in the first marriage or in the second, let us walk seeking the kingdom of heaven through the grace and compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is glory, power, and honor, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever, Amen³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ The human spirit would either sanctify or corrupt the body. In case man attempts to have a pure body and a corrupt soul; let him choose between one of two things: either to honor the soul or to draw the body to corruption¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

“And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leach on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction” (35)

In verses 35-40 he is probably talking about those who after marriage, and with their complete free will, they choose, through mutual consent to have a perfect virgin life. And yet, in case one of them weakens, they would commit no sin if they resume their normal physical relationship.

5- MAN’S POSITION TOWARD HIS VIRGIN:

¹ *On Virginity, 9.*

² *On Virginity,20.*

³ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 19: 7.*

¹ *CSEL 81: 86.*

“But if anyone thinks he is behaving improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to, if she is getting along in years, and he feels he ought to marry, let him do what he wishes; he does not sin; let them marry” (36)

The term ‘virgin’ in Greek, applies to both the unmarried man and woman. There are two different views of what the apostle means by “Man’s position toward his virgin”:

(1) Some believe that the apostle means here that if someone, after living long without marriage, longing to dedicate his life to worship and ministry; he feels that he is no longer able to hold to the purity of life, he should not be ashamed of getting married, however old he may be.

It is probably because of this that the leaders of monasticism ask him who seeks to be a monk to wait a long period of time under probation; during which he may change his mind and get married if he feels too weak to proceed.

❖ Paul always wishes the best for Christians. It would be better for man to get publicly married, than to behave shamefully in secret¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

“Nevertheless he who stands steadfast in his heart, who is under no compulsion, but has control over his own will, and has so determined in his heart not to marry his virgin, does the right thing” (37)

Here he speaks about whom God granted a strong will to practice the life of virginity; who, having passed through a period of probation, realized that it is his true vocation. Let him go ahead and do it.

Some others believe that the apostle deals with the issue of someone who has got a virgin daughter. If he feels that it is for her own good and for her chastity, to give her in marriage, he should encourage her to be. But if he realizes that she is strongly determined on virginity, and that she is capable of doing it, he would do well to let her remain virgin.

Here we notice three important points in the issue of marriage of sons and daughters:

a- Parents should not stand negative in this issue, but do what is for the good of their children.

b- Being something concerning the children, it is not the parents’ right to commit them to marry or not to marry.

c- Parents should not be preoccupied with the way the society looks at it; but only with what is for the edification of their own children’s souls.

“So then he who gives her in marriage does well, but he who does not give her in marriage, does better” (38)

¹ CSEL 81: 89.

❖ He who is tied by the chains of marriage is bound; and he who is not, is free; the former under the law, and the later under the grace. Marriage is good, as through it, we would gain the kingdom of heaven, and keep on gaining the heavenly rewards¹.

(St. Ambrose)

6- WIDOWS ARE ALLOWED TO DO WHATEVER THEY CHOOSE:

“A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord” (39)

❖ I wish women listen carefully to this; those who intend to enter into a second marriage, and do wrong to the memory of their departed husbands, although they used to love them. I am not by this forbidding the second marriage, nor say this as though it is a defilement; for Paul would not allow me to do; he has shut up my mouth by saying: *“If she gets married, she has not sinned”* (28, 40). ... Yes, but I wish she listens carefully to what he says following this: *“But she is happier if she remains as she is”* (40). ... Why so? For several reasons. First of all, As it would be better for man not to marry at all than to marry, So it is in the widow’s case, it would be far better for her to remain as she is. ... You may say: But some of them may not endure widowhood, and would probably fall into many troubles. Yes, but that would be because they do not know the true meaning of widowhood. It is not that widowhood is exempted from the second marriage, but we are dealing here with the issue of virginity which is better to keep¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment – and I think I also have the Spirit of God” (40)

❖ If a wife or a husband dies, would it be a sin if the other gets married? No; yet if he or she remain unmarried, they would gain a greater honor and a better glory in the sight of the Lord².

(Hermas)

❖ She would be blessed if she gets married and has a husband to protect her; But she would be more blessed if she, for the sake of piety, rejects marriage and dedicate her life completely to God³.

(Severian, Bishop of Gebalah)

¹ Synodal Letters.

¹ In 2 Tim., Hom. 7.

² The Shepherd 4: 4.

³ Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.

❖ Notice how Paul did not say that the widow who gets a second marriage would have a miserable life; But he says that she would rather be happier if she remains unmarried. It is a relative matter¹!

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

❖ He says well: “*for what is proper, and that she may serve the Lord without distraction*” (35). ... But **why would he not encourage the second marriage?** Is it forbidden? Certainly not! It would be a heresy! But he wishes for her to be preoccupied with spiritual things, and to concentrate all her care on virtue; Not that marriage is a kind of defilement, but it is of distraction. He speaks here about finding more time to serve the Lord; and not that they would become more pure through remaining without marriage. Marriage certainly requires more worldly cares. And if she intends to remain unmarried to have more time to serve the Lord, and yet did not profit from that time to render service to the strangers and saints, she would get no benefit from her decision¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ Pg 82: 286.

¹ In Tim., Hom. 14.

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CORINTHANS 7

PREPARE ME FOR THE DAY OF MY WEDDING, O DIVINE VIRGIN!

- ❖ You created Eve to be a wife of the first Adam;
And held his wedding in the garden of Eden!
You blessed the wedding at Cana of Galilee;
And sanctified every marriage consummated according to your pleasure.
- ❖ You came to our earth to set me as a virgin bride.
I long for the day of my wedding to You, O the heavenly Virgin Groom.
- ❖ Grant me in my marriage to dedicate my heart to You in the virginity of spirit.
Grant me in my virginity to unite with You, O Divine Virgin!
Your Holy Spirit grants love and dedication.
Grants virginity and purity.
Reforms and prepares me for the day of my wedding to you.
- ❖ How amazing are your supernatural works;
You were born by a virgin, and remained after your birth a Virgin.
You came to set a heavenly wedding.
You chose humanity as a bride.
To set out out of her a virgin bride.
To embrace married people, yet virgin in spirit.
And widows, virgin in heart.
And virgins in the body for the sake of the virginity of spirit.
Your Spirit embraces all: the married, the widows, and the virgins.
To set out of them all a virgin bride!

CHAPTER 8

CONSCIENCES OF THE STRONG AND THE WEAK

Because of the food dedicated to the idols through certain rites in the idol temples, then sold in the meat market, some serious problem arose among the Christians in Corinth. Some pagans used to invite their Christian friends to eat together with them in the idol temple, or to eat meat that was sold in the meat market to the account of the idol temple.

As far as this issue is concerned, the Christians in Corinth were divided into two groups:

A group with strong conscience, mostly of Gentile origin, who did not refrain from eating what was slain to be offered to the idols, on account of the fact that there is no such thing as gods or idols; That the idols are unable to sanctify or to defile a sacrifice, because they are utterly nonexistent; And that what is slain is created by God for man to eat. They believed that it is their right to purchase any meat from the market, regardless of its source or to whose account it is sold.

A second group with weak conscience, mostly of Jewish origin, offended by the behavior of the first group; who refuse to eat such meat on account of that it is connected to the worship of vain gods; that the animals were not slain according to the law; and that no tithes nor firstfruits were offered on them. Whereas those among them who were of pagan origin, counted eating this kind of meat as an actual partaking of the idol worship; as food has been an integral part of the worship rites.

Although this problem is no more now, yet the apostle's wise response is very important to us, as it presents spiritual concepts, essential for our contemporary daily behavior:

(1) According to the apostle Paul, the believer should have a strong conscience, and should eat without searching. And if the first group of people we mentioned claim to have true knowledge, that there is no such thing as gods ...; this knowledge is not only their own, but "*We all have knowledge*" (1); Therefore they should not boast over the other group with the weak conscience, as though they are ignorant.

(2) "**Knowledge (without love) puffs up, but love edifies**" (1). Our behavior should be set upon our love for others, and not upon our mere knowledge. The apostle has already set the following important principle: "*All things are lawful for me, but not all things are beneficial*"; and also: "*All things are lawful for me, but not all things edify*".

(3) **Our knowledge now is not complete** (2); but he who loves God will become the subject of God's knowledge and be His personal friend.

(4) **There will be need for little concessions**; not in serious things but in eating and drinking ... "*For neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse*" (8).

(5) Although eating what is slaughtered for **the idols is nothing in itself**, yet it could become a stumbling block to him who is weak and would probably make him eat those things as partaking of idol worship (10); and by this your weak brother will perish, for whom Christ died (11).

(6) For the sake of those with weak conscience, for whom Christ delivered His life, the apostle proclaims his readiness for concessions beyond limits: ***“If food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble”*** (13).

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1- DEPENDING ON KNOWLEDGE ALONE:

The pagans used to hold banquets to eat their sacrifices, and to invite their friends to share it with them. Those banquets were held inside the pagan temple, and what remain from the sacrifices was sent to the market to be sold to their account of the priests of the temple (25). The Christians, not to isolate themselves from their pagan neighbors and friends, in the hope that by their love they would probably gain their souls to faith, used to eat with them at their homes. Yet, their behavior became a stumbling block to some Christians with weak consciences, who considered it a stage that could lead to offer sacrifices to the idols.

The apostle dealt with this problem in detail in the tenth chapter of this epistle, but here he introduced general principles to guide the behavior of the believer.

He starts by talking about those who, with haughtiness, boast of having knowledge, disregarding love for their brethren.

“Now concerning things offered to idols; we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up. But love edifies” (1)

Knowledge without love, leading to haughtiness, and filling the mind as though with wind; would not benefit its owner, and would harm others. Whereas the practical love, namely, compassion toward the others, would make us care for them, and work on edifying them, and ourselves together with them.

He who thinks that he knows, and actually has mental knowledge, yet does not bear love, knows nothing yet as he ought to know; as it is befitting of him to know how to love his neighbor as he loves himself, and not to feel haughty toward the others.

“We know that we all have knowledge” (1). This phrase is most probably not the words of the apostle Paul, but quoted from the message sent to him from Corinth. As all parties, whether of Jewish or Gentile origin, claimed have knowledge; to which the apostle responds by saying that knowledge alone joined with pride would puff up the mind; make man proud of himself and his views, despise those of others, and put the blame on them. It is

very dangerous to make decisions, depending on knowledge alone. Love, on the other hand edifies, and sets the spiritual temple of the Lord, by the Holy Spirit of God, inside the soul.

Love gives more surety than knowledge in guiding man in his behavior toward others. Knowledge alone is a dangerous leader on the life of man and those around him; Whereas love for God and man is more secure. By love, as man becomes more compassionate toward his brother and the weak in particular; and makes him care, not for what is his own, but for what is others', his decisions would become wise and calm. He who loves God becomes ready to learn from God, who presents His knowledge to the humble souls.

He who loves God, loves his brethren, and is truly known by God, a knowledge of friendship, pleasure, and love; God would know him as a son, and refers him to Himself (Psalm 6: 1; 2 Timothy 2: 19). By love we get to know God – the Love itself; and God would know us, as we receive His feature in us.

St. Augustine lived most of his youth seeking knowledge, teaching it, and boasting of it as a philosopher and teacher. But once he experienced the encounter with the Lord Christ, the meek, and the humble in heart, he realized his need for getting purified of pride by the blood of Christ. He saw himself like one of the Hebrews, bearing knowledge as being the gold and silver taken from the Egyptians; Yet he realized that he could not be liberated of the bondage of Pharaoh, unless purified by the blood of the meek Lamb; and that knowledge is good, if sanctified by the blood of Christ, and connected to His saving love, and His meekness.

❖ He feels that however great the wealth he carries with him from Egypt; Unless he keeps the Passover, he would never be saved. Now Christ is our Passover, slain for our sake; and there is nothing like the sacrifice of Christ, to teach us clearly about the call He Himself presents to whom He sees labor under the authority of Pharaoh, saying: *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls”* (Matthew 11: 28-30).

Whom is addressing but the gentle and the lowly in heart alone, who are not puffed up by knowledge, but are edified by love? Let us remember that those who have celebrated the Passover at that time, were shadows, when they stroke their lintel and the two doorposts with the blood of the lamb, using a bunch of hyssop (Exodus 12: 22); ... In the hyssop, a meek and humble kind of grass, there is a symbol of the virtue of purification; that our chests should not be puffed up by knowledge, nor we would vainly boast of the riches we carried from Egypt. The Psalmist says: *“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness”* (Psalm 51: 7, 8). Then he adds right away: *“Let the bones that You have crushed rejoice”*; demonstrating that the hyssop refer to purification from pride.

- ❖ This could be only understood as: Without love, knowledge presents no goodness, but puffs man up, and make him boast of vain wind. Those who have knowledge without love are haughty, and covet for divine honors and works that hide the true God; Yet they do their best to reflect that on those whom they could influence. Their pride is like that of the devils, because of which, mankind were submitted to a punishment they deserve. Contrary to this is the humility of the Lord, taking on Himself the form of a servant, whom the people failed to recognize, as they likened the devils in pride, and not in knowledge, and puffed up with defilement¹.
- ❖ Knowledge is good as long as it is accompanied by love; or else it would puff man up with pride².
- ❖ The proud is called puffed up, as though he is full of wind; hence the words of the apostle: **“Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies”** (1)³.
- ❖ Knowledge of a good kind is a servant of love. Knowledge without love puffs up; but love fills the heart, where knowledge finds no void by which it would be puffed up⁴.
(St. Augustine)
- ❖ Love edifies. It moves on the way of truth, and not according to whims⁵.
(St. Clement of Alexandria)
- ❖ Paul means to say that knowledge is such a great and beneficial thing, for him who acquires it, as long as it is diluted with love⁶.
(Ambrosiaster)
- ❖ By confirming that knowledge is general, he meant to rein their enormous pride. As those who possess a great and an exalted thing would be very happy to know that they are the only ones who have it; but if they happen to realize that it is a common possession with others, they would no longer have such feeling⁷.
- ❖ He showed that this thing is far from being perfect on all aspects, but by saying: **“Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies”**, he actually shows that it is nothing if not combined with something else. While knowledge without love leads man to feel absolute boasting; Love gathers us together, and leads us to knowledge⁸.

¹ *City of God* 9: 40.

² *Sermon on the Amount 1: 1: 3.*

³ *Ep. 55: 39.*

⁴ *Ep. 167: 11.*

⁵ *Stromata 1: 54: 4.*

⁶ *CSEL 81: 91.*

⁷ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 20: 1.*

⁸ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 20: 2.*

- ❖ Their knowledge not only puffed them up, but separated them from each other; and made them antagonize one another¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know” (2)

The apostle does not designate the range of knowledge, but says “*knows anything*”. Despite the benefit of scientific, philosophical, ethical, or theological knowledge, he counted them all as nothing, if they do not work to edify its owner and the congregation through love.

- ❖ It is only when man has love, that it could be said that he knows as he ought to know².

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ Notice how he brings down their increasing pride; not saying: “You have no knowledge befitting of the issues concerned; but he says: “about anything”; and not saying: “You”, but says “if anyone think”; whether it is Peter, Paul, or anyone else. By that he calms them down and let them be humble³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him” (3)

- ❖ We did not know Him, but He knows us; That is why the lord Christ says: “*You have not chosen Me, but I chose you*”; and Paul says: “*I will know fully, even as I have been fully known*” (1 Corinthians 13: 12)⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

Some one may wonder: Why does he say: “*If anyone loves God, this one is known by Him*” Does God not know those who do not love Him?

The Lord Christ says: “*Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness*” (Matthew 7: 21-23). Here the Lord talks to us about the day of his ultimate coming, when He encounter with the wicked, not as a rejoicing Groom, but as a terrifying Judge; when their vain long prayers will not intercede on their behalf, nor their vain preaching, casting demons, or doing wonders in His name; He never knew them because they practice lawlessness.

¹ In1 Cor., Hom. 20: 2

² CSEL 81: 92.

³ In1 Cor., Hom. 20: 3.

⁴ In1 Cor., Hom. 20:3.

God knows His saintly children and ministers, and not the wicked who practice lawlessness; When Adam fell into sin, He asked him: “*Adam, where are you?*”. According to St Jerome, God knew that Adam was in paradise, and knew everything he did; Yet, once he sinned, He did not know him; and asked him. “*where are you*”¹ as though he does not see him. Once Adam forsook the divine Light and Righteousness, he came to be under the shadows of sin, and the darkness of death. Commenting on the saying of the Lord, “*I never knew you*”, **St. Augustine** says: God means to say to them, [I do not see you in my light, and in the righteousness I know²]. God does not see us in His light if we do not love Him, even if we raise long vain prayers, or preach, or do wonders in his name; but when we live with and by Him, and walk along His ways³. we who love Him will enjoy the light of the righteousness of Christ, and will become qualified to be the subject of His knowledge.

2- THE NATURE OF IDOLS:

“Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one” (4)

“*An idol is nothing in the world*”; An idol can do nothing in the world; having no deity, it is like naught, with no true being, called in the new Testament lies and vanity. Idols are illusionary gods, with no power, nor ability to defile God’s children and ministers.

Concerning food, “*Every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving*” (1 Timothy 4: 4).

Some Jews who received Christian faith might probably inherited the controversy that was between the literals and those with open minds. The first category with their much doubt and literacy concerning the sanctuaries, that they even forbade eating the kinds of animals offered in idol worship; which was allowed by the other category on one condition, not to carry the sign of the idol. Whereas the Gentiles as a whole, believed that eating that meat, if it was not offered for idol worship, does not represent partaking of that worship.

❖ Although his god were the work of his own hands, yet man became their captives, once he delivers himself to fellowship with, and worshipping them. ... As, what are idols, according to the Holy Book, but things with eyes, yet cannot see¹?!
(St. Augustine)

❖ Notice how Paul’s mind was committed to confirm two things: That it is befitting of man to refrain from such a banquet; And that, at the same time, such banquet is powerless to harm those who partake of it. Two things difficult to conform between them²!

¹ *On Psalm Hom. 1.*

² *In Ioan 49: 20.*

¹ *City of God 8.*

² *In 1 Cor., Hom. 20: 4.*

³ للمؤلف: إنجيل متى، 1983، ص 184-185.

- ❖ The same thing as when man believes that by touching a dead body, he would, according to Jewish customs, be committed to count himself as unclean about whom he says: “*for some with consciousness of the idol, until now*” ; Yet not without reason that he adds “*until now*”, to refer to that they are still sticking to some Jewish customs, that are now futile¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“*Foe even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many Lords)*” (5)

“*so-called gods*”, because they are not true gods, but are claimed to be (1 Thessalonians 2: 4); whether in heaven like the sun and the moon, etc. (Deuteronomy 4: 19), or on earth, like the kings who deified themselves.

By those in heaven, he probably means the gods claimed by pagans to dwell in heaven, and occasionally come to visit the earth, like Jupiter, and Jun-Mercury. And other gods claimed to have authority on certain regions of the earth and the seas, like Ceres, and Neptune; and even beneath the earth like Pluts.

“*many Lords*”. Some pagans used to call gods ‘Baals’, meaning, (masters or lords); believing that they had authority over the minds of their worshipers, and were guardian keeping them safe.

3- THE TRUE WORSHIP:

“*Yet for us there is only one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him, and one lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live*” (6)

For us, the one God, the Father, of, in, and for whom, are all things; the Fountain of existence, the Source of everything, who creates, keeps, and ordains the whole world.

Indeed the Son is God, although begotten by Him, yet He is not another God. And the Holy Spirit is God, although proceeds from Him, yet not another Deity. We have one Lord, one intercessor between the Father and men – Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God.

- ❖ The Holy Book testifies that the three expressions: “with Him”, “by Him”, and “in Him”, are actually one expression in Christ¹.

(St. Ambrose)

- ❖ “From Him” means (from the Father); “by Him” means (by the Son); and “in Him” means (in the Holy Spirit) – a clear testimony that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one God².

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 20:8.

¹ The Holy Spirit 83.

² Trinity 1: 13.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ As there is one God -- the Father from whom is everything, there is also one Lord -- Jesus Christ by whom is all things¹.

(St. Cyril of Alexandria)

- ❖ Taking the time into consideration, the apostle says that all things were created by Jesus Christ: “*One Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things*” (6). And talking about the passion of Jesus Christ he shows that it is the Lord of Glory who was crucified, saying: “*If they knew, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory*”².

(St. John Cassian)

- ❖ The prophet says on the tongue of God the Father: “*My hand made everything*”; by ‘His hand’ He means the power of the Only-begotten Son. Now the apostle says that everything is from the Father, and everything is done by the Son; And the prophetic spirit conforms in some way to the apostolic teaching, in that (everything) is given through the Holy Spirit¹.

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

4- THE CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND LOVE:

“However there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak is defiled. But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse” (7, 8)

- ❖ Meaning, that neither the first would make me rich; nor the second would make me poor².
- ❖ Whether we fast or not fast on the seventh day (the Sabbath); there is nothing that would give us peace like the apostolic law, saying: “*Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat; and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him*” (Romans 14: 3); and, “*Neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse*” (8). Let us keep our fellowship with whom we live in God undisturbed because of those things³.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ He looks at the thing (food) in itself as nothing of real importance; If it is done, it would have no benefit, and if not done, it would not harm⁴.

¹ Letter 50: 26.

² The Seven Books of John Cassian, 6: 22.

¹ Against Eunomius, 7: 1.

² Confessions 10: 45.

³ Ep. 36: 26.

⁴ In 1 Corinth., hom. 20: 9.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours becomes a stumbling block to those who are weak” (9)

The apostle address those with strong consciences, who, although they eat in those banquets with no offense before God, yet their behavior would probably become a stumbling block to those with weak conscience. He says to them that by refraining from partaking of those banquets, they would not lose anything of their spiritual exaltation or of the strength of their conscience.

Eating or not eating is neither a virtue nor an iniquity; neither commend us to God nor separate us from Him; Even in fasting, it is befitting of us not to be preoccupied with the abstention from eating, as much as with coming close to God and uniting with Him.

“Lest somehow this liberty of yours becomes a stumbling block” (9). The apostle warns them against abusing the authority of liberty, and the strength of their consciences. As liberty in the Christian faith has a commitment, namely, caring for the weak and taking into consideration their spiritual potentials and concepts. He with a strong conscience partakes of those banquets with the conviction that the idol is nothing; while he with a weak conscience will imitate him, but with another concept, namely, a fellowship with the pagans in their connection with the idols.

The apostle did not forbid his people to enter the idol temples, to partake of their banquets, or to purchase meat that could be of sacrifices offered to idols; as all that those things are already known as hateful and unclean. But he sought from them to be preoccupied with what is more important, namely, with the salvation of every soul, particularly those of weak conscience; rather than to be preoccupied with dry mental debates to prove that idols are vain, and that all God’s creation is good.

“For if anyone sees you who have knowledge, eating in an idol’s temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat these things offered to idols?” (10)

It is rather strange that those who claim to have strong conscience, enter the idol temples and partake of their banquets; and their knowledge, bare of love, lead to some kind of behavior that could make them lose their sound spiritual depths.

❖ Why should you become for those with weak consciences, a stumbling block, instead of giving them a helping hand?! You should at least avoid making them perish! ... They are weak; and your unreasonable behavior makes them -- your own brethren, weaker¹!

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ In 1 Corinth., hom. 20: 10.

- ❖ There are two kinds of food: one that help salvation, and the other fits the perishable! ... It is befitting of us not to abuse the gifts of the Father, and do like the prodigal son of the rich man (Luke 15: 11-14); but to use them with a kind of self-control. We are commanded to be masters of, and not slaves to our food¹.

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

“And because of your knowledge, shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?” (11)

Enjoying the gift of salvation; and realizing the price paid for it by the Lord Christ on the cross; the believer would attempt to pay Christ’s love back with love, and would covet even to die for the sake of his brethren! Indeed, he who bears the Spirit of the Lord Christ, would love those loved by Him, cares, not to cause them grief, nor to become a stumbling block on their way to salvation.

- ❖ My anguish is great! And my fears are many! I even intend to throw myself at your feet, cry myself out, and by the eloquence of love resort to you for his sake, the weak brother for whom Christ died²!
- ❖ *“You slander your own mother’s son!”* (Psalm 50: 20), for whose sake Christ died; he who is still a feeble infant, not yet ready for the solid food, but in need of his mother’s milk (1 Corinthians 3: 2) ³.
- ❖ When man sins against a brother, he should take into consideration the words of the apostle: *“When you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ”* (12). Having all become members of Christ, how could we sin against one member of Christ⁴?
- ❖ If you love the weak person less than you do another on account of his ethical failure that made him weak, Just remember the One who died for his sake⁵.
- ❖ It is the law of Christ Himself, that man should endure the burden of another; By Christ’s love you can easily endure his weakness. And even he whom you don’t love because of his unbecoming attributes, you should remember that Christ also died for him¹.

(St. Augustine)

¹ *Paedagogus* 2: 9.

² *Ep.* 73: 8.

³ *Ep.* 93: 21.

⁴ *Sermons on New Testament Lessons*, 32: 4.

⁵ *Questions 71 Fathers of the Church* 70: 185.

¹ *Questions 71*

“But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience you sin against Christ” (12)

The harm done to those of weak conscience is counted as done against Christ Himself. Whoever does wrong against the herd would be dishonoring the Shepherd who gathers them in His arms and embrace them in his bosom (Isaiah 60: 11).

The apostle did not ask the strong to explain their position to those with weak souls, nor to enter with them into debates and controversies, but, with love make concessions for their sake.

- ❖ Those who are stronger and would not be confused by doubts, are nevertheless asked to refrain (from partaking of the idol temple banquets and from eating their meat), lest they would become a stumbling block to those who, because of their weakness, they find it necessary to refrain¹.

(St. Augustine)

“Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble” (13)

The apostle supports his people by presenting himself a role model for them. He is ready to refrain completely from eating meat for the sake of his weak brethren. He did not just say he would refrain completely from eating, because that would be a grave sin.

- ❖ He who proclaims that everything is good, and that nothing is despised, if taken with thanksgiving, In certain situations, because of the conscience the weak brother, he demands from us to refrain from certain things, which are otherwise acceptable. He says: ***“If food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble”***².

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

¹ *The Way of Life of the Catholic Church Fathers of Church* 56: 55.

² *Against Eunomius*, 1: 37.

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 8

SHOULD I MAKE CONCESSIONS FOR THOSE FOR WHOM YOU DIED

- ❖ Indeed, how fast would I hasten to recognize my rights!
And how sweet to defend them!
Yet, I pray that You to grant me the true knowledge, flaring with love.
That Your Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, reveals Your secrets to me.
And guides me along the way of the giving love.
The way of Your glorious cross.
- ❖ What benefit would I get from having knowledge that lacks love?
It would be the cause of my haughtiness and perdition!
Do not let me be deprived of enjoying Your love.
To walk with it toward You, and toward all Your creation.
- ❖ You are the Truth, the source of love.
You are the love, Grantor of the Truth.
By Your love, You have presented limitless concessions for my sake.
The Creator became clothed with my human nature.
The Grantor of life entered with me even to my grave.
The rich became poor, that by His poverty, he would make me rich.
Now, grant me the honor of fellowship with You.
That I would make concessions on my part for the sake of Your beloved.
But, what have I to present?
When I am just dust and ashes?
- ❖ Grant me, O the eternal love,
Your bosoms, spacious enough to accommodate the whole world!
That, with and by You, I would stretch my arms to embrace every weak.
Yes, by and for the sake of Your precious blood,
I would care for the salvation of the weak, yet not by overwhelming him with debates.
I would care for his inner satisfaction, instead of annoying him with foolish discussions.
I would covet his eternal glory, instead of criticizing and condemning him.
- ❖ While we were enemies, You loved us, and delivered Your life for our sake.
How could we not love our weak brethren?
How could we not covet to die,
For those for whose sake you died?!

CHAPTER 9

A PATTERN OF SELF-DENIAL

In the last chapter, the apostle Paul sought from the strong believers to endure for the sake of the weak until they are well established in the grace of God. It is the work of the divine love in their hearts; to present concessions for the sake of the salvation of their brethren.

In this chapter the apostle confirms two facts that concern his ministry:

(1) **He confirms the authenticity of his apostleship** against those who deny it; not to seek glory, but for the sake of the edification of the people to whom he ministers; making it clear that what preoccupy him is the salvation of others, even while defending himself. Some groups among the congregation attacked the apostleship of Paul, based on the fact that he has not seen the Lord Christ while on earth; and on that He was not chosen by Him among the twelve disciples or the seventy apostles. Hence he confirms his apostleship and receiving the apostolic ministry with his complete liberty (1). His response was that he has seen the Lord while on his way to Damascus; And that they are the seal of his apostleship in the Lord (2); his very own.

(2) The apostle Paul used to present commandments, but not before he practices them in his own life. He is a practical preacher who **presents himself as a live role model to those he ministers, concerning his concessions of his apostolic rights** for the sake of his brethren. He proved the authenticity of his apostleship, yet he denied himself several of his rights.

- ❖ Although he has **the right to live from** the gospel (4); yet he has not used this right so as not to stumble anyone. Together with Barnabas, they worked for their living, so as not to be a burden on the ministry (6).
- ❖ Although he has **the right to take along a believing wife**, as other apostles did, including the brothers of the Lord (5); namely to get married, and have her share his travels; yet he denied himself this right to dedicate himself completely to ministry, and to be able to move more freely to the account of the kingdom of God.
- ❖ Although he has **the right to be free**, yet, with his complete free will he opted to deny himself this liberty; he chose to be, not his own possession, but that of all, to let them enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God. He chose to become a servant, not of someone, nor of a certain family, but of all, that he might win the more to Christ (19).
- ❖ Although he has **the right to walk as a strong man**, yet he chose to become weak to win the weak, and all things to all men, that he might by all means save some (22).

1- The authenticity of Paul's apostleship	1 - 2
2- The apostle's right to live from the gospel	3 - 14
3- The apostle's concessions for the sake of the gospel	15 - 18
4- The apostle's care for the salvation of all	19 - 23
5- The apostle's care for his own salvation	24 - 27

1- THE AUTHENTICITY OF PAUL'S APOSTLESHIP:

The Lord Christ proclaimed that "*A prophet is not without honor except in his own country*" (Matthew 13: 57); And the apostle Paul confronted opposition from the church he founded in Corinth; not from those outside, but from those who received faith through him. Therefore, it is befitting of the true minister not to expect honor or commendation from those he ministers and for whose sake he delivers himself, but he should rather expect opposition and denial.

"Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?" (1)

By saying: "*Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord*", he proves the authenticity of his apostleship, For although he did not enjoy the blessing of discipleship to the Lord Christ while living on earth, nor listened to His teachings, or saw Him in His crucifixion, and directly after His resurrection, until His ascension; Yet, by appearing to him, he became a witness to His resurrection from the dead; A fundamental testimony for the apostolic work (Acts 1: 22).

Here, the apostle Paul confirms his apostleship by the following:

1- "*Am I not an apostle?*"; being chosen by the Lord Christ Himself, who called him for apostleship after His ascension to heaven.

2- "*Am I not free?*" On another aspect, he, by his own free will, accepted that exalted mission.

3- "*Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?*" By seeing the Lord on his way to Damascus (Acts 9: 7, 17; 22: 17), he became a witness to the resurrection.

4- "*Are you not my work in the Lord?*" The work of God in them through his ministry, is a living practical testimony to the authenticity of his apostleship. Their receiving faith, true repentance, and new life, could not all be realized except by God who sent Paul to preach.

It seems that doubt has crawled into some brethren concerning his apostleship for the following reasons:

1- Having not seen the Lord Christ during his life on earth, he could not become His disciple.

2- He and Bernabas did not seek from the churches to provide them with their necessary needs like the other apostles.

3- He and Barnabas committed themselves to work for living.

- ❖ **“Am I not an apostle? Am I not free?”** (1) Meaning, ‘Have I no authority over myself? Is there anyone among you who can judge me, and deprive me of my rights?’ ... Yet even that would not glorify my apostleship; he says: *“Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? ... Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me”* (1 Corinthians 15: 8); Which was not a little honor, in light of what is written: *“Many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it”* (Matthew 13: 17); and also: *“The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it”* (Luke 17: 22)¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord” (2)

As though he says: ‘I expected that others would doubt my apostleship; but, having established the church of Christ in Corinth, and you became the seal of my apostleship in the Lord, It is not befitting of you to deny my apostleship! For if I am not an apostle, I would not be able to win you to the account of the kingdom of God’

If the ‘**seal**’ is a certain form engraved on stone, or on a metal ring, to print on messages as a confirmation of their source (John 3: 33); they are his special seal by which he confirms the authenticity of his mission; Referring to them would be enough for the listeners to be sure of the truth of his apostleship.

And by saying **“in the Lord”**, he confirms that he got his apostleship as a gift or grace from the Lord Himself; by which, as well, was their receiving faith on his hands.

- ❖ Paul says that, in case someone wishes to examine his works, let him look at the Corinthians; They are testimony enough to his labor².

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

- ❖ Although it is his right to boast of his work in the whole world, and in particular among the barbarians; yet he did not refer to any of these, but only to his ministry in Corinth, to show how he got more than what he needs. It is as though he says: I do not intend to refer to what I have done in other regions, but to what you, yourselves, are witnesses. I do not seek a testimony from others, yet, although it is my right to seek yours, being your teacher, yet I have not³!

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 21: 2.

² PG 82: 294.

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 21: 2.

- ❖ The believers of Jewish origin who persisted on keeping the Mosaic law, denied Paul the apostleship, on account of his teaching that there is no more point in keeping the circumcision and the Sabbath ... But as far as the Corinthians are concerned, Paul was certainly an apostle, having seen in him the signs of the power of God¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

2- THE APOSTLE'S RIGHT TO LIVE FROM THE GOSPEL:

After confirming his apostleship, he referred to his rights as an apostle, and how, by his own free will, he made concessions for the sake of his love for the salvation of mankind.

“My defense to those who examine me is this: ...” (3)

The apostle speaks as someone under trial in a criminal court, listening to the charges made against him, and defending himself openly and with love; having set the Corinthians judges to examine the authenticity of his apostleship.

“Do we have no right to eat and drink?” (4)

He means his apostolic **“right”** to eat and drink through his ministry at the expense of the churches he preaches. Yet he did not seek beyond the bare sustenance to live and serve.

- ❖ Although nothing commits him, the apostle refers to the fact that he has forsaken even the things allowed to him by the law, for the sake of edifying others, and so as not to become a stumbling block to anyone; Contrary to those who refused to commit themselves to refrain from partaking of the banquets of idols despite their knowledge that their behavior may cause the perdition of many².
- ❖ Having seen how I committed myself to refrain from things allowed for me by the law; It would not be just to doubt me as deceitful or as someone working for the sake of profit³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Do we have no right to take along a believing wife as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?” (5)

- ❖ The other apostles used to travel accompanied by their believing wives, to minister to housewives, and to bring the teaching to women without hindrance or doubt⁴.

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

“Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working?” (6)

¹ CSEL 81: 97.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 21: .1

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 21: 3.

⁴ Stromata 3: 53: 3.

Both Paul and Barnabas, by their own free will, earned their living as tentmakers (Acts 18: 3; 20: 34; 2 Thessalonians 4: 8); so as not to become a burden on anyone.

“Whoever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard, and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?” (7)

Then the apostle, to defend himself, presented actual examples from life: A soldier would expect to be paid wages and given provisions of food and clothing for his services for the sake of his country; and the farmer and the shepherd of herds would expect wages to sustain them for their service. Striving in his ministry, the apostle likens himself to a soldier, to a planter of a vineyard who finds pleasure in its fruit, and to a shepherd who tends to his flock; Yet he has not taken any wages as a soldier, nor tasted the fruit of the vineyard, or the milk of the herd. He did not seek even the necessities (**his own expenses**), for the sake of his love for the ministry.

The church is often likened to “*an army with banners*” (Songs 6: 4); to a “*vineyard*” (Songs 1: 6); and to a “*herd of sheep*” (John 21: 16).

In the East, the wages of the shepherds of sheep and cattle, in most cases, are not paid in money, but as a certain portion of the milk or the butter of the herd.

The true minister is a spiritual soldier (), a vinedresser (1 Corinthians 3: 6-8), and a shepherd ().

❖ Notice how he chose convenient examples to realize his goals; starting with those surrounded by danger like soldiers in a battle; as the apostleship is not less, but rather more risky; fighting, not against men, but against the devil and their hosts.

“Who plants a vineyard, and does not eat of its fruit?” As he referred in the previous example to the risks and dangers of the ministry, here he refers to its hard labor, and many troubles.

“Who tends a flock and does not drink of its milk?” Here he demonstrates the great care of the teacher toward those whom he tends¹.

❖ He demonstrated the qualities required of the priest or the minister, to be as brave as a soldier, as diligent as a farmer, and as caring as a shepherd; and more than all these, he should not ask for more than the necessities of life².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also?” (8)

He started by using the human logic; then consummated by the divine logic, namely the law of God. As though he says: ‘Do I say these things on my own, without resorting to

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 21: 4.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 21: 4.

the divine law? Is not what seems just and acceptable, also supported by the divine authority itself?

As the controversies were mostly directed from those Christians of Jewish origin in the church in Corinth, he resorted to the law of Moses, as he usually did when he talked to the Jews.

“For it is written in the law of Moses, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain’. Is it oxen God is concerned about?” (9)

After resorting to examples from the actual daily life, and from the generally acceptable laws on human level, he resorted to the law which proclaims that the minister of God should enjoy what sustains his life.

“is it oxen God is concerned about?” The law that cares for the well being of the oxen (Deuteronomy 25: 4), would it not rather care for man, for whose sake the oxen were created, and are even presented as sacrifices?!

By saying: *“You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain”* he refers to the law that grants him the right to enjoy the temporal blessings; and he likened himself to an ox, yet he does not taste the grain he treads out.

That does not imply that the apostle denies God’s care for the oxen; but intends to show that God who so cared for the beasts to set such a law for their sake, Would He not apply it to man, and particularly to his minister?

“Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and whoever threshes should thresh in hope for a share in the crop” (10)

What came in the law, did not come for the sake of a specific man; Moses did not have in mind the person of the apostle Paul or any other; but what he said was from God for the sake of all mankind, that all would work with the spirit of hope to reap the fruit, and rejoice in the success of their labor.

“If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?” (11)

The apostle gave his whole life up, on a daily basis, to sow for them the spiritual things, to let them enjoy the divine salvation, Would it be a great thing for him to get the sustenance of his body? He sowed in them the seeds of the gospel, and granted them the joy of hope in the heavenlies. He sowed in them what is greater than everything in this world, having presented to them the resurrected life instead of death. If in their life, he acted as a physician, a vinedresser, a shepherd, and an advocate ... for the sake of their eternal glory; How would he not dedicate himself to that great work, leaving the care of his daily needs, up to the church? Working to the account of every single individual for the edification of the whole congregation, he has to dedicate himself utterly to that great mission.

- ❖ Paul confirms that his fellow apostles did nothing wrong when they did not preoccupy themselves with earning their living for the sake of their life needs, but lived from the gospel according to the instructions of the Lord. They received life sustenance from those they provided with the spiritual food¹.

(St. Augustine)

“If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endured all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ” (12)

By others here he means the true apostles, and may also means the false ones (2 Corinthians 11: 12). He has more right to it than his fellow apostles, because he was the founder of the church in Corinth; Yet for fear of hindering the gospel of Christ, he chose to forsake this obvious right.

He speaks about the other teachers who, living among the congregation, the church was committed to their needs; about those who entered unto his labor, he who endured everything: poverty, hunger, thirst, nakedness, and vain accusations for the sake of establishing that church. Although he had more right than all *“the others”*, yet for the sake of the gospel of Christ he made this concession, to be able to draw the hearts and minds of all to the gospel.

The clear goal before his eyes, made him endure everything, not only without murmur or complaint, but with joy and gladness, as a sign of true love, to realize the mission of the Lord Christ in him.

- ❖ So as not to embarrass the other apostles who do otherwise; By several means, he showed, from examples of the daily life of soldiers, vinedressers, and shepherds, from the law of Moses, and from nature itself, that it is lawful for the preacher to live from the gospel. He clarified all those things, then he chose to do without them¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar?” (13); “Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel” (14)

Lest they would think that he depends on the law of Moses in the Old Testament, assumed by some to have become obsolete; he also presents a divine commandment on the tongue of the Lord Christ Himself, saying: *“Even so the Lord has commanded”*

¹ *The Work of Monks.*

¹ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 21: 7.*

And lest they would think that he is insulting his fellow apostles for getting the necessities through their ministry, he confirms that both the Old and the New traditions give them that right; beside a commandment by the Lord Himself with the same sense.

- ❖ Despite all those evidences that those who serve the altar, and those who preach the gospel, should live from them (13, 14), yet he still says: “***But I have used none of these things***”, but worked, and worked diligently¹.
- ❖ He says “eat” and “live” of, and from these things, and not to make a trade or build treasures out of them; because the laborer deserves his wages².

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ “***Nor have we eaten free bread from anyone***” ... So that is how the apostle to the Gentiles progress a step at a time in rebuking. Although he knows that the Lord commands: “*that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel*” (1 Corinthians 9: 14); and also: “*The laborer is worthy of his wages*” (1 Timothy 5: 18).

So as long as such a great preacher of the gospel did not intend to use the Lord’s commandment to eat free bread, how much more diligently we (the monks) should work with our hands, so as not to live out of the labor of others?)

How could we eat our bread free of charge, when “*the chosen vessel*”, being bound by his care for the gospel, and his preaching task, did not dare to eat his bread without working with his own hands? ...; and who say, “***but worked with labor and toil, night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you***” (2 Thessalonian 3: 8)?!

Even in this point, he refrains from going too far in his rebuke. And lest some might probably assume that he depends on certain private income or on some money he saved, or through contributions from others; he says: “***but worked with labor and toil, day and night***”; not as a kind of sport or work out, but in order to provide himself with the necessary sustenance¹.

(St. John Cassian)

3- THE APOSTL’S CONCESSIONS FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL:

“***But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void***” (15)

After presenting many examples to confirm his right to the sustenance by the church; like a soldier, a shepherd, a vinedresser, and a priest who offered the sacrifice in the Old Covenant; He preferred the salvation of his brethren to his own life, that he would rather die

¹ In 1 Thess., Hom. 3.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 21: 1.

¹ Institutions 10: 8.

than to hinder the progress of his ministry. Imitating the Lord Christ in delivering Himself, grants him an inner happiness better than gaining even the necessities of life. By the true love, he seeks nothing for himself, but what is for God, and for others; a necessity put upon his inner depths, before which nothing could be compared.

Although nature itself, the law, and the gospel, all give him the right to be sustained by the church; yet his love for preaching keeps him from using it; ***“for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void”***.

He did not intend to be given any wages, that would let some doubt that he works as a laborer in the vineyard of God to eat and live; and, accordingly, would stop to care for the salvation of their own souls. He did not use that right in the past, nor wrote it to seek it in the future, when he returns to visit them.

❖ Although many things give me the right to eat from the gospel; yet nothing of them would make me void the law that I have set for myself. I am not talking of the past (although I endured much to talk about in this concern), but I am talking about the future; *“that it would be better for me to die”*, than anyone would deny me my crown¹.

❖ And lest someone might think that what he did caused him any grief or anguish, he, in order to reveal his joy and his great zeal, he called it glory or ***“boasting”***².

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ The apostle Paul believed in the principle that that it is far better giving than taking, Yet, at the same time he says: *“These hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me”* (Acts 20: 34); And when he wrote to the Corinthians he says *“It would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void”* (15), How then, could he allow for his boasting to get void by receiving wages, when he says: *“I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you”* (1 Corinthians 11: 8). Here it is apparent that he did take, yet not as wages for himself, for his own sustenance, but for the expenses of presenting such a great work *“to minister to you”*³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ The apostle Paul showed that, although this practice is allowed, yet it is not a commandment, lest a minister who takes wages for the sake of his necessary needs from those he preaches, would probably think that he has done wrong. But refraining from it is however commended, as is clearly demonstrated by his own life ... Although he

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 22: 2.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 22: 2.

³ In Pjilip. Hom. 15.

proclaimed that he did not use that right, yet he did not commit his fellow apostles to do the same¹.

(St. Augustine)

❖ It would be better for me to die, than to see some of my brethren robbed; or to see little children deceived in Christ².

(The scholar Origen)

“For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel” (16)

He preaches by his own free will for the sake of the eternal glory. That is the subject of his boasting, and accordingly, he does not seek his right, and he is ready to accept any labor, suffering, or giving, even his life for the sake of preaching. The necessity is laid upon him; **not a necessity for temporal life, but one for the inner love for the salvation of his brethren, and his enjoyment of the eternal glory.**

By the necessity laid upon him, he probably means that he did not rejoice in the preaching as a work or a job, but that amazingly personal heavenly call has committed him to work in obedience to the One who called him personally to serve Him (Acts 9: 6). The Lord, Himself, did not commit him to work, yet that kind of call, together with his own free will, made him bear an inner commitment in his heart, a commitment of his conscience to preach and to proclaim the evangelic truth. The divine care has led him to become an ambassador for the Lord Christ.

The apostle did not preach out of necessity; namely, out of material need, but obediently anticipating the heavenly reward. “Woe is he if he does not preach”, namely, if he does not preach, he would feel miserable, not out of material need for his daily life, but because his conscience would rebuke him, his depths would judge him, and his heart would moan inside him. How could he not be miserable if he rejects that kind of call of God to such an exalted glorious work?!

The apostle have been a prosecutor of the Lord Christ, But now, having discovered the divine Truth, his heart transformed to testify to Him, coveting to partake of His poverty and nakedness, and of being rejected by His own.

Preaching out of love, and not out of need for temporal wages, he will gain a heavenly reward; Whereas if he practices it against his will, for fear of not getting what would sustain him in this world, or for fear of falling under a divine punishment, in case he does not comply, he would then lose the heavenly reward.

The ministry is therefore both a necessity and a commitment; Yet, this commitment comes from the heart through self-giving; which is the true love and the secret of joy.

¹ On Lying 15: 30.

² In Genesis, Hom. 4: 6.

- ❖ How amazing and great is the honor of the apostle, which he perpetually demonstrates. He does not refer that honor to himself, but, being granted it, he became under the necessity to obey. He speaks of himself as “*called*”, and “*by the will of God he became an apostle*”; and, “*The necessity is laid upon me*” (16)¹.
- ❖ He says: “*Woe is me if I do not preach*” (16). “*Woe is he*” if, after receiving the grace of apostleship, he does not work according to it. As for you, you are free of such a commitment².
- ❖ I shall never cease to do my duty whatever the reasons are. I am here for the sake of this work³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ The one called by the Lord for ministry, is committed to preach even if he is not willing to do; Otherwise, he will suffer. Moses preached to Pharaoh, although not willingly (Exodus 4: 10; 5: 1); So did Jonah to the people of Nineveh (Jonah 1:1; 3: 4)⁴.

(Ambrosiaster)

“For if I do this willingly; I have a reward, but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship” (17)

His heart having been in the evangelic work and the gospel which he loves, he preached for no wages at the expense of those he ministered, and labored with his hands to fulfill his needs.

- ❖ There is nothing equal to preaching! Although it makes men like angels, yet someone may practice it like an order directed to him, or as a debt he is committed to fulfill; While he who practices it willingly will be better off¹.
- ❖ Notice here his wisdom! He does not say: If I do it unwillingly, I would not have a reward, but says: “*I have been entrusted with a stewardship*” (17); showing that, even then, he would be getting a reward, but for doing what he was ordered to do, and not for doing something on his own, willingly to fulfill the commandment².

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Although I am a useless steward, yet I got from the Lord a command to give His servants their portion of food in due season (Luke 12: 42)³.

¹ In 1 Tim., Hom. 1.

² In Ephes., Hom. 11.

³ In 1 Cor., PG 91: 354.

⁴ CSEL 81: 102.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom., 22: 3.

² In 1 Cor., Hom., 22: 3.

³ In Gen., Hom. 10.

- ❖ The truth is that, once Paul became absolutely free, he, by necessity became an apostle. You could be free from sexual immorality, yet you are still a slave to anger; you could be free from greed, yet a slave to pride; or you could be free from a certain sin, yet a slave to another¹.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ It is surely better to be worthy of the reward, than to serve as steward; I wish we are no more under the yoke of bondage, but minister with the love of the spirit².

(St. Ambrose)

- ❖ Paul proved to be free of any human accusation, for he preached the gospel without getting a commendation for it, nor sought anything from anyone but their salvation³.

(Abrosiaster)

- ❖ That is how the blessed Paul became everything for everyone; not to gain some benefit; but, by losing a portion, he may win all⁴.

(St. Cyril the Great)

- ❖ How should we preach the gospel? Obviously, we should preach it in a way where **the gospel itself, and the kingdom of God** would be the reward; We should preach it willingly, and not out of necessity; *“For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.”*(17). If I preach the gospel against my will, just out of a need for the necessities of this temporal life; others will get the reward of the gospel through me, those who came to love the gospel itself, which I preach; While I, myself will not get that, for I do not love the gospel in itself, but seek the temporal wages. It is a sin to minister to the gospel, not like a son, but like a servant, entrusted with a stewardship¹.

- ❖ We should not preach the gospel to get food, but to eat food to be able to preach the gospel. Because if we preach the gospel to get food; Preaching the gospel would then be, in our sight, less important than food; Our happiness would concentrate on getting the food, and preaching would become a necessity to realize that goal. ... That is what the apostle warned us against, when he said that, by an allowance from God, those preaching the gospel could live from the gospel; Yet he himself did not use that right for himself. As many, at that time, had the intention to get a chance to sell the gospel, and he would not let them get that chance, he worked with his own hands, saying: *“that I may cut off the*

¹ Comm.. on 1 Cor., 3: 43: 1-5.

² Letters to Priests 47.

³ CSEL 81: 103.

⁴ Letter 76.

¹ Our Lord's Sermon on Mount, 2: 16.

opportunity from those who desire the opportunity” (2 Corinthians 11: 12). ... Hating to see preaching the gospel as a necessity (namely unwillingly to get food), he says: “Do you not know that those who minister the holy things, eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9: 13, 14). By this he showed that it is allowed to live from the gospel, yet not as something compulsory, lest he would be considered as breaking the commandment of God, by not living from the gospel. That is why he added: “... Nor that I have written these things that it should be done so to me; for it would be better for me to die, than that anyone should make my boasting void” (15).

He says: *“For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of” (16);* Namely, if I preach the gospel to get those necessities, I would then be making the goal of my preaching the gospel, to get food, drink, and clothing. ... But why would I have nothing to boast of? *“for necessity is laid upon me”*; Namely, in this case, I have to preach as a way to earn my living; I seek temporal fruition from preaching the eternal things; Then preaching for me would become a necessity, and not willingly; and *“Woe is me if I do not preach”*

But what then is the goal of his preaching the gospel? ... He means to get the reward of the gospel itself, and to gain the kingdom of heaven, so he preaches it willingly and not against his will; saying: *“For if I do this willingly, I have a reward, but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship” (17).* ... He who ministers to the gospel as a slave, and not as a son, would be doing wrong to the stewardship with which he is entrusted; he would earn only his food as wages of his miserable stewardship, and he would be giving the others what he is deprived of; He will not therefore become a partner in the kingdom of heaven, but will be driven out of it,

But the minister who counts himself among the sons, would, by faith, be able to partake of that kingdom in which he has a portion. Whereas if he is counted as a slave, he would say: *“If I do it against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship” (17);* namely, he will give others while he himself will not have a portion¹.

(St. Augustine)

What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel” (18)

Forsaking his rights, his eyes look forward to greater wages, on an eternal heavenly level. There is no comparison between his temporal concessions and the glory he is anticipating to gain. That is what motivated him not to abuse his apostolic work, and not seek, nor covet his rights, but found his happiness in forsaking them. ... Then, for fear that the people would treat the rest of the apostles the same way, and refrain from presenting to

¹ Sermon on the Amount 2: 55.

them their temporal needs, he confirmed: “*I may not abuse my authority (right) in the gospel*”, referring to it as a right which he personally forsakes, and not a general principle for all to follow. ... It would be better for the congregation to contribute; and for the minister to forsake.

What are then the rewards of ministry?

- ❖ “To shine here like the brightness of the firmament, and turn many to righteousness by the light of the Holy Spirit, like the stars of heaven” (see Daniel 12: 3).
- ❖ In ministry we endure together with our crucified Christ, to be glorified together with Him (2 Timothy 2: 12)
- ❖ Ministering well here, we would get an authority when he comes (See Luke 19: 17-19).
- ❖ Winning the souls here, we would rejoice in His coming (2 Thessalonians 2: 19, 20).
- ❖ Shepherding the flock of the Lord Christ, we would be justified before the Chief Shepherd in His coming (1 Peter 5: 4).

4- THE APOSTLE’S CARE FOR THE SALVATION OF ALL:

“For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more” (19)

The apostle proclaims that he does not only forsake his personal rights for his temporal needs, but, while free, he forsakes his freedom, with his own free will, to walk as though a servant to his masters, serving them and caring for their good, like a servant who works, not to his own account, but to that of his owners, with no right for wages or reward; obeying them even in what is unreasonable or unacceptable.

Though he was not committed to anyone, yet he counted himself in the possession of the whole congregation, a servant of all.

He confirms his freedom, born free, carrying the Roman citizenship by birth, and was never mastered by anyone; Yet with his own free will, he covets to become a servant of everyone, to win all to enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God. His gladness as a servant would be to bring pleasure to his masters, by acquiring them as children to the Lord and Liberator of all.

In this, the apostle Paul imitates his Lord who became poor, that by His poverty He would make us rich; and became a crucified servant, to grant us, by His Holy Spirit, the sonhood to God. Every concession by Paul, therefore, even of liberty, has in it the pleasure of fellowship with the Savior who, truly forsook everything to grant us everything He has.

- ❖ Again, he presents another more progressive level ... He says: I haven't only forsaken my right, but made myself a servant, in a diverse and collective servitude to all¹.
- ❖ **Having done all those things with his own free will, zeal, and love of Christ, and having had a strong desire for the salvation of mankind, he also used to surpass the limits for everything, to exalt even above heaven itself².**

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ He was indebted to the Jews and to the Gentiles with love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith (1 Timothy 1: 5); and has become everything for everyone, to win all (19); not through the craftiness of deceit, but through a loving heart full of compassion; Namely, not through pretending to do all those evils done by others, but by going through the severest of labor, by which he ministers with all compassion, presenting the cure for the wickedness practiced by others, counting what in them, as though in him; counting himself as ill, not by pretending as though he himself has fever, but counting, in his mind commiserating with them in truth, how he would like to be treated if he himself was ill³!

(St. Augustine)

“To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; To those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law” (20)

He starts with the Jews, for, although the apostle to the gentiles, feels a commitment to serve his own people in every country; And on another aspect, the Jews represented the majority among those opposing him, accusing him of breaking the law and of disregarding its requirements.

To every category, he became as though one of them, committed to some of their customs and behavior, with a good conscience, as long as they are in the Lord. Wherever there is no danger on their salvation, he does not attack them (See Acts 16: 3, 21; 21: 18-26; 23: 1-6).

By saying “*under the law*”, he most probably means the Jews living in Judea, who are committed to the law more than those living among the Gentiles. Saying “*To the Jews I became..*”, and “*to those under the law, ...*”, he does repeats himself, on account of that the Jews are under the law? But by saying “*To the Jews ...*”, he speaks of them as a nation and country, having been himself a Jew; But, not every Jew is under the law, like those who received faith in the Lord Christ, to get free of the law, while remaining Jews by race.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom.22: 4.

² In 1 Cor., Hom.22: 4.

³ Ep. 82: 27.

In the book of Acts (16: 3), the apostle Paul was committed to have his disciple Timothy circumcised, in order to win the Jews who did not yet believe, and to keep them from being offended in him as a breaker of the law.

- ❖ He did not say “To the Jew I became a Jew”, but he wisely said: “***I became as a Jew***” ... Could we say that the great preacher of the world, who got in touch with heaven itself, and who shined with such splendor in grace, would descend to such a level? ... Yes! For this is not a descent, but is rather an ascent; bowing down, to bring them up¹!
- ❖ He became under the law, when he shaved his head and offered a sacrifice; not that he changed his mind; but because his love made him descend, to bring up to faith those who were truly Jews. By doing what he did, he did not become truly a Jew, but showed himself as such, in order to liberate those who practice it, and bring them up from their lowly position².
- ❖ He did not debate the Jews from the gospels but from the prophets; Hence he says: “*To the Jews I became as a Jew*”³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Paul did not pretend to be what he is not, but he rather showed compassion⁴.
- ❖ He who cares for a patient, would, in a certain sense, become as though he himself is a patient; not by pretending to be with a fever, but through commiseration, and by wishing to be treated as though a patient¹.
- ❖ “***To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law***”; ***to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some***” (1 Corinthians 9: 20-22); he does not do that in pretension, as some may assume, justifying by this their own hateful pretension.

Having previously set this principle, saying: “*For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more*” (19). With his love and compassion on the weak, as though their weakness is his own, and with no pretension on his

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom.22: 5.

² In 1 Cor., Hom.22: 5.

³ In Titus, Hom. 3.

⁴ Letter to Jerome 82.

¹ Letter to Jerome 75.

part, he says: “*For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love, serve one another*” (Galatians 5: 13)¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Did Paul become everything for everyone only in appearance, flattering them? No! He was a man of suffering, and with great care he cared for all. And commiserated with all. ... In all of us there is a mutual part with everyone. This commiseration with the other is what Paul embraced in dealing with every specific person².

(Ambrosiaster)

“To those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law” (21)

Here he probably means two categories:

a- The **Sadducees** who did not care for the Jewish rites, among whom he appeared as though he does not care for those rites, so that he might draw them to faith, and to believe in the ultimate resurrection.

b- The **Gentiles** who were not committed to the Mosaic law, like the statutes concerning the purification and circumcision, etc. with whom he talked in their language as one of them, who knows their poets and traditions.

Under “*the law of Christ*”, he never felt that he walked without the committing law of love. Law in Christ Jesus has its commitments and laws, so that the believer would bear the features of Christ: of love, holiness, longsuffering, obedience, etc.. Life in Christ has its particulate joyful spiritual system, being a deposit of the particulate heavenly life. The law of Christ by which we are committed is the law of love, by which we fulfill the law (Romans 13: 8; 6: 2).

- ❖ Some say that he refers here to his talk with the people of Athens concerning what was inscribed on one of their altars; hence he says: “*and to those who are without law, as without law*”¹.
- ❖ And lest someone might think of this as a change of mind, he adds: “*not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ*” (21); meaning: God forbid for me to be without law, but I have another law more exalted than the old one – the law of Spirit and grace – hence he adds “*toward Christ*”².

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ Sermon on the Amount 2: 65.

² CSEL 81: 103.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom.22: 5.

² In 1 Cor., Hom.22: 5.

- ❖ He did that, not out of pretence; but he became for everyone as like him, to help him. That is the way when the great mercies prevail, and everyone becomes like everyone else, not with deception, but by putting himself in his position¹.

(St. Augustine)

“to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some (22). “Now this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker of it with you” (23)

By the weak he means the non-Christians, and also the newly converted Christians with weak conscience, who easily doubt, especially in what concern the sanctuaries. With his strong conscience, the apostle is compassionate toward the weak among the believers and non-believers, that he might win them to Christ, instead of being a stumbling block to them (1 Corinthians 8: 8; Romans 1: 14).

A sign of his love is that he conforms with everyone, not to deceive him, but to win him over to faith. To the Jew he became as a Jew; To those under the law as though under the law; To those without a law, as though without a law, To the weak as though weak; And all things to all men, that he might win the more. ... That is how a father would deal with his own children, acting like a child among them, until he brings them over to complete maturity. ... That does not mean hypocrisy or deception; but, moved by love, he forsakes his own will, his ways, pleasures, and profits, that he might win all to bear the will of Christ, and to accept Him a way for themselves, the cause of their pleasure, and their eternal profit.

Far from the apostle to criticize those under the law, those without law, or the weak. He never despised them, nor entered with them into mental or hypothetical debates; but he bowed with love to bear them in his heart, to present them to the Lover of all mankind, and the Savior of all.

- ❖ To interpret this with a more sound way, we say that it is not by lies, but by commiseration, he was able to transform them to faith through his great love; counting himself as though the one suffering from the evil, from which he intends to save them¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ In every situation, the Savior, Himself, became everything for everyone, To the hungry he became bread; to the thirsty, water; to the dead, resurrection; to the sick, a Physician; and to the sinners, salvation².

(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

¹ ON Lying 12.

¹ On Lying.

² Sermon on the Paralytic 10.

❖ The Lord Christ became everything for all mankind, that He might present salvation to all. And Paul who followed His lead, lived as though without law; and gave up his life for the sake of those he intended for them to overcome; By his own free will, he became weak, that he might give strength to the weak¹.

(St. Ambrose)

❖ Paul became weak through refraining from practicing things that might offend the weak¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ It is only him who is mature in faith, like the apostle Paul, who could say this; that the sinner cannot utter².

❖ The reason why (the church), together with “*the daughters of Jerusalem*” run after him (Songs 1: 4), is that the person, perpetually perfect, become like all things to all men that he might by all means win all (22)³.

(The scholar Origen)

❖ If Paul elaborately keeps these secrets, appearing as a Jew to win the Jews; Why did he not partake with the Gentiles of the pagansacrifices, as long as to them he is as though without law, that he might win them?!

To interpret this we say that he partook of the Jewish sacrifices, because he has been a Jew by birth. And when he said all that, he did not mean to pretend what he is not, but, felt a true compassion toward them, to present to them such a help, as though it is presented to him, if he is preoccupied with their sins.

Here, he did not use the craftiness of deception, but the commiseration and the compassion of a savior. In the same phrase, the apostle puts the principle in a general form, saying: “*To the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some*” (22). The last part of the phrase leads us to understand the one preceding it, by appearing as one who has compassion on the weakness of others, as though it is his own weakness. When he said: “*Who is weak, and I am not weak?*” (2 Corinthians 11: 29), he did not mean to pretend that he suffers the same weakness of another, but rather to show it by commiserating with him⁴.

(St. Augustine)

❖ So that is how you should do as well; Do not count yourselves better than others, but be humble. For the sake of the salvation of your brother, you should forsake your own honor;

¹ *Letters to Priests* 54.

¹ *CSEL* 81: 025.

² *Comm.. on 1 Cor.*, 3: 43: 49-50.

³ *Thr Song of Somgs, Comm. Bok 1: 4 (ACW).*

⁴ *Ep* 40: 6.

which is not falling, but concession. As he who falls would be cast on his face, and difficult to get up; Whereas he who makes concession would get up bearing many profits; As did Paul who with such concessions, ascended and together with him the whole world; He did not work in just a part of the world, but sought to acquire all those who were saved through his work¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

5- THE APOSTLE'S CARE FOR HIS OWN SALVATION:

“Do you not know that those who run in a race, all run but one receives the prize. Run in such a way that you may obtain it” (24)

Having in mind how the Corinthians were preoccupied with sport events, the apostle Paul used examples from the course of race, and the ring of boxing, to show the need of a Christian to be in fit health condition to minister to God. In Greece there were four kinds of sport events:

- ❖ Delphic or Pythian
- ❖ Isthmian (or Corinthian)
- ❖ Nemean
- ❖ Olympic

In those occasions, people from all over Greece would gather together to pass a period of public celebration filled with fun.

The Corinthian or Isthmian games used to be held in a narrow part of the Isthmus north of the city of Corinth; which are, no doubt, the games the apostle refers to in this epistle.

The Nemean games were held in Argolis, a city built by Argives in honor of Archemorus who died stricken by a serpent. Renewed by Hercules, it embraced a course of horse race, sprinting, jumping, and boxing, etc, The victorious in those games, held every 3 or 5 years, was rewarded by a crown of olive leaves

The Pythian games, that drew many, even from outside Greece, were held every 4 years in Delphi at Phocis, at the foot of Mount Parnassus; and drew many, even from outside Greece.

The Olympic games were held in Olympia, in the city of Elis on the south bank of the River Alphias, west of Peloponnesus.

The schools of sports were of the main features of the major cities of Greece; where every young man was trained in one of those schools for a period of at least ten months, and used to vow that he will not break the rules he learned in them (2 Timothy 2: 5). To

¹

participants in public sport events, the graduates of those schools used to follow a very strict and stringent program of eating healthy food, abstaining from drinking wine, and training on the endurance of both hot and cold weather conditions. The boxer used to go through a long training program, so that when he confronts his opponent in the boxing ring, his strikes would be effective; Otherwise he would be striking the air with his arms right and left

The one individual who wins any of the sport events gets the reward that was mostly a crown of plants put on his head. Whereas in the field of the spirit, all can enter the arena, where God wishes for them all to get the reward (24).

Here, the apostle refers to the short range sprint race (24), where speed of running is considered to be one of the greatest gifts given to man (27). Lamenting King Saul and his son Jonathan, the prophet David said that they used to be “*lighter than eagles, and mightier than lions*”.

❖ Referring to the freedom of our will, the apostle says: “*Run in such a way that you may obtain it*” (1 Corinthians 9: 24); and referring to its weakness, St. John the Baptist says: “*A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven*” (John 3: 27)¹.

❖ Grace is always ready, seeking those who welcome it. Whenever our Lord sees a watching soul, flaring with love, he pours on it His riches, more abundantly than what it sought².

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ In his talk here about running our spiritual race to get the reward of our heavenly work, the apostle Paul counsels us to increase our pace, saying: “*Run in such a way that you may obtain*”; the way he himself did, running in such a way to reach what lies ahead, and forgetting what is behind. He was truly like a first class boxer, very swift, particulate in his movements, and directs his stokes, not to beat the air right and left, but attacks his opponent with effective strokes to his body¹.

❖ The more your efforts increase for the sake of piety, the more your souls increase in greatness through the labor in the things which the Lord incites us to do².

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

❖ Let us then run with love together with good men, to get a better reward, always having in mind the words of the apostle, “*Run in such a way that you may obtain it*” (24)³.

(Father Valerian)

¹ Cassian: *Conferences* 12: 10.

² *On Gem* PG 53: 76, 77.

¹ *Beatitudem sermon 2.* (ACW).

² *On the Christian Mode of Life.*

³ *Homilies (Frs of the Church), 13.*

❖ Your Lord Jesus Christ anoints you with His Spirit, and brings you over to the arena. Long before the day of the race, He takes you away from the way of easy life, to a more stringent system in life, to make you stronger.... He isolates the wrestlers, away from a luxurious life, delicious food, and rejoicing drinks, and makes them go through tougher training programs, so that their hope for victory grows stronger¹.

(The scholar Tertullian)

Some scholars believe that the use of examples from the sport events correspond to the date of the epistle, and to how much the Corinthians were fond of them; which confirm the authenticity of the epistle, its dating back to the apostolic era, and having been actually addressed to the people of Corinth.

“And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for imperishable crown” (25)

The winners in the Olympic games were given crowns of olive leaves; in Delphi, crowns of apple branches; in the Corinthian games, crowns of pine; and in Nemean crowns of parsley; at the end of the tournament, in a magnificent celebration amid great joy, where the winners were carried on the shoulders of their competitors to be seen by all, who cheer and applaud them, and cover them with flowers and roses; beside what the government give them of material gifts and tax exemptions.

Cisro says that the winner in the Olympic games in Greece was not less than the victorious leader in Rome¹. ... The winners in sport events get perishable crowns; Whereas those working with the spirit, get eternal imperishable crowns (25).

❖ Because the spiritual crown is not limited to one individual winner; and the prize surpasses all labors. The apostle Paul rebukes the Corinthians by saying: *“They do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for imperishable crown”* (25)².

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ The prophets have long ago prophesied that battle, The Lord was preoccupied with it; And the apostles went through it³.

(Cyprian the martyr)

❖ Being a wrestler, Come to compete against your opponents, not with your head, but by your arms⁴.

(St. Ambrose)

¹ *To the Martyrs 3: 3.*

¹ *Anachar iii, 449.*

² *In 1 Cor. Hom. 23: 1.*

³ *Letter 10: 4.*

⁴ *Six Days of Creation 6.*

- ❖ Entering into the way of the Lord, getting away from the vanity of the present world, and getting refreshed by hope in the life to come, we do not concentrate our hearts on the contemporary things, but rejoice in the exalted ones¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ *“If anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules”* (2 Timothy 2: 5). He who longs to quench the fire of his carnal desires, should hasten to overcome the evils that are out of our nature. And if we wish to experience the power of the words of the apostle Paul, we should first learn the rules of strife in the world, that through these rules we may appreciate what the apostle says about the one who wins an imperishable crown (1 Corinthians 9: 25), and not the perishable crown of temporal glory¹.

(St. John Cassian)

Some believe that the canonical strife by which we may enjoy the conquest, is that in which the believer leans on the bosom of the Lord, seeking His grace and help, by the spirit of work and strife.

- ❖ We cannot run along the way of God, unless we are carried on the wings of the spirit².
- ❖ There is no stronger one than he who enjoys the divine help; and no weaker one than he who is deprived of it³.
- ❖ Let us then be stronger than all, following the lead of Paul, Peter, James, and John; As, if we are deprived of the help of God, we shall not be able to resist the least of seductions⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ It is not up to him who wills, nor to him who seeks, but to him who gets mercy from God; ... Calling on Him, He would grant us the strength to seek and the help to work⁵.

(St. Augustine)

“So I do not run aimlessly, nor I box as though beating the air” (26)

In a training on martial arts, the wrestler beats the air with his hands, as though his enemy is before him. The boxers are used as well, when they enter the arena to beat the air for a little while as a kind of work out, or as a show before the spectators; in what is called ‘skiamachia’ or ‘Sciamachia’, namely a false or a make-believe battle; And when the boxer beats the air as his opponent avoids his strokes. The apostle probably means to say that his

¹ Sermon 263 Fathers of Church 38: 396.

¹ Institutions 5: 12.

² In Gen PG 53: 228, In Mat. PG 57: 30.

³ In Paralyt. PG 51: 51.

⁴ In Mat PG 57: 303.

⁵ To Simplician 10.

fighters are not without experience, for he knows well how and when to strike under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God, to gain the ultimate victory. The spirit of God grants us the ability and wisdom, so as never to fail in our strife.

“*Not aimlessly*” may also mean (not without reason). The apostle in his fight moves not without reason, but with awareness of the rules of the race; with knowledge of the eternal life, and the way leading to it; also taking into consideration that the spectators concentrate their sight on the participants in the race, in anticipation of the final score; The false preachers wish to see him deviate from the right way, or helplessly quit the race; And the opponents to the gospel among the Jews and the Gentiles, wish to see him fall. The true church, on the other hand watch him, eagerly anticipating his ultimate coronation; And above all God’s compassionate eyes are upon him, supporting him in his strife.

❖ By saying: “*Not aimlessly*” ,he intends to say: I do nothing aimlessly or without reason, the way you do when you enter into the idol temples. ... All what I do is for the salvation of my neighbor.... When I surpassed Peter in my concessions, and in forsaking some of my rights, ... Or when I shaved my head, and let Timothy be circumcised, I did those things with reason and not “*aimlessly*”.... But you could not give me a single reason for entering into the idol temples; “*For food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse*” (1 Corinthians 8: 8). ... Obviously you are running “*aimlessly*”¹.

❖ “*Thus I fight, not as one who beats the air*” (26). Referring again to the fact that he does not beat the air, but he beats the devil his enemy; while you are not beating him, but are simply wasting your strength in vain².

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ Paul means to say that he does not fight with mere words, but with works³.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ **(Do not fear the fighting of the devil)**

The spiritual wars are fierce; or else what would be the point in the words of the apostle Paul: “*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*” (Ephesians 6: 12); and: “*Thus I fight, not as one who beats the air*” (1 Corinthians 9: 26); and: “*I have fought the good fight*” (2 Timothy 4: 7).

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 23: 2.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 23: 2.

³ CSEL 81: 106.

Speaking about war, struggle, and battle, there must be strength and strife on both sides, and that both of them would be well prepared, either to be ashamed of failure, or to rejoice in victory; Or else would be rather a kind of unfair and unjust attack¹!

(Father Serinus)

- ❖ like a wrestler who finally comes to the arena, and raises his eyes up to heaven ... disciplines his body, lest he would be defeated in battle; ... anoint it with the oil of mercy; ... practices everyday a show of virtue; ... runs with certainty to reach the goal of the round; ... directs his blows and aims his arrows, but not as one who beats the air; ... The earth for man is the field of battle; and heaven is his crown².
- ❖ Like a good wrestler, Paul knew how to direct his blows to the adversary forces; and strikes those who renew the attacks³.

(St. Ambrose)

- ❖ Let us run in this world, to get the prize in the world to come⁴.

(St. Jerome)

- ❖ Do you wish to hear what a true wrestler for Christ, who strives according to the rules of the battle, would say: ***“Therefore I run thus, not with uncertainty. Thus I fight; not as one who beats the air. But I disciple my body and bring it into subjection; lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified”*** (1 Corinthians 9: 26, 27). Do you see how he made the main part of the struggle dependant on him, namely. on his body; and let the result of battle dependant upon keeping the purity of the body, and disciplining it!

He runs, not with uncertainty; for looking forward to the heavenly Jerusalem, he find before him a sign toward which his heart runs without diversion. He runs, not with uncertainty, *“forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead; pressing toward the goal for the prize of the upward coal of God in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 3: 13, 14). With certainty, fixing his sight on the goal, and hastening to reach it, he says: *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith”* (2 Timothy 4: 7).

And because he knows for sure that he, with an upright heart raced toward the fragrance of the ointment of Christ, did not linger, and has overcome in the spiritual battle with the purity of his body, he dared to end his talk, saying: *“Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that day”*.

¹ Cassian: Conferences 7: 21.

² Letters to Priests 49.

³ Paradise 12: 56.

⁴ Against the Palagiansl.

And to open before us, as well, the door of hope to acquire such a prize, if we are ready to imitate him in his path of faith, he adds: “*but not to me only, but also to all who have loved His appearing*” (2 Timothy 4: 8); proclaiming that we shall be his partners in the crown on the day of judgment, **if we also love His appearance; not that He appears to us against our will, but appears to us daily in the holy souls, if we gain the conquest in the battle by the purity of the body.** Concerning this appearance, the Lord says in the gospel: “*My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him*” (John 14: 23); And also: “*Behold, I stand at the door and knock; If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come to him, and dine with him and he with Me*” (Revelation 13: 20)¹.

(St. John Cassian)

❖ By the “*air*” here (1 Corinthians 9: 26), he refers to the forces of evil².

(Theodore, Bishop of El-Missa)

“But I discipline my body, and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” (27)

The apostle Paul knows the devil his enemy well, and is capable of beating him, not in the air, but of destroying him by the cross.

Those who run the race, do that with uncertainty, as only one of them will get the prize; Whereas in the spiritual strife all those who strive by the Lord, will get a heavenly crown in certainty according to the true promises of God.

Lest those who hear, may assume that the apostle boasts in pride because of his concessions for the sake of ministry, he confirms his perpetual fear of perdition, despite the success of his ministry, saying: “***I discipline my body, and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified***” (27) ... He strives even against his own body!

If the apostle fears for the perdition of his soul, after such a long strife by which he gained thousands of souls to the Lord Christ; How much more it is befitting of the believers, especially the priests with all their ranks, and the ministers, to strive for the sake of the salvation of their souls and those of their brethren?! The success of the apostle Paul in establishing new churches, gaining souls, and distributing the gospel, are not a sure guarantee of his own salvation, but he is committed to go on striving by the grace of God until his last breath. He presents himself as an example to us, lest we become deceived and slothful depending on our previous or present success. It is very risky to lead others to eternal life, while we, ourselves, slide down to the pit in eternal death!

¹ *Institutions 5: 17.*

² *Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.*

Unless we discipline both the body and the soul by the Holy Spirit of God, the body will certainly bring the soul into subjection. The body should be a good servant to the soul; for if it becomes its master, it would turn vicious!

- ❖ Look at the apostle Paul. Does he not seem to avenge the martyr Steven in himself, when he says: “*Thus I fight, not as one who beats the air; but I disciple my body, and brings it into subjection*”(1 Corinthians 9: 26, 27)? For when he persecuted Steven and other martyrs, he used to bring their bodies into subjection, and to humiliate them. It is as though he avenged them in himself by disciplining his body and bringing it subjection¹.
- ❖ He who brings his own body into subjection in the ministry of God, places the lamp on the lampstand; that preaching the truth becomes in a higher level than the ministry of the body. . Teachings, however, would increase in clarity through the dedication of the diverse body senses (the tongue, the mind and the body members) to teaching. Hence the apostle puts his lamp on the lampstand when he says: “*Thus I fight, not as one who beats the air, but I disciple my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified*” (1 Corinthians 9: 26, 27)¹.

(St. Augustine)

St. John Chrysostom often talked about his extreme care for his own salvation amid his preoccupation with ministry, and often warned the Bishops against disregarding this².

Before his encounter with the Lord Christ, Saul (the apostle Paul) used to lean on his past as a Pharisee, righteous in his own sight and that of the people; and he even to assumed to be righteous in the sight of God. But now, having experienced the new resurrected life, he became preoccupied with the present; asking himself whether he is walking as a man of God, and enjoying the resurrected life of Christ as a present life.

- ❖ If Paul had such a fear, and so he taught many; after being like an angel, and becoming the teacher of the whole world; What could we say? He as though says: [Do not think that having believed is enough for your salvation. As far as I am concerned, neither preaching, teaching, nor gaining limitless number of souls, are enough for my salvation, unless I show blameless behavior³].

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ The bride of the songs says: “*They made me the keeper of the vineyard, but my own vineyard I have not kept*” (Songs 1: 6). If you apply this to Paul who cares for the

¹ Sermon on the Amount 1: 22: 77.

¹ Sermon on the Amount 1: 6: 17.

² In 2 Thess. PG 62: 498. 1880-186 ،1980 ،راجع للمؤلف : القديس يوحنا الذهبي الفم،

³ In 1 Cor. Hom. 23: 2.

salvation of all mankind; you will see that if he keeps the vineyards of others, and does not keep his own vineyard, how great would be his loss while winning the others?!

While he was free from all men, he made himself a servant to all, that he might win the more; To the weak he became as weak; to the Jews he became as a Jew; and to those who are under the law, as under the law; how could he say: “*but my own vineyard I have not kept*” (Songs 1: 6)¹?

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ When you put your energies and zeal at work; whether striving in prayer, fasting, giving the poor, or forgiving those who do you harm, according to what God gave us for the sake of Christ, or controlling the bad habits, disciplining the body, and bringing it into submission (27) ... You are doing the work of those who walk along the upright way, “*whose eyes are ever toward the Lord, for He shall pluck their feet of the net*” (Psalm 25: 2)¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Keep on praying that “*When I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified*” (27). And when boasting, do not boast of me but of the Lord.

As, however great I control my household, I am still a man, and am living among men.

I cannot pretend that my household is better than **the ark of Noah**, where there were eight people, among whom was the cursed Canaan (Genesis 9: 27).

Nor better than **Abraham’s household**, where the words were heard: “*Cast out this slave woman with her son*” (Genesis 21: 10).

Nor better than **Isaac’s household**, about whose two sons it was said: “*Jacob, I have loved, but Esau I have hated*” (Malachi 1: 2).

Nor better than **Jacob’s household**, where there was Reuben who defiled his father’s bed (Genesis 49: 4).

Nor better than **David’s household**, where one of his sons misbehaved with his own sister (2 Samuel 13: 4); and another rebelled against such a father filled with holy compassion.

Nor better than **the friends of the apostle Paul**, about whom was said “*fears from inside and from outside*”; who if he lived among good men, he would not say, testifying to the holiness and faithfulness of Timothy: “*I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare*” (Philippians 2: 20). “ ()”.

Among **the twelve good men** who were together with Jesus, was Judas, the thief and traitor.

¹ The Song of Songs, Hom. 1: 7. (ACW).

¹ Ep. 48: 1.

And I am not better **than heaven**, from which angels have fallen¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ As he, who intends to be teacher is committed first to teach himself; And he who has not become a good soldier, would not be able to be a leader; he would say: “*When I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified*” (27)¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Let our souls be commanding, and our bodies be submitting; when the Lord Christ comes and make his dwelling place in us².

(St. Jerome)

- ❖ In order to bring our body into submission, we should fast, and keep away from all kinds of luxury; the way Paul did, lest he lose the prize about which he preaches to others³.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ Paul brings into submission what is his, and not himself. As what is his (the body) is something, and himself is something else; He chastises what is his, as by that he may bring to death his carnal lusts⁴.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ O Philanthropic God, Set us free from the danger referred to by Paul; that he while preaching to others would himself become vain.

You truly know who we are.

You know the nature of the enemy confronting us. In our non-equivalent battle, in our weakness and our death, we seek You⁵.

(Cassiodorus)

In this chapter the apostle Paul established the following principles:

- ❖ **The true God granted him the right to be subsisted by the church, if he intends to (&-10, 13).**
- ❖ **It would be just to live at the expense of the church (11).**
- ❖ **It is a divine principle that he, who minister to the gospel, lives from the gospel.**

¹ Ep. 78: 8.

¹ In 1 Tim., Hom. 5.

² Homily 9 *Fathers of Church* 48: 67.

³ CSEL 81: 106-107.

⁴ *Against Julian* 24.

⁵ Cassiodorus: *Explanation of the Psalms, Prayer ACW* 53: 468-69.

- ❖ **The apostle chose to subsist himself by himself, so as not to be a burden over anyone (15, 12).**
- ❖ **Necessity is laid upon him to preach the gospel (16).**
- ❖ **His rejection of the earthly reward would crown him in heaven (17-18).**
- ❖ **His principle in life was not to earn money, but to enjoy the salvation of souls, together with giving on his part (19-22), whatever the price is.**
- ❖ **He is in an incessant wrestling that would only come to an end by winning a non-corruptible heavenly crown (24-27).**

In short, the whole chapter deals with “giving oneself for the sake of the edification of souls”.

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 9

LIBERATE ME BY THE EXALTED SPIRIT OF LOVE TO BE A SERVANT TO ALL, THAT I MIGHT WIN THE MORE

- ❖ Am I not a son of Yours?
Grant me the glorious liberty of Your children.
That through love, I would make myself a servant to all.
To win many for my heavenly Father.
- ❖ Grant me the spirit of a warrior that knows no weakness;
Grant me the spirit of care, to shepherd all your flock.
Grant me the spirit of faithfulness to work in your vineyard.
Yes, O Leader, and good and faithful Shepherd.
Being Your son, grant me to work with Your Spirit.
And to walk with what befits You and me.
- ❖ Let me work with the spirit of love and liberty
To seek, not what is my own, but what is for the glory of my brethren.
I would rather die, and nothing would hinder my ministry to You and to them.
Their eternal glory is my own glory and pride.
Their true liberty is my peace and joy.
- ❖ Who would become weak, and I would not be weak together with him?
If someone bows to the law, I shall bow together with him.
But with Your Spirit I would bring him into your spiritual law.
To someone without law;
I shall appear to him as though I am without law, although Your law is my life.
I could then set forth together with him to the law of liberty and glory.
By You, I would become everything for everyone.
Until I acquire him for You, and he would acquire You for himself.
- ❖ This is my strife; and this is my struggle.
I shall never cease to run all the days of my sojourn.
That with love, all will win a non-corruptible crown.
I shall never give comfort to my body, to train it on strife;
To let it have comfort and be glorified together with my soul on the day I encounter You.

CHAPTER 10

THE EDIFICATION OF OTHERS

In the last chapter, the apostle dealt with the problem of eating meat of what was offered to idols, based on the concessions of love, presenting himself as a living example of the concessions for the sake of the gospel. In the present chapter the apostle answers three questions concerning the same issue:

- (1) What is the believer's position concerning the banquets in an idol temple?
- (2) What is his position concerning whatever is sold in the meat market?
- (3) What is his position concerning an invitation to a banquet in the house of an idol-worshipper?

1- The believer's position concerning partaking of a banquet held in an idol temple 1 - 15

- a- God's pleasure is in sancty** 1 - 5
- b- A warning against evil temptations** 6 - 14
- c- A commitment to wisdom** 15
- d- It is either a fellowship with the Lord or a fellowship with the demons**
16 - 22

2- The believer's position concerning whatever is sold in the meat market 23 - 26

3- The believer's position concerning an invitation to a banquet in the house of an idol-worshipper 27 - 33

1- THE BELIEVER'S POSITION CONCERNING PARTAKING OF A BANQUET HELD IN AN IDOL TEMPLE:

The apostle gave neither a positive nor a negative answer to this issue, but presented the following general principles, through which a believer can decide from within himself, and not as an order given to him:

a- God's pleasure is in the sanctity:

God in His love for humanity stretches His hands to grant them gifts without limits; Yet His pleasure is to see us according to His image and likeness, sanctified in the truth, as He is Holy and the Truth itself. The divine gifts are not measures of his pleasure in us, but our sanctification is the subject of His pleasure.

“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea” (1)

Now, he presents to them the church of the Old Covenant as an example of how it enjoyed a multitude of divine gifts, and yet those gifts did not justify them; as God's pleasure is in the sanctification of His church. The multitude of God's gifts to us, do not justify us if we are slothful concerning our salvation. The apostle intends to confirm to them that, instead of the contentions, especially if they are about issues concerning food or drink, it is befitting of them to care for salvation on the level of the congregation, as well as on that of individuals, through purifying their life by the Spirit of God dwelling in them.

Binding between the churches of the Old and the New Covenants, the apostle counts the men of faith of the old Covenant as fathers of those of the New Covenant.

The apostle repeats the word "**all**" five times in the verses 1 to 4, to confirm that God impartially and generously gives His gifts to all; and yet He has pleasure only in those who respond to His love by sanctification. Gifts, although presented to all, yet the reward is only given to those who are sanctified to the Lord.

Although the majority of the congregation in the church of Corinth were from the Gentiles, yet they had knowledge of God's dealings with His old people; of how he chose them, brought them out of Egypt; how He shadowed them with a cloud, as a sign of His exalted care for them, as though they were protected underneath His wings; and how He crossed with them over the sea, to separate them from Pharaoh and his pagan soldiers. Despite all that, with most of them God was not pleased, because they did not respond, in a practical way, to the call they were called to.... How then, could men of the New Covenant dare to enter with their complete free will into the temples of the idols to partake of their banquets, and assume that God was pleased with them.

In other words he tells them that God brought His people out, and separated them from the pagan atmosphere, into which you go with your own free will.

The old people enjoyed being brought out from Egypt, and being liberated from the bondage of the devil. It is obvious that the amazing cloud that shadowed them in the wilderness have realized three jobs:

- ❖ It was in the shape of a pillar that led and guided them in the wilderness by day.
- ❖ It was a pillar of fire that gave light to the camp by night.
- ❖ It was a cover to protect them from the heat of the sun (Psalm 105: 39).

"All were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (2)

On account that the Corinthians probably assumed that once they were baptized, they would definitely enjoy the eternal glory; and by having a strong conscience, they could go into the idol temples, and partake of their banquets, without getting defiled, nor deviated from the holy life; he presented to them the old people of Israel, who were baptized through walking underneath the cloud and crossing over the sea, Yet with most of them God was not pleased. Although baptism is necessary for

salvation, Yet he who is baptized, but does not walk as a son of God, and becomes slothful in the truth, will perish.

The apostle Paul believes that the church of the Old Covenant in the days of the prophet Moses, have symbolically gone through baptism, on account of that the Red Sea refers to the font of baptism, and the cloud that covered them refers to the Holy Spirit; according to the saying of the Holy Book: “*You blew with Your (Spirit), and covered them*” (Exodus 15: 10).

The symbolism of crossing over the Red Sea to baptism, appeared in the Old Covenant itself, when the prophet Isaiah saw the arm of God (a symbol of Christ) awaken from the grave to destroy the enemy (the devil), namely the serpent dwelling in the great deep; opening the road to conquest before His children to cross over through the waters and be saved. The prophet says: “*Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord! Awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Are you not the arm that cut Rahab apart, and wounded the serpent? Are you not the one that dried up the sea, the waters of the deep sea; that made the depths of the sea a road for the redeemed to cross over? So the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads; They shall obtain joy and gladness, And sorrow and sighing shall flee away* (Isaiah 51: 9-11). The three screams to wake up: “*Awake, awake, awake*” are a proclamation of the power of the resurrection on the third day, granted to the redeemed of the Lord in the font of baptism through the three plunges in the name of the Holy Trinity. Again, he asks the Lord who worked in the old through the symbol of the crossing over, to work now as well to let His redeemed cross over through the water, to bring them over to the eternal joy, the kingdom of God, from which sorrow and sighing will flee away. The prophet Isaiah saw the destruction and wounding of the serpent, the killer of mankind!! In the crossing over, he saw living divine concepts of the work of baptism in the life of the believers, and their conquest through the Lord who is risen and arose them together with Him; He saw the destruction of the old serpent.

❖ Paul says that the Jews were under the cloud, as a reference to that everything are to be understood as a portrait of the truth proclaimed to us. Under the cloud they took refuge to be saved from death, as an example of baptism. As when the crossed over the Red Sea, they were saved from the Egyptians who died in it. (Exodus 4: 28-29); And their death was a symbol of our baptism that brings our enemies to death¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

¹ CSEL 81: 107.

❖ The salvation of Israel from Pharaoh was through the Red Sea; And the salvation of the world from sin is through the sanctification and cleansing with the washing of water by the word of God (Ephesians 5: 26)¹.

❖ There, God sent Moses to Egypt, And here, the Father sent Christ to the world. Moses' mission was to bring the persecuted people out of Egypt; And Christ's mission is to save the whole people of the world from under the authority of sin. There, the blood of the lamb was the sign against perdition; And here, the blood of the blameless Lamb – Jesus Christ – is doing the same².

(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

❖ When the people came out of Egypt by their own free will, and escaped from the authority of the king of Egypt by crossing over the water of the Red Sea, Water killed the king and his entire army. Who could be more clear than that, as a symbol of baptism?! The peoples of the world are saved by the water, forsaking the devil who brought them under submission, and is destroyed in the water³.

(The scholar Tertullian)

❖ The cloud is the grace of the Holy Spirit, while the sea refers to baptism.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

❖ What happened then, when the cloud covered the people, was according to the apostle, a symbol of the secret of baptism. But the Lord Christ Himself who has done all that, enters now the water of baptism before His people with the pillar of His own body⁴.

(Maximus, Bishop of Torin)

❖ The Jewish people have actually gone through the oldest form of baptism⁵.

(Cyprian, the martyr)

❖ The Red Sea which received the Israelites who did not fear it, and saved them from the evil of the Egyptians who chased them, has been – beside all the events of the exodus – a symbol of the salvation to be consummated in baptism.

Egypt here actually symbolizes this world in which we go through the afflictions of the evil life we live; The people are those baptized; the water is the medium of salvation; and the Pharaoh and his army, are symbols of the devil and his hosts⁶.

(St. Dedymus the blind)

¹ *Cat. Lect.* 3: 6.

² *Mystagogical Lecture 11*: 3.

³ *De Baptismo* 9.

⁴ *Sermons 100*: 3.

⁵ *Letter*, 73.

⁶ *De: triantate 2: 14 PG 39: 697 A.*

- ❖ The sea symbolizes the baptism by water; while the cloud symbolizes the grace of baptism by the Spirit.

(Theodore, Bishop of El-Messisa)

- ❖ As the cloud, being a symbol of the grace of the Spirit has covered the Israelites and protected them against the Egyptians, This same grace is a shield that protects us against the tricks of the devil. And as their crossing over the Red Sea protected them against their enemies and granted them a true liberty, Baptism protects us against our enemies . And as the Israelites lived under the law of Moses, We live in baptism clothed with the spirit of adoption, heirs of the covenants, and of the confession in harmony with the commandments of Christ¹.

(Gnadius, Patriarch of Constantinople)

“All ate the same spiritual food” (3)

- ❖ Calling the Lord a spiritual food and drink, the apostle suggests that he knows that the human nature is not simple, but it includes a mental part mixed with a sensual one; and each part needs a certain kind of food: sensual food to sustain our bodies, and spiritual food to sustain our souls².

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

- ❖ The body of Christ is that secret; and therefore, this food is not material but spiritual³.

(St. Ambrose)

- ❖ All those who ate that bread (the manna) died in the wilderness, But this food which you eat, the living bread coming down from heaven, vitalizes the eternal energy of life; Whoever eats it will never die, for it is the body of Christ (John 6: 49-58).

- ❖ While that manna was corruptible if kept to the next day, this One is incorruptible, and whoever taste it in a holy way, will be incorruptible as well. ... While for those in the wilderness, water erupted from the rock, For you, blood flows from the side of Christ. For the former, water was just enough for some time, but for you Christ’s blood will satisfy you eternally⁴.

(St. Ambrose)

- ❖ Paul calls that food as ‘supernatural’ (See Exodus 16: 11-36), granting him who eats it the power of the Holy Spirit; Yet eating it would not make the people spiritual, unless they receive it as is befitting.

¹ *Gennadius of Constantinople)Pauline Comm. Form the Greek Church).*

² *On Perfection.*

³ *The Mysteries, 58.*

⁴ *The Mysteries 8: 48.*

(Theodor, Bishop of El-Messisa)

“And all drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ” (4)

It seems that some Corinthians leaned upon having communion of the body of the Lord in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, as a confirmation of their salvation, yet with slothfulness in their behavior, demonstrated in partaking of the banquets of the idol temples. That is why the apostle reminded them of the old people who, although they have all eaten one spiritual food (the manna), a symbol of the body of Christ (John 6: 31), the bread coming down from heaven, that gives life to the world (33), the bread of life (48), Yet, having not been sanctified to the Lord, they all perished.

Did the rock actually followed them? Or the talk here is symbolic? The old Jews used to believe that this source of water actually followed them all along their journey, ascending mountains, and descending to valleys; quoting the song that said: “*Spring up, O well! All of you sing to it! – the well the leaders sank, dug by the nation’s nobles, with the scepter, with the staff*” (Numbers 21: 17-20).

Having been provided in a supernatural way, it was called ‘spiritual drink’, though it was regular water to satisfy the bodies of a multitude of about 2 million persons. Described as ‘a brook’, ‘flood’, ‘drain’, and a ‘rive’r, coming down from Mount ‘Horeb’, not to gather into a basin, but to form a river that followed them all along their journey in the wilderness, then flowed down to the sea (Numbers 43: 5). If it is said that nothing of the sort is there now in that region, the answer is that it was a divine gift to that specific people in that specific time, as a sign of God’s care for them; the same way He granted them the manna from heaven; to feed two million people all along those forty years in the wilderness.

❖ The apostle says these things to tell us that, as the Israelites profited nothing from that great gift they enjoyed; the Corinthian Christians, as well, would profit nothing from the holy baptism, nor from the holy communion, unless they lead a life befitting this grace¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ As the rock that followed the people of Israel in the wilderness, did not contain inside it a source of water that flowed into glorious rivers; So did the divine Word who conformed the creation from naught¹.

(St. Ephram the Syrian)

❖ Calling Christ a ‘lamb’ (John 1: 29), a ‘bull’ (Ezekiel 43: 19), or ‘the Lion’ of the tribe of Judah; does not mean that we worship a flock of lambs or a herd of beasts; And calling him a ‘Rock’, or ‘Mount Zion’, (as in Him we find an example of the church), does not

¹ On 1 Cor., Hom. 23: 3.

¹ Hymns on Paradise 5: 1.

also mean that we worship a rock or a stone. A sign is sometimes used as a name of the one concerned, the way the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form like a dove upon Him (Luke 3: 22); And the beaten rock was called ‘Christ’, being a symbol of Christ¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ That surely refer, not to His deity, but to His body, that flowed on the thirsty hearts of the people with a stream of the His perpetual blood².

(St. Ambrose) & (Father Caesarius, Bishop of Arl)

- ❖ The manna and the water from the rock have been called ‘spiritual’, on account of that they did not come according to the laws of nature, but by the power of God working independently from the natural elements (Exodus 16: 11-36; 17: 1-7). Those things referred to the Lord Christ³.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ We as well, will become a rock, imitating, as much as possible, by our ever-changing nature, the perpetually unchanging nature of the Lord⁴.

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

- ❖ The spiritual rock is every disciple of Christ, from which all will drink; And upon these rocks every word of the church is built; and its policy conformed to it; As God builds His church in every perfect person who connects in harmony between the words, the works, and the thoughts, and is filled with blessings¹.

(The scholar Origen)

“But with most of them God was not pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness” (5)

The cause of the perdition of the old people were their “*playing*” (7), “*sexual immorality*” (8), “*tempting the Lord*” (9), and “*murmuring*” (10); Hence the commandment of the apostle came: “*Flee ...*” (14).

After the old people enjoyed being covered by the cloud, crossed over the sea, ate the manna from heaven, and drank the water from the rock that followed them, God was not pleased with most of them, for they saddened the Holy Spirit of God, and did wrong to the divine Grace. They started by the Spirit, but consummated by the body.

¹ Ep, 169: 9.

² The Holy Spirit 1: 2.

³ CSEL 81: 108.

⁴ On Perfection.

¹ Commentary on Matthew, 12: 10.

❖ Because the Israelites were not yet in the promised land when God did all those things with them, God visited them with a double chastisement: Beside punishing them severely, He did not allow them to see the land to which He called them¹.

❖ While debating with his listeners, the apostle did not command them, but he rather counseled, and even supplicated to them².

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ Paul intends to remind us that we are not saved, merely by receiving the free grace of God, but by proving that we wish to accept it; As the Israelites have received it, but proving that they were not worthy of it, they were not saved³.

(The scholar Origen)

b- A warning against evil temptations:

“Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted” (6)

The Corinthians were like the old Israel, having received a multitude of divine gifts, yet, instead of thanksgiving and sanctification, they murmured, and came under the danger of perdition that dwelt upon the Israelites in the wilderness.

❖ As the gifts were intended to be symbolic, it is the same way with the chastisements. Baptism and communion, symbolized in the prophecies, together with the punishment of those unworthy for these gifts, were intended for our sake, to learn from those examples, how we are committed to watch our steps carefully¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written: ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play’ (7)

St. Paul considered partaking of the pagan banquets in the idol temples, as an actual fellowship in idolatry. *“and rose up to play”* The Jews generally understood “playing” here as unclean practices accompanying idol worship, like dirty dancing.

❖ Notice how Paul calls the Israelites “idolaters”, then follows by giving examples to support his allegation against those sins, And gives us, as well, a reason for their idolatry, namely, ‘gluttony’².

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ On 1 Cor., Hom. 23: 4.

² On 1 Cor., Hom. 24: 2.

³ Comm.. On 1 Cor., 4: 45: 2-5.

¹ On 1 Cor., Hom. 23: 4.

² On 1 Cor., Hom. 23: 4.

“Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell” (8)

In the book of Numbers (25: 9), it came that 24 thousands died, So why say here that 23 thousands did? This was because the Lord commanded Moses to take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the Lord out in the sun. Those counted about one thousand, to be added to the 23 thousands who died by the plague.

“Nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents” (9)

Here he refers to “**Christ**” in the New Covenant, who was called ‘Jehovah’ in the Old Covenant; and whom the Jews tempted by denying His divine care, and murmuring against Him.

“Nor murmur, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer” (10)

Because of the manna, the Jews murmured against Him, assuming that the divine promises provided to them while in Egypt were not realized, and were consequently destroyed by the serpents and the plague. In the way same way the Israelites murmured against God and His prophet Moses, the Corinthians also did against God and His apostle Paul.

The Israelites also murmured after the death of Korah and his company (Numbers 16: 41, 49); and their murmur against Moses and Aaron was counted as though against God Himself (Exodus 8: 16). Quoting that, the apostle Paul counted the murmur by the Corinthians as against Christ and against His apostle.

- ❖ It is requested, not only to suffer for the sake of Christ, but also to endure your suffering calmly and with gladness, as this is the nature of the crown of the perfect wrestler; Otherwise we would be worthy of chastisement. That is why the apostles rejoiced when they were beaten; and why the apostle Paul was glorified in his sufferings¹.
- ❖ He exhorts us to get rid of this sin as fast as we can².

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ It is befitting of the Christian never to murmur, whether in his need of the necessities, or in the labor and suffering; As, together with the commitment to these things, he has got an authority to enjoy³.

(St. Basil)

¹ On 1 Cor., Hom. 23: 4.

² On 1 Cor., Hom. 24: 2.

³ Letter 22: 2.

“Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come” (11)

❖ He called them “*examples*” and said that “*they were written for our sake*”; then he referred to the end to remind us of the end of all things; when the punishment would not be only temporary, then would come to an end, but an eternal punishment. The punishment here would end with the end of the present world, But in the world to come it would be perpetual¹.

❖ Again he takes pride away from those who assumed that they are on a high level of knowledge. As, if those who have got such great privileges could not alter God’s ordinances toward them, How much more would it be for us, unless we become wise¹?

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ If we should give greater care concerning these things, we are committed to take care not to wound the weak consciences of our brethren, and sin to Christ, when we cause the perdition of those for whose sake Christ died; When we sin to Christ, we shall fall under punishment, because the souls of those who perish because of us, will be sought from us².

(The scholar Origen)

“On whom the ends of the ages have come” (11). By this he probably means that the time of the Old Covenant has come to an end by the beginning of the New Covenant; Or that the fullness of time has dwelt by the coming of the Messiah the Savior of the world, whose day the men of God have for long desired.

This was written for the sake of the apostle Paul, and of the Christians in his time, and “*for our admonition*”, namely, for all the believers in the world along all generations; as the word of God is alive and active; and the Holy Book is for every man, and for every era.

By saying “*the ends of ages*” (11), he also refers to that, as the salvation has been realized by the cross of the Lord Christ, His resurrection, and His ascension, the plan of God is consummated, and His divine ordinance is realized, until He comes to carry us on the clouds. That is why the world is considered as at the ends of ages.

❖ Paul refers to the ends of ages to put fear in the hearts of the Corinthians; for the punishments to be, would have no time limits, but are eternal, contrary to the punishments that dwell in this world which will end with our present life³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Therefore, let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall” (12)

¹ On 1 Cor., Hom. 23: 5.

¹ On 1 Cor., Hom. 23: 5.

² Commentary on Matthew, 13: 22.

³ On 1 Cor., Hom. 23: 5.

The true believer, although he believes in God's work in his life, yet he has to stay alert lest he would lose his faith, or lest he would fall from the holy life in the Lord, in which he enjoys the divine grace. He who does not stand fast in his union with God, and in his worship by the spirit, truth, and walking by love, would fall in the darkness and the hardness of heart.

Here the apostle warns him who leans upon himself, and who assumes that because he loves God, and has got divine and heavenly gifts, he would never fall.

As long as we are in the body, we are committed, together with our enjoyment of the rich grace of God, to walk cautiously, as there is no one who would never err. The devil, attempting to destroy us, sometimes through making us despair of our sins, and other times by a vain sense of security, and false self-confidence, leads us to forget our weakness, and stop resorting to the refuge of the divine bosom, to find protection and abidance.

Our hope in salvation fills our hearts with joy, and our humility before the Lord, would make us stand fast in this hope, and would double our external joy.

❖ Standing fast here lacks security, until we quit the currents of the present world, and resort to the calm port. Therefore stop feeling haughty being steadfast, but take heed lest you fall; For if Paul, who is more steadfast than us, fears that, how much more would it be fitting of us to take heed¹!

❖ Because he who reviles others would probably fall in the same sins; the blessed Paul advises us "*Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall*" (11)².

❖ Because the most prominent military tactic is to know how to stand fast, on which much would depend, the apostle

refers often to it, saying: "*Watch, stand fast in the faith*" (1 Corinthians 16: 13); "*Stand fast in the Lord*" (Philippians 4: 1); "*Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall*" (12); and, "*Having done all, to stand*" (Ephesians 6: 13). He, undoubtedly means the sound way to stand fast, recognized by those with experience in wars. If coaches of boxers and wrestlers are keen to underscore this point to their players, namely, to stand fast, how much more would it have priority in wars and military tactics¹!

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ Paul says this to those who, thinking that they have reached a higher level of knowledge, assume that they have the right to eat anything, regardless of the offense they may cause to

¹ On 1 Cor., Hom. 23: 5.

² In Titus. Hom. 5.

¹ In Ephes., Hom. 23.

their weak brethren. He tells them that they are actually have gone down to a lower level because of the teachings of the false teachers¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (13)

What dwelt upon the church in Corinth, of contentions and controversies, are because of not being preoccupied with the new life in the Lord; **St. John Chrysostom** interprets the expression “ *such as is common to man*”, as being little, short termed, and moderate. As what dwelt upon the church of Corinth is considered as temptations, not as serious as what dwelt upon the Israelites in the old days.

“God is faithful”, while the devil is deceptive and a liar. He who leans upon God will be secure, and will bear a divine power; Faithful in His promises, God would never destroy the hope of His children in Him. In His faithfulness and His wisdom. He would not allow for His believers to bear beyond what they can bear. Knowing the possibility of everyone, He would only allow for the kind and extent of temptation for his edification. It is enough for us to believe that God is faithful; to holding fast to His promises; to have confidence in His compassionate fatherhood; and to be aware of His wise care; All that would grant us the strength to go through the temptation, without feeling that it is beyond our ability to bear.

He give two promises: the first is that He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear; and the second is that with the temptation, He will make a way of escape.

All circumstances and events are in the hand of God the Almighty, allowing them according to His wisdom, and for our edification, if we respond to Him and believe in His fatherhood.

❖ Having put the fear in them by presenting those old examples; and having warned them, saying: *“Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he falls”* (12); Although they went through several temptations, and suffered many fears, yet he also says to them: *“I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling”* (1 Corinthians 2: 3). And lest they might say: [Why should you terrify us and warn us? We also have our experience, and have gone through our share of troubles, persecutions, and many continuous dangers]; He says: *“No temptations have overtaken you except such as is common to man”* (13); and says as well: *“I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh”* (Romans 6: 19); You have not gone through a danger that threatens death, nor a temptation that ends in slaying;

¹ CSEL 81: 111.

as he says to the Hebrews: “*You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin*” (Hebrew 12: 4)¹.

- ❖ He says: Those little temptations, although we can bear on our own, Yet we seek God’s help, and ask Him to give us the perseverance, and grants us the comfort, to go through them and be able to bear them².

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ If the whole creation will eventually dissolve, and the form of this world is going to change; Why should we marvel, being a part of it, to share in such an expected general suffering, and are allowed to be delivered to sorrows according to the measure of our endurance, when He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able; and with the temptation He will also the way of escape, that we may be able to bear it³?!
 - ❖ “*God have arranged all things by measure and number and weight*” Wisdom 11: 20); He tempts all those who strive in the true religion, by sorrow; but not beyond their strength to bear; To all those who should show that, amid their sorrows, they keep on giving Him thanks, “*He has given them tears to drink in great measure*” (Psalm 80: 5)⁴.
 - ❖ I am totally convinced that if there is a voice to move the good God, He will make His mercy at hand, and will even “*give, together with the temptation the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it*”¹.

(St. Basil)

- ❖ Why was this written if we are now granted the conquest over all the temptations by merely enduring them through our strong will²?

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Paul exhorts the Corinthians to avoid any contact with idol worship, to separate themselves from it, not only by their bodies, but also by their minds; to destroy any form of temptation; because he who is preoccupied with idols, will be affected by them; Leaning upon idols is an escape from God³.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ The temptations that happen through the devil, are not by his own power, but through allowance from God, either to chastise us (punish us), or, because of His love for us, He

¹ On 1 Cor., Hom. Hom. 24: 1.

² On 1 Cor., Hom. Hom. 24: 1.

³ Letter 139.

⁴ Letter 219.

¹ Letter 256.

² Letter 179 to Bishop John.

³ CSEL 81: 113.

intends to test us and train us. There are different kinds of temptations: the temptation in which Judas fell for selling his Lord, differs from that in which Peter fell by denying Him because of fear.

I believe that there are general temptations through which all men may go because of human weakness, however good their behavior is. As an example, when someone gets angry with another who tries to guide him to the way of truth, in contradiction of the tranquility required by Christianity. Saying: “*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man*”; then adding: “*But God is faithful who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it*” (13), the apostle Paul clearly shows that we do not pray, not to be tempted, but not to be led into one we cannot endure; Because if we fell into a temptation we cannot endure, we would be led into a temptation¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Paul did not pray not to be led into temptations; for he who is not tempted will not be justified, but prayed to be able to endure his temptations as he should be¹.

(Severian, Bishop of Gebalah)

- ❖ Many are overcome by temptations they are not able to endure. What God grants us, is not a confirmation that we will endure the temptation, but the possibility of becoming able to endure it².

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ “*Lead us not into temptation*”.

Here, there will be an important question: If we pray not to be led into temptation, how could our strength to endure be justified; according to the saying: “*Blessed is the man who endures temptation*” (James 1: 12)?

The phrase: “*Lead us not into temptation*” does not mean “Do not allow us to go through a temptation”; As the righteous ‘Job’ has been tempted, yet he did not fall into temptation, **having not blasphemed God as the evil tempter wanted him to do. So have Abraham and Joseph been tempted, yet they did not fall into temptation, having not surrendered their will to the tempter.**

This phrase was followed by: “*Save us from the evil one*”; namely, ‘Do not allow the evil one to tempt us beyond our ability to endure, but “*With the temptation, also make the way of escape, that we may be able to bear it*” (13)³.

¹ Sermon on the Amount 2: 34.

¹ Pauline Commentary from Yhe Greek Church.

² De Principiis 3: 2; 3.

³ Cassian: Conferences 9: 23.

❖ **Every man is attacked according to his ability to endure.** The evil spirits are not all of the same viciousness or power; the beginners and weak among men, are first attacked by weak spirits, which if defeated, more powerful spirits may follow, that the soldiers of Christ cannot resist on their own; as even the strongest of saints are not able to match the power of those mighty enemies, **unless the Lord of struggle Himself – Jesus Christ – come to his aid and confront the increasing power of the charging warriors; and “with the temptation, also make the way of escape, that we may be able to bear it”** (13)¹.
(Father Cerinus)

❖ On the same result, the apostle Paul says: *“Therefore let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he falls. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it”* (12, 13). For when he said: *“Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he falls”*, he gave the chance for free will on his part; knowing for sure that having gained the grace, man may stand fast through strife, or fall through slothfulness.

But adding: *“He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able”*, the apostle Paul rebukes them for their weakness of heart, having been unable to endure the attacks of the spiritual evil spirits, against whom, he and the other perfect men war every day; saying to the Ephesians: *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”* (Ephesians 6: 12). And when he adds: *“But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able”*; he surely does not mean that they would not be tempted, but would not be tempted beyond what they are able to endure. The first phrase refers to man’s free will, while the second one refers to the grace of God who makes the impact of the temptations lighter¹.

❖ In case we are overcome by carnal covetousness, and became slaves to them in this battle, we would not be bearers of the sign of freedom nor of power, and we would be considered as unworthy, and be removed from the strife against the spiritual hosts; as *“Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin”* (John 8: 34). Then the apostle would call us “adulterers”, whom *“no temptation has overtaken except such as is common to man”*; As, if we cannot realize the power of the mind, we would not be worthy to enter into a stronger struggle against evil, on a higher level, if we could not manage to submit our weak bodies that resist the Spirit².

(St. John Cassian)

¹ Cassian: Conferences 7: 20.
¹ Cassian: Conferences 13: 13.
² Institutions 5: 16.

“Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry” (14)

He speak as to wise men, asking them to judge for themselves (15) in two things:

- ❖ “Are not those who eat of the sacrifices, partakers of the altar?” (18).
- ❖ “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of the demons; You cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons (21).

Concerning the fellowship, the cup which we bless, is a fellowship and a union with the blood of Christ; and the bread we break, is a fellowship in the given body of Christ,. Through our communion of them, we become one with the slain Christ,, and we enjoy a fellowship with one another (15-17). In a similar way, he who eats in an idol temple, is partaking of the table of idols to the account of demons; which would keep, even those with strong conscience, away from the table of the idols.

Recognizing the danger that confronts them, the apostle, with the spirit of fatherhood, cries out to them: **“My beloved!”**

God, on His part, is faithful and Philanthropic; We, on our part, are therefore committed to respond to His faithfulness and love, by fleeing away from idol worship, and from partaking of their banquets; fleeing from anything that could lead us to sin.

c- A commitment to wisdom:

“I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say” (15)

If they count themselves as wise, let them walk with wisdom and reason; to realize that fleeing from idols is the way of true wisdom.

d- It is either a fellowship with God or a fellowship with demons:

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” (16)

+Listen to the blessed Paul; how he refers to these awesome sacraments, and gives the name *“the cup of blessing”* to that extremely awesome and fearsome cup! Yes, It is a worthy name; because when I call it “blessing”, I mean (thanksgiving), and so reveal the treasure of the goodness of God¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ This cup, or rather its contents, that is sanctified by the word of God, is the blood of Christ. Through these elements, the Lord intends to grant us His body and blood He delivered for the forgiveness of sins. If you receive them with worthiness, you, yourself, will become what you receive; namely, you will become a member of the body of Christ¹.

(St. Augustine)

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 24: 3.

¹ Homily 227.

“For we, being many, are one bread and one body, for we all partake of that one bread” (17)

He calls the people of the Old Covenant “Israel *after the flesh*” (18); whereas the church of the New Covenant, he calls “*Israel after the Spirit*”. The way the old Israel enjoyed the unity through the altar, and partook together of the sacrifice; So it is with the New Israel, who enjoy the unity through the sacrifice of the Eucharist, for the whole church to become one bread.

- ❖ What is this bread? ... The body of Christ. And what will those who partake of it become? ... The body of Christ, not many bodies, but one body. ... The way the bread is formed of many grains of wheat before it becomes one bread, when the wheat grains, although they actually exist, do not show any more because of the unity together; So we will unite together, one to another, and with Christ, will not have a body to this, and another to that, but it will be one and the same body for all. Hence he says: “*for we all partake of that one bread*” (17). Now, if we enjoy the same bread, and all become the same body; Why then do we not show the same love, to become one¹?

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Every soul that receives the bread coming down from heaven, is a house of the bread, the bread of Christ, feeding and having her heart strengthened by the heavenly bread dwelling in her. Hence Paul says: “*We are one bread*”. Every faithful soul is ‘Bethlehem’, and also called ‘Jerusalem’, as on her will dwell the peace and tranquility of the higher Jerusalem, namely heaven. This is the true bread which, after being broken to pieces, will satisfy the whole humanity¹.

(St. Ambrose)

- ❖ From the bread you may learn how you should cherish unity. Before turning into bread, it was formed of scattered multitude of wheat grains; then ground, and united together to become dough by water, then baked by fire to become bread. So are you, after being scattered, you are ground through denying the devil, when you come to the baptism by water, and the humility of the fire of your fasting to take the final form of bread².
- ❖ He who eats the body of Christ and drinks His blood as is befitting, will join the unity of the body; Whereas the heretics and the dissidents, although they can partake of the sacrament, yet without getting any benefit, but rather for their own harm, as they increase and not decrease their punishment³.

¹ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 24: 4.*

¹ *Letter to Priests, 45, FC 26: 263.*

² *Sermon 227 FC 38: 107.*

³ *City of God 21: 25.*

(St. Augustine)

“Observe Israel after the flesh; Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?” (18)

- ❖ I implore you to meditate in how he did not describe the Jews as partakers of God, but said that they are “*partakers of the altar*”; as what was put on it got burned; Whereas, concerning the body of Christ, it is different. How? We would be “partaking of the body of the Lord Himself”, and not of the altar¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? (19)

“But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons” (20)

Although the idol is nothing, with no authority nor power; the sacrifices offered to it are offered to demons, and not to God; And he who partakes of them will have fellowship with the demons. The true believer would not have fellowship with Christ and with demons at the same time.

Although the idol is nothing, yet this does not mean that the sacrifices offered to it are nothing as well; namely are not considered as sacrifices, and hence the believer can partake of them; For what are offered are sacrifices to the demons, and partaking of them would imply a fellowship in the worship of demons.

- ❖ Therefore, do not hasten to indulge in controversial things! If you are the son of the king, and has the right to partake of the royal banquet; Would you forsake it and partake of that of the prisoners in the lower dungeons?! Would your father allow you to do such a thing?! Would he not pull you back, not to spare you the harm that this would entail, but because this behavior would be a disgrace to your honorable royal status¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ It is obvious that what would be judged in the pagan practices, by the true religion, is not the mere offering of sacrifices (as the old saints have offered them to the true God); but because they are offered to vain gods and evil demons².
- ❖ Unknowingly partaking of eating of what was offered to idols, is not considered a sin. Any produce of the earth, belong to its Creator; as “*The earth is the Lord’s and all its fullness*” (Psalm 24: 1; 1 Corinthians 10: 25-26; 1 Timothy 4: 4); and “*Every creature of God is*

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 24: 5.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 24: 5.

² Ep. 102: 19.

good” (1 Timothy 4: 4). And yet, any of the earth’s produce offered to idols, are considered unclean, and to partake of them would be a sin¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ The way the bread and the wine in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist are counted as regular bread and wine before the invocation of the holy Trinity; Yet after it, the bread becomes the holy body of Christ, and the wine would become the holy blood of Christ; In the same way, the food offered to the demons, although appearing as regular food in nature, yet it becomes unclean through the invocation of the evil spirits¹.

(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

- ❖ Paul says that behind the surface of the idol, there is a demonic power that would corrupt the faith in the One God².
- ❖ He who drinks the cup of the demons reviles the cup of Christ; and he who partakes of the table of the demons, rebels against that of the Lord, namely His altar, and crucifies Him again³.

(Ambrosiaster)

“You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; You cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons” (21)

“Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?” (22)

The apostle considers him who partakes of the table of the idol as provoking the Lord to jealousy on His people and His temple.

Idol worship is considered as adultery, namely, delivering the heart that belongs to God, to the devil; like a matrimonial betrayal. It is befitting of the soul to be faithful to her union with her heavenly Groom, and not exchange Him with another.

“Are we stronger than Him?” He is threatening the disobedient who rebel against the Lord by worshipping the idol; how could they stand against such a threat?! He who partakes of the table of the Lord, then partakes of the table of demons, would be provoking the Lord to jealousy, taking the risk of opposing the Lord Himself.

- ❖ ***“Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than Him?”*** Namely, Are we challenging Him to punish us by going to the adversaries, and by taking the side of His enemies⁴?!

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ Ep. 47: 4.

¹ Mystagogical Lecture 1: 7.

² CSEL 81: 114.

³ CSEL 81: 115.

⁴ In 1 Cor., Hom. 24: 6.

2- The believer's position concerning whatever is sold in the meat market:

“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not beneficial; All things are lawful for me, but all things do not edify” (23)

After requesting from us to sanctify the congregation and everyone of its members, the apostle confirmed our commitment of not partaking of the tables of the demons, to be worthy of partaking of the table of the Lord. The other principle is to care for the edification of others; adding: ***“Let no one seek his own good, but that of others”*** (24); meaning: *“Just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved”* (33).

Although it is lawful for me to eat anything, yet this is not beneficial for me, if it implies grief and offense for those with weak conscience.

- ❖ The expression ***“not beneficial”*** hints to the destruction of the person meant by the apostle; whereas the expression ***“do not edify”*** hints to causing an offense for him¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ It is easy for the one who fearfully respect what is allowed, to feel terrified before what is forbidden².

(The scholar Tertullian)

- ❖ He who abuses what is lawfully allowed, will easily and strongly fall to doing what is lawfully forbidden³.

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

“Let no one seek his own, but each one that of others” (24)

Meaning, let everyone live not for himself, but for the humanity around him.

The Greek word translated as ***“that of others”*** refers to all and everything concerning his comfort, benefit, well being, and salvation.

- ❖ Hearing the apostle counsel the faithful members of Christ, according to the law of love, saying: ***“not to seek his own, but each one that of others”*** (24), Greed would jump with all its deceptions, to intentionally misinterpret the phrase *“to seek what is of others”*. But hear and listen, O greedy one; When the apostle says: ***“Let no one seek his own, but each one that of others”***, he clarifies it in another location, saying: ***“not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many; ... Imitate me, just I also imitate Christ”*** (33)¹.

(St. Augustine)

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 24: 6.

² The Appeal of Women 10-6.

³ Paedagogus 2: 1: 14.

¹ Sermons on New Testament Lessons, 28: 6.

- ❖ As an idol worshipper, seeking only what is his own, puts obstacles on the way of the conscience of his weak brother; It would be befitting of us to resist practicing what we desire, for the sake of the love of Christ, and the salvation of our brethren¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ The question here is not, whether what you eat is with a good conscience, but if it is for the benefit of your brother²!

(Occuminus)

2- THE BELIEVER'S POSITION CONCERNING WHATEVER IS SOLD IN THE MEAT MARKET:

“Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience sake”

(25)

Blood of the sacrifice was meant to be an offering to the idols; whereas a portion of the meat was burnt on the altar, another portion was eaten by the one offering the sacrifice, and a third portion was taken by the priest, who mostly gathered his portions to sell in the market place. To partake of eating together with the one who offers the sacrifice inside the temple is considered as a fellowship in idol worship, namely in the table of the idol; which is contrary to the table of the Lord; And whoever partakes of the table of the idol will not be able to partake of the table of the Lord. But whatever is sold in the meat market could be purchased, asking no questions as to its source.

“Nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (1 Timothy 4: 4-5). *“To the pure, all things are pure”* (Titus 1: 15).

Concerning the conscience, man can eat whatever is sold in the market, yet with wisdom, he should not purchase anything harmful or deadly.

Along many eras some used to question whether what they purchase is the product of cruel and non-human labor of slaves abused by their owners?... whether it is produced by a factory that works on the day of the Lord? ...or whether the revenue of that business is used for things that are against the rights of others?

- ❖ It is not allowed to question nor to search whether the food was an offering to idols, but to eat everything simply and with thanksgiving ... As this is the nature of things that bear no evil in its essence; and it is the intention of man that make them unclean; he says: *“asking no questions”*¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ CSEL 81: 116.

² Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 25: 1.

- ❖ The conscience here does not refer to that of the person who knows for sure that there is nothing as idols; but that of the one who, seeing someone purchase food of what was offered as sacrifice to idols, feels that it is a sin¹.

(Severian, Bishop of Gebalah)

“For the earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness” (26)

This, the apostle quoted from psalm 1: 24; and Deuteronomy 10: 14.

What the earth produces of vegetable or animal food is a gift of God, even if abused by being offered to idols. It is a fruit of God’s love and care for man.

- ❖ If the earth, the fruit, and the animals, are all God’s creation; Nothing of them, therefore, is unclean; but would become as such through man’s intention or disobedience².

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Man commits no sin by unknowingly eating food that was previously offered to idols; As every vegetable or animal belong to God, its Creator³.

(St. Augustine)

3- THE BELIEVER’S POSITION CONCERNING AN INVITATION TO A BANQUET IN THE HOUSE OF AN IDOL WORSHIPPER:

“If anyone of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience sake” (27)

Jews generally, when they were invited to dinner in the house of an idol worshipper, used to enquire and search many details to make sure that the food offered is not unclean.

But a Christian shares the feelings of his friends as long as it is not at the expense of his faith; he accepts the invitation and asks no unwarranted questions.

- ❖ Look at the apostle’s moderation; how he did not command, nor put a law committing us not to partake of an invitation by a non-believer¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ It is befitting of us not to be gluttonous and to eat only what is necessary. But if we are invited to dinner by a non-believer, we are told by the apostle to eat whatever is set before us, not to refrain from eating his luxurious food, but we should not covet it².

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

¹ Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 25: 1.

³ Letter 47.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 25: 1.

² Paedagogus 2: 10.

“But if anyone says to you: ‘This was offered to idols’, do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience sake; for ‘the earth is the Lord’s and all its fullness’” (28).

A believer can simply and innocently partake of the private banquets, even those held in the houses of idol worshippers, and it would not be counted as a fellowship in the tables of demons, nor a banquet of idols. Yet, if he is told by someone that the food was offered to idols, he should refrain from eating it for the sake of those with weak conscience.

“Conscience I say, not your own, but that of the other.... Why is my liberty judged by another man’s conscience?” (29)

He addresses those with strong conscience; who are sure that they are doing nothing wrong; Yet, by seeking what of others, and caring for those with weak conscience, they do nothing to offend them.

As to saying: ***“Why is my liberty judged by another man’s conscience?”*** this is probably a protest by the one with strong conscience, asking the apostle, why should he not practice his own liberty, but act according to the conscience of the one with a weak conscience?

To compare between the bread of the Lord (the Eucharist) and the regular food, **the scholar Origen** says that we enjoy the blessings of the bread of the Lord through our faith in it, As without faith, we shall not be sanctified. ... And what defiles man is not the regular food itself, but the unclean conscience of man and his lack of faith, saying:

❖ It is not the food, but the conscience of him who eats it with doubt, that defiles the eater; For he who doubts is judged if he eats, eating without faith. Nothing is clean for him who is unclean and unbelieving; not in the thing eaten itself, but because of his uncleanness and lack of faith ... What is sanctified by the word of God and by the prayer, does not sanctify the nature of him who eats it; Otherwise,, he who eats the bread of the Lord without worthiness, would be sanctified; and accordingly, no one would become weak, sick, nor would die. In the case of the bread of the Lord, It is only him who uses it with a clean mind and pure conscience, will profit from it¹.

(The scholar Origen)

“But if I partake with thanks, why should I be denounced because of that for which I give thanks?” (30)

❖ Although the sun casts its rays on many corrupt locations, yet they return as pure as they were; We as well, living among the world, would remain pure if we so intend, through the great power given to us. You may say: ‘Why then would we refrain? Not to be unclean, far

¹ *Commentary on Matthew, 11: 14.*

from it! But for my brother's sake; not to have fellowship with the demons, and not to be judged by non-believers¹.

- ❖ See how many reasons he produced to commit us to refrain from partaking of sacrifices offered to idols? ... Because they are of no benefit, of no need, they may bring harm over our brother, because of the evil judgments of non-believers, of having a fellowship with demons, and of being a kind of idol worship¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ By saying: "*I do not want you to have fellowship with demons*" (20), he intends for them to separate their life and behavior from those who minister to the demons².

(St. Augustine)

"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (31)

It is befitting of the believer to glorify God even in his eating, drinking, or whatever he does. The way a son honors his father, and reveals his features in him by his respectful behavior, We, as well, even in our eating and drinking, should have our God transfigured in us, so that everyone would recognize in us our fellowship in the features of our God, and in our practicing His goodness, mercy, and holiness.

While eating or drinking, a righteous man has in mind the commandment saying: "***Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God***" (31). ... If it is necessary to put a quick portrait of the unclean food, according to the gospel, we may say that it is that connected to gluttony, based upon the lowly love of money, or the servitude to the belly, that would have authority upon the soul³.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ Aide, to do everything with reason, even in the simple things as eating and drinking, to the glory of God⁴.

(St. Basil)

- ❖ To eat and drink to the glory of God, is to eat and drink after presenting glory to the Creator⁵.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ Do everything with reason to make others glorify God by you, and not be offended¹.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 25: 2.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 25: 3.

² Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany, sermon 17: 3.

³ Commentary on Matthew, 11: 12.

⁴ Letter 22: 2.

⁵ CSEL 81: 118.

(Severian, Bishop of Gebalah)

- ❖ Even if I stretch my hands to give, I shall meditate in the law of God; If I visit the sick, my feet will meditate in the law of God; If I consummate all what is prescribed for my healing, I shall pray with my whole body what others do with their lips².

(St. Jerome)

- ❖ The apostle wants all our behavior to be in the presence of Christ as a companion and a witness; to do all the good things for His sake, being their source; and to avoid all what is evil for the sake of the fellowship with Him. He who knows that Christ is his Companion will feel ashamed to do evil. Christ is the Helper to do what is good; and the Defendant to confront what is evil³.

(Maximus, Bishop of Turin)

“Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks, or to the church of God” (32)

It is befitting of the believer to be particulate in his behavior. to give no offense to a Jew or a Gentile who have not yet received faith, or to a Christian.

- ❖ Do all things delicately and orderly for edification. You should chose, and persist on choosing the right person, time, and place as is befitting; For if you take all these details in consideration, you will avoid every shadow and trace of evil⁴.
- ❖ Do not ever be an offense to those you encounter; Be cheerful, amiable, decent, and humble; And do not abuse your right as a guest by demanding an out of the ordinary kind of food⁵.

(St. Basil)

“Just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved” (32)

The apostle presents himself as a role model; intending to win many, not to himself but for their salvation.

- ❖ What benefit would be acquired by the Christian congregation, in case of a calamity, if the ministers of Christ care only for themselves! And what an extensive harm, if *“they seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 2: 21)!; if they lack the love that *“does not seek its own”* (1 Corinthians 13: 5); and if they fail to follow the lead

¹ Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.

² Hom. On the Psalms, Homily 1.

³ Maximus of Turin: Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.

⁴ The Long Rules, 33.

⁵ Letter, 42.

of the one who says: “*not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved*” (33)¹.

- ❖ [If I just please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. Namely, if the good things I practice are for the sake of getting human commendation; and if I get puffed up when I get commended, I am not a servant of Christ]. The apostle, therefore, although he intends to please all men, yet it is not to boast of their commendation, but because by commending him, they would edify themselves in Christ².
- ❖ The apostle wants all believers to please all men, the way he does; not that gets inner satisfaction by their commendation, but because by pleasing them all, he can edify them in Christ³.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ It is not for the sake of the corruptible glory that he talks about the glory to come; but for the sake of his fellow believers and neighbors, to covet it and win their salvation⁴.

(Cassiodorus)

¹ *Ep 228: 2.*

² *Ep 228: 2.*

³ *Letter 231*

⁴ *Cassiodorus: Explanation of the Psalms 121: 9.*

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 10

GRANT ME TO PLEASE YOUR HEART O YOU WHO ENRICH ME WITH YOUR GIFTS

- ❖ Your amazing storehouses are open along all generations.
You brought Your people across the wilderness.
You granted them Yourself, a cloud to shade them by day.
And a pillar of light to guide them by night.
You gave them water from a rock that followed them.
Yet instead of a thanksgiving sacrifice, they offered murmur and rebellion.
And instead of getting attached to You, they worshipped a golden calf.
You seek their pleasure in You, and You in them.
But in stubbornness, hardness of heart, and thickness of neck, they provoked You to jealousy.
- ❖ Here I am in the wilderness of my life.
You shade me with the wings of Your love, while on the cross.
You led me to the River Jordan.
And offered me Your Spirit to lead me by the spirit of love.
To shine on me with the divine light, to enlighten my understanding.
To flare my heart with the fire of divine love.
Instead of the rock, You offered me Yourself with Your pierced side.
To flow over me with the water of the Spirit.
And to cleanse me with the precious blood.
Grant me, instead of denial, to give You thanks.
And instead of rebellion, to attach myself to You with obedience.
And instead of dryness, to have my heart flared with love.
Yes, You are my pleasure and the gladness of my heart.
You, who find pleasure in me, a weak sinner.
- ❖ How can I pay back all that flow of gifts?
I shall pay it back in Your children.
Together with them, I shall become one indivisible bread.
Yes, I shall abide with them in You, by Your holy body and precious blood.
To become together with them, one in You.
That is what brings pleasure to Your heart, O Grantor of unity.
- ❖ You have granted me liberty.
All things are lawful for me;
Yet, I shall only do what is beneficial to me as Your son.

I shall only move with what edify my soul, and the souls of my brethren in You.
I shall please You by pleasing those whom You love.
I shall not seek what is my own, but that of Your beloved.
To imitate You, O You who delivered Yourself for my sake;
I shall deliver myself for the sake of my brethren.
Grant me with Your Spirit, to share with You the cross of love.

DIVISION 4

**DEALING WITH PROBLEMS OF
WORSHIP**

(Chapters 11 to 14)

SPEAKING WITH TONGUES

11-14

SPIRITUAL CHURCH REGULATIONS:

In this division the apostle started dealing with some spiritual church regulations, confirming the equality of woman to man (1: 1-16); and the commitment of the believer to examine himself before having communion of the Lord's body and blood (11: 17-34).

THE GIFT OF SPEAKING WITH TONGUES:

Out of the many gifts of the Holy Spirit to the church, he presented that of speaking in tongues. Its goal, on one aspect, is to let the Jews in the whole world realize that God is not just the God of the Jews but of all the nations; something very difficult for them to accept. And on another aspect, to preach among the Gentiles whose tongues the apostles did not know. But, because the Corinthians have misunderstood all that, the apostle Paul started by talking about the church gifts in general (12); and confirmed that love surpasses all the other gifts (13). He finally, confirming that God is a God of peace, and not a God of confusion, they should not abuse the gifts, and in particular that of speaking tongues (14).

CHAPTER 11

CHURCH REGULATIONS

In this chapter, the apostle deals with certain spiritual church regulations, like the relationship between women and men in the church; holding the aghaby banquets; and the believer's commitment to examine himself before having communion in the body and blood of the Lord.

1- Man and woman in the church	1 - 16
2- The proper conduct at the Aghaby banquets in the church	17 - 22
3- Communion in the Eucharist	23 – 34

1- MAN AND WOMAN IN THE CHURCH:

“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1)

This phrase represents the end and the ultimate conclusion of the previous chapter, as well as the beginning of the present one. It is the end of the previous chapter when the apostle presents himself a role model of delivering oneself for the sake of others, and the care for giving no offense to anyone, Jews, Gentiles, or Christians. And it is the beginning of this chapter, in which he exhorts them, through imitating him, to hold fast to the traditions he delivered to them, and to wisely understand the ordinances concerning the worship in the church.

- ❖ That is the law of the perfect Christianity; the precise relationship that makes the road clear; a point above anything else: seeking the things for the public interest as proclaimed by the apostle, saying: *“as I also imitate Christ”* (1). Nothing makes man imitate Christ like caring for his brethren¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Concerning those they consider as good shepherds, they should not only listen to their good teachings, but should also imitate their good behavior. Among those good shepherds was the apostle Paul who says: *“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ”* (1). He was a light turned on by the eternal Light, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; and put on a lampstand, having glorified in His cross, by saying: *“God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ”* (Galatians 6: 14)².

(St. Augustine)

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 25: 3.

² Ep. 208: 5.

- ❖ To realize the perfect life, we are committed to imitate Christ, not only in His meekness, humility, and longsuffering; but also in His actual death. Hence Paul, imitating Christ, says: “... *Being conformed to His death, If, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead*” (see Philippians 3: 10-11). ... We become in the likeness of His death; by being buried together with Him through baptism (Romans 6: 4-5)¹.
- ❖ If the goal of Christianity is actually imitating Christ according to the measure of His incarnation; according to the work of every individual; It would be the commitment of those who trust in the leadership of others, to support those who are weaker than them, by helping them to imitate Christ².

(St. Basil the Great)

- ❖ It is only natural to imitate those whom God has set as our teachers; the way they imitate God. As God the Father has sent Christ as a Teacher and the Source of life; Christ also sent the apostles to us as teachers, to imitate them, being unable to imitate Him directly³.

(Ambrosiaster)

“Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the traditions as I delivered them to you” (2)

To deal with certain issues concerning church regulations, the apostle started, not by accusing them of causing such confusion in the church, but introduced the positive aspect, by praising them for being convinced that he is an apostle of authority, whose guidance they seek in everything concerning church regulations. That is what the apostle means by saying: ***“You remember me in all things” (2)***.

It is obvious from this phrase that the apostle has delivered to them many traditions, orally or practically, to which they are committed; And here he is commending them for caring to keep them; exhorting them to imitate him in Jesus Christ. Believing in the importance of encouragement, he uses every chance he gets to praise those whom he ministers.

In the fifth chapter (5: 1), they wrote to him about the leader who intended to have his father’s wife; And in this chapter it seems that they wrote seeking his counsel concerning the role of women in the public church meetings, and particularly in worshipping. In case a woman enjoys a kind of proclamation or inspiration, will she take up a leading role in worshipping; take off her veil, and teach the congregation?!

¹ *On the Holy Spirit, 15.*

² *The Long Rules, 43.*

³ *CSEL 81; 119.*

The word translated in Arabic as “teaching”, is “paradossels” in Greek, meaning “traditions”. The apostle delivered to them many traditions concerning the church worship, either orally, or practically, and not necessarily in writing;; like practicing the Eucharist or communion, and other ordinances concerning the worship.

- ❖ Such was the kind of personality of the apostle Paul; even in little things, he always care for praising those he ministers, not for, far from it! As how would it be as such for someone who seeks neither money, nor glory, nor any material benefit¹!

(St. John Chrysostom)

“But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God” (3)

The apostle did not provide them with a direct answer, but he rather seeks from them to look into the situation, and to recognize some facts, that would help them to reach decisions; with the intention to confirm that the church system is not set upon solid and dry laws that should be obeyed without discussion, but they should recognize the spiritual and theological concepts behind every law or system, saying: “*I want you to know*”. Here he presents three different kinds of heads:

(1) The head of every man is Christ:

The Word condescended, became man, and occupied the rear raw of humanity; consented to become a slave sold for thirty pieces of silver; and to be betrayed by His disciple; so that, by humility and giving love, he would become a Head, a Bishop, and a Leader of man. He could have issued His commands from heaven to be committed to follow; But our Christ **presents a new concept of leadership; that of commitment and self-deliverance for the sake of His beloved subjects**, By saying “*the head of every man*”, he means (of every believer), namely, He presented His life for all mankind, to embrace every man in the whole world.

- ❖ He who keeps Christ in him, Keeps his Head for his own protection².

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ As long as Christ is the Head of every man, and logically (of every believer – as it would not be possible for Christ to be the head of a non-believer); that is why he who forsakes faith, the giver of salvation, would become headless like ‘Goliath’ (1 Samuel 23), who lost his head by his own sword. Our job is not to sever the head, but to demonstrate to them that it is severed³.

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

¹ *In Cor., Hom. 26: 2.*

² *Sermons on New Testament Lessons, 14: 3.*

³ *Answer to Eunomius' Second Book.*

❖ I wonder what kind of a crown did Christ submit His head for the sake of the salvation of humanity? What kind of crown is for Him, He, who is the head of man, the glory of woman, and the Groom of the church? ... It is a crown of thorns and thistles¹.

(The scholar Tertullian)

❖ The Head suffered at the location of “Golgotha” (the skull)! What a great prophetic name! A name that reminds you to think of the crucified, not a mere man, ... He is the Head with power²!

(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

(2) The head of woman is man:

Some men often use this part of the phrase to commit woman to submission. But the apostle started by presenting Christ as the Head of man as an example. So that, if man intends to practice his leadership, he should imitate His Christ, by bringing his love down to his wife’s heart, by honoring her, and by delivering himself for her sake. That would make her, on her part, covet to seek his protection, when she sees him worthy and capable of practicing his role. **Man’s leadership, is actually a right sought by his wife, wishing to see in him the giving and humble leader; and not a right sought by the husband for the sake of authority and submission without wisdom or love!**

❖ This is a warning, that none of them should depend on the other. She, who was created as a helper, is in need of the protection of her stronger partner; giving significance to the expression “*The head of woman is man*”. And he who needs the help of his woman has fallen because of her. So no one should submit his life in the hand of another, unless he is sure of his virtue; And no one should claim to take the role of protecting the one whom he thinks is weaker than him, but he is committed to share his grace with him, in particular the one in a position of a greater power,, and is supposed to take the role of a protector³.

(St. Ambrose)

(3) The Head of Christ is God the Father:

God, the Word, took the role of the Intercessor on behalf of humanity before God, the Father. Through His own free will He became Man and, in perfect obedience, He submitted to His Father’s will, though He is One with Him in essence, to consummate every ordinance of salvation. And as said by the apostle: “*Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered*” (Hebrew 5: 8). In His role for salvation, He took the role of the Son submitted to the will of His Father, to take away from us the nature of disobedience, and to let us share with Him the feature of obedience.

¹ The Chaplet, 14.

² Catechesis 13: 23.

³ Paradise 4: 25.

❖ “*The Head of Christ is God the Father*”, having begotten Him; The head of man is Christ, having created him; And the head of woman is man, having been created from his side (Genesis 2: 21-22). It is therefore one expression with several meanings according to the diversity of persons and the relationships between them¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ The term “head” is used with diverse meanings, or else the result would be erroneous. There is a huge difference in the level and nature of relationship between Christ and God the Father, on the one hand, who are equal in essence; and that between man and woman on the other hand².

❖ He says “*The head of Christ is God the Father*”. And I say as well, As we are all one body, And so are Christ and God the Father, they are One; By this, God the Father is our Head³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head”

(4)

By the term “**prophesying**” here, he means (**teaching**) publicly in the public meetings, to proclaim the will of God; namely talkin to people for the sake of edification, giving them guidance and spiritual comfort (1 Corinthians 3: 14). Therefore by saying “**praying or prophesying**” he means carrying out a role of leadership among the congregation in the church.

It is not befitting for man to give a sermon, with his head covered by any means; As uncovering the head is a sign of submission, since he talks in the presence of God the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Representing the Person of the Lord Christ who obeyed and honored the Father, the spiritual leader uncovers his head, once he starts his worship ministry. Up to this day, some European men, when greeting somebody, take off their hat as a sign of respect.

“**Dishonors his head**”, namely, dishonors his Christ. All over the world, man uncovers his head in the presence of someone of greater rank than him (as it happens in the military, or before a king, or a ruler).

In this respect, someone may wonder **why then would the Bishop, the Priest, or the deacon put a crown on his head during the ministry of the divine liturgy?** According to the Coptic rite, the priest covers his head while raising the incense; But, during the divine liturgy, he uncovers his head⁴, as though to celebrate the wedding of the heavenly King of

¹ CSEL 81: 120-121.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 26: 3.

³ In Ephes., Hom. 20.

⁴ في الخولاجيات القديمة يُشار إلى دخول الكاهن لبدء رفع البخور عشية وباكراً وقد كشف رأسه.

kings to His church, the heavenly Queen. The ministers of the altar, feeling that, by standing in his presence they are crowned as spiritual king, they cherish the spiritual honor they get through the sacrifice of the cross.

As to wearing the black turban on his head during his other services to the congregation, It is a reminder of the decree that was issued by a certain Sultan to commit the Christian subjects to wear a black turban, and the Jews to wear a blue one, as a kind of ridicule and humiliation; Hence it is still worn by the priest as a sign of his acceptance of the shame with pleasure for the sake of Christ.

❖ The Corinthian women used to pray or to prophesy with uncovered heads; while men who for so long have been preoccupied with philosophy, used to cover their head with long hair, as was the custom of the Greeks, when they pray.

Having already counseled them concerning those issues. And some obeyed, while others did not, here he praises those who obeyed, before attempting to correct the position of the others¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved” (5)

❖ Saying “every woman” implies of all ages, all ranks, and in all situation².

(The scholar Tertullian)

❖ Several prophetesses were mentioned in the Holy Scripture, like ‘Miriam’ (Exodus 15: 20), ‘Deborah’ (Judges 4: 4), ‘Huldah’ (2 Kings 22: 14), ‘Noadiah’ (Nehemiah 6: 14), and ‘Anna’ (Luke 2: 36). In the early church, in the time of the apostles, there were as well, prophetesses to whom God has revealed His will, and they used to pray for the others; like the virgin daughters of Philip the evangelist (Acts 21: 9), as well as others before and after them, about whom the prophet prophesied in the old, saying : “*Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy*” (Joel 2: 28; Acts 2: 17)³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

Having had its special circumstances, it so seems that some women in the church of Corinth were so filled with haughtiness, that they used to force themselves on the front rows of the church, and to lead meetings, and to give sermons with their heads uncovered. And, imitating the pagan priestesses, they used to take off their veils, uncover their heads, and display their hair in a disorderly way, as a sign of having inspiration. Yet those priestesses they imitate were also known for their ethical corruption and sexual looseness.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 26: 2.

² Prayer 22: 4.

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 26: 4.

It was the custom of some women at that time to keep their heads uncovered in an attempt **to draw the attention of men**; and as a sign of non-submission and disrespect for authority, in particular of the husband, the father, or men in general in the public meetings; The apostle, intending for the Christian women to be respectful, reserved, and humble, particularly during the collective worship, forbade them to uncover their heads while praying or prophesying.

That trend to uncover their head was counted by **the apostle as a dishonor to a woman**, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved; The hair being a sign of beauty for women, shaving it was an attempt to look as equal to man, and to reveal that she does not cherish her race as a woman. The honor of each race is in cherishing his or her race, Neither of them should feel haughty or envious of the other race as being superior.

Here it is noticed that women and virgins of the early church, used to have a role of leadership, leading prayers and giving sermons (prophesying), yet with their heads covered. And as it was the custom among the Greeks and the Jews, that women would not appear publicly with uncovered head; It was the custom, on the other hand, among prostitutes to appear with uncovered heads.

Whores and unruly women were punished by having their heads shaved, as a sign that they dishonored their men (if they are married), who are their heads; namely that they are unworthy of having husbands as their honored heads. And ‘Tacitus’¹ tells us that, despite the huge census, it was very rare to find whores among the Germans; And in case one is found, she would be punished by having her head shaved, displayed before her folks, and would be expelled from her home by her husband.

According to the Mosaic law, in case a wife was accused of sexual immorality, she was to be brought before the priest, and to have her head shaven (Numbers 5: 18).

And according to Achilles Tacitus Clitophon; ... Leucippe; before putting her on sale in the slave market, her head was shaven, and her head adornments were removed.

Among the Greeks, women used to have their heads shaven as a sign of intense grief. And among the Hindus, a woman cuts her hair off when her husband dies, as a sign that she is widowed.

A married woman, on the other hand, counts her hair as her beauty.

The way a woman wearing unbecoming attire, would be counted as dishonoring her husband, and her conduct would be a subject of doubt; Appearing in public with her head uncovered is counted the same way¹.

❖ As It is a great honor for a woman to keep her rank; it is disgraceful for her to rebel².

¹ *Germ. 19.*

¹ *Adam Smith: Comm. On 1 Cor., 11.*

² *In 1 Cor., Hom. 26: 4.*

❖ I am sorry to say that some women in the congregation uncover the heads of their maidservants and pull them by their hair! Why should your face get red when hearing that; I am only addressing those who do such a disgraceful behavior. Do you uncover her head, contrary to the words of the apostle Paul? Are you not aware that by so doing you dishonor yourself¹?

(St. John Chrysostom)

“For if the woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered” (6)

The apostle gives the woman the choice to cover her hair or to have it shaved. And if, according to nature or custom, it is disgraceful to shave the head, uncovering the head would be on the same level.

Yet, it is a different case, as far as a nun is concerned. Rejecting her natural beauty, and not caring for how the other people would look at her, she has her hair shorn so as not to be preoccupied with it, and dedicate herself completely to worship or ministry.

❖ By uncovering her head to imitate men a woman would not have the honor of men, as much as losing her own honor².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man” (7)

During collective worship, man ought not to cover his head, a sign of cherishing the authority given to him by God who created him in His Image, to have dominion on the creation on earth, and not to be in bondage or humiliation.

The woman, being bone of man’s bone and flesh of man’s flesh, she is his glory and splendor, since she is created as well in the image of God and according to His likeness (Genesis 1: 26-27). Yet, having come after man in the order of creation, she is committed to practice submission as a sign of not being independent of her man. As both of them are one body. The submission of woman is not humiliation, being the glory of her husband, and without her he is as though has lost his glory.

Man therefore cherishes dominion, not for the sake of haughtiness, but for commitment to responsibility and to the practical giving love for his family. The woman in her turn is committed to submission, not with a feeling of humiliation, but with the spirit of unity and cooperation, for her man to be proud of her as his glory and splendor.

The apostle underscores the role of man as a steward of God, to appear in the collective worship with an uncovered head, as a testimony to the glory of God. And as the

¹ In Ephes., hom. 15.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 25: 4.

man cares to testify to God by being of authority; So is the woman, being the glory of man, practices authority among her household and children, bringing pleasure to the heart of her man. A woman is either the glory of her man or his disgrace. If she cares for raising her children in the fear and the love of God, she will glorify her man before God and men. And if she become slothful in raising them, she would fail him before heaven and on earth.

- ❖ As an officer cannot appear before the king without his military uniform and the signs of his rank, the same way, man who dares to approach the throne of God is committed to carry the sign of his rank, represented by having his head uncovered; otherwise he would dishonor himself and do wrong to Him who honored him¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“For man is not from woman, but woman from man” (8)

Woman is created from the side of man (Genesis 2: 18, 22-23); yet not the product of his hands, but created by God. And as man is the veil between God and the woman, woman is therefore committed to that veil (or cover); Man, on the other hand, being created directly by God, he should not have a veil or a cover on his head.

“Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man” (9)

Man is not created for the woman, but woman is created to be his helper or partner (Genesis 2: 18, 21-22). ... She is his bride, the way the church is the bride of Christ. ... She is not created to be his maidservant, but to be his helper; ... Not to satisfy his lust and pleasures, but to be his partner and support in life; ... Not to become of a nature lower than his, but of the same nature, a friend to share with him his pleasures and grief. ... Being a helper to support him in the truth, would not lessen her honor; ... Being in need of her, both would walk together on the same path.

“For this reason a woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels” (10)

The apostle’s argument concerning the submission of woman is not meant to lessen her honor, but to exhort her to behave with a spirit of submission, shyness, and acceptance of the commitments of nature and customs to have her head covered, something that give her honor and glory. He connects between the two terms: cover (veil) and submission; being almost similar in Hebrew: ‘radad’ and ‘radid’.

“a symbol of authority on her head”: Many scholars believe that the word **“authority”** here, means ‘veil’. Some believe it to be a head cover adorned with pearls, like the one which was worn by the queens of Persia, as a sign of splendor and a symbol of submission to the king.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 26: 4.

Called ‘tiara’ or ‘kerchief bandalette’, It was also worn by married women, who had authority on the unmarried girls who used to wear little hats instead. In several countries women used to wear a head cover that reached down to their eyes.

Wearing a head cover, a woman carries a symbol of authority, of power, or of glory, as a believer submitted to her man in the Lord.

Now, who are the angels for whose sake women should have their head covered? He probably means the **congregation of worshippers**; For according to **St. John Chrysostom**: [You are standing together with the angels, praising and singing].

While others believe angels to be **the evil angels** or the demons who infiltrate into the church meetings to provoke people to rebel, and to enjoy looking at the women with uncovered heads. Others believe them to refer to the ministers and workers of the church.

While still others believe that they **are angels in the literal sense**, who are present in the church to share with us the worship of God, and find pleasure in us as the children of God (Ecclesiastes 5: 6; 1 Timothy 5: 21); Who, exulting and rejoicing to see the spirit of piety, submission, and shyness, appearing on the worshipping women, present this spirit as practical prayers before the divine throne.

Some believe that the Nazirite would never let a razor touch his hair (Numbers 6: 5-7), as a sign of his submission to God, and dedicating his life to Him. The same way, a woman who has her head covered, proclaims the dedication of her life to her household, and her submission to her man to the account of her family¹.

❖ The veil refers to power; and the angels to the bishops².

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ It is as though he says to woman: If you do not care for your man, do it to honor the angels. Being a sign of submission and a symbol of authority, he exhorts her to look downward, and in shyness to keep the befitting virtue; since the virtue and honor of him who submit are in his obedience³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord” (11)

If it is for the sake of the proper ordinance of affairs of the family, that the woman submits to her man in the Lord, and carries the authority in her household to proclaim the honor of her man; yet the apostle confirms their equality in the Lord, and the mutual respect between both of them.

¹ Adam Clarke: *Comm. On 1 Cor., 11.*

² CSEL 81: 122.

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 26: 5.

Being in need of one another, neither of them should belittle the other or look at him as inferior to himself. In Jesus Christ, each of them should respect the other and cooperate with him, to realize the one goal. Both hide “**in the Lord**”, becoming members of one body, working together through the Head – Jesus Christ – for the sake of the edification of all.

“For as the woman was from the man, even so the man also is through the woman; but all things are from God” (12)

As the woman was created from the man, Man is born from the woman; Both of them are the creation of God (Romans 11: 18). Each of them depends on the other, and both depend upon their Creator. By such an outlook, man and woman should reconsider their view about authority and submission; As authority is a commitment, work, and love; And submission is cooperation, and keeping the spirit of unity.

The first woman was created from the side of Adam; And men, the children of Adam are created in the womb of woman; But all are the creation of God; and the whole humanity owe their existence to the Creator.

- ❖ Talking about the glory of man, the apostle Paul sets the following balance: Man should not boast beyond what is befitting; nor apply pressure on the woman; since, in the Lord, woman is not independent of man, nor man is independent of woman. Each of them is the cause of the other; or rather, none of them is of the other, but God is the cause of all¹.
- ❖ As any exaltation of the man, completely refers to God; we are committed to obey Him and stop complaining².

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Paul adds that all things are from God; lest the woman would be offended because of her dependence on man, or man would boast because of his position of responsibility³.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ Concerning the two genders: males and females, While ‘Mani’ (**the son of perdition**) says that they are not from God but from the devil; Paul (the chosen vessel) says: “*As woman was from man, even so man also is through the woman; but all things are from God*” 12). The devil through the mouths of the followers of ‘Mani’ say that the body is an evil material created, not by God but by the devil¹.

(St. Augustine)

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 26: 5.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 27: 5.

³ CSEL 81: 123.

¹ Contenance. 10: 24.

“Judge among yourselves, Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?” (13)

He asks them with a spirit of delicateness and wisdom, to go back to nature itself to meditate and judge, what would be befitting of her.

As by nature, the Greek women used to appear in public with their head covered, the apostle wonders if it would not be honorable for them to refrain from imitating the evil priestesses of the idols, in the collective worship meetings, or while giving speeches or sermons to the congregation.

But this text should not be understood as though women have taken the role of leadership in prayers or preaching; except in case where there are women of special gifts like Anna the prophetess and Priscilla (Acts 2: 18); but the general rule was for the women to keep silent in the church (1 Corinthians 14: 34-35; 1 Timothy 2: 11-12).

❖ That is the church tradition; which when disregarded by the Corinthians, Paul resorted to nature¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

“Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?” (14)

Men of Achaia to which **Corinth is affiliated were so known for their long hair, that they were called by Homer “the Greeks with long hair” or “the Achaeans”**. As to the Jews, only the Nazirites among them used to leave their hair without shearing or shaving with a razor, as a sign of complete dedication to God (Numbers 6: 5; Judges 13: 5; 16: 17; 2 Samuel 14: 26; Acts 18: 18), of humility, and of being not preoccupied with outer appearance.

❖ It is not befitting of man to imitate women².

(St. Ambrose)

“But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering” (15)

A woman should harmonize with nature that gave her the long hair, by covering this hair to keep her beauty.

Women in the East, according to ‘Harmer’ used to let their hair long as a sign of their glory. According to ‘M. W. Montague’, their hair used to trail beautifully behind them, adorned with plenty of jewels, And according to ‘Chardin’, some women had their hair so long to reach down to their heels.

¹ CSEL 81: 124.

² Letters to Laymen, 78.

When Ptolemy Eurgetes, king of Egypt left to war against Seleucus Callinicus, his wife the queen vowed to present the most precious sacrifice, to cut off her long hair and to present it as an offering to the gods, if the king comes back safe.

On the contrary, men in the East, used to cut it short, lest they would be accused of being feminine, which is counted as great shame.

“But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor the churches of God” (16)

The apostle Paul believes that many, in dealing with some issues like the head cover for man and woman, are fond of debate and contention; Yet, because what should preoccupy the heart of a true believer is his attachment to the Lord, and his care to have fellowship with Him, his time is too precious to get into such foolish debates that cause divisions and dissensions; But, in love he acts with what brings peace to souls, and edification to the church of God.

By saying: ***“We have no such custom, nor the churches of God”***, he refers to the absence of such practices of women appearing in the church assemblies with their heads uncovered.

❖ Resistance to this teaching is an unreasonable rebellion. If the Corinthians persist on being contentious, they would be standing against what is followed by the entire catholic church¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

2- THE PROPER CONDUCT AT THE AGHABY BANQUETS IN THE CHURCH:

“Now in giving these instructions, I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse” (17)

Here, the apostle proclaims that they get together to worship, yet not for the sake of progressing and edifying themselves, but for getting down to worse. He would have wished to praise them, but he could not, for their assemblies were not for true worship that bears harmony, unity, love, and piety; but, on the contrary, they produce evil: On one aspect, there were divisions and contentions among them; and on another aspect, a corruption of the table of the Lord.

“For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it” (18)

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 26: 5.

That, for him, was the most important issue, which he heard from those of Chloe household (1: 11), and would warrant a harsh rebuke. He wished not to believe what he heard, but all the evidences were pointing to that it was all true, even so with some exaggerations, yet they could not deny that there were divisions in the church.

- ❖ Because the Corinthians, instead of getting closer to God, they have fallen into the customs of this world, Paul realized that they were in need to be rebuked to get back to what they used to be¹.
- ❖ To the Galatians, he did not speak with such gentleness, when there were certain divisions concerning issues of teaching, but he bluntly declared it, and sharply rebuked them, saying: “*If an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed*” (Galatians 1: 8); and, “*You have become estranged from Christ; You who attempt to be justified by law, you have fallen from grace*” (Galatians 5: 4). He called those who corrupt the teachings as ‘dogs’, saying: “*Beware of dogs*” (Philippians 3: 2); and even called them the “*ministers of Satan*” (2 Corinthians 11: 14-15); and in another location, he said: “*having their own conscience seared with a hot iron*” (1 Timothy 4: 2); ... But here, away from the sensitive issues of teaching, he says nothing of the sort, but criticizes mildly and gently; and to make his criticism even milder he says: “*in par It believe it*”, by which he exhorts them to correct their stance¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you” (19)

Some believe that the word ‘faction’ here does not mean heretic dogmatic diversions, but divisions and contentions. Although there must be factions (See also Matthew 18: 7; and see 2 Peter 2: 2); for the devil will never calm down; Yet, at the same time, they will help to recognize and justify those who love unity, and harmony, and who work for the sake of the peace and edification of the church.

The expression “**there must be**” here, does not mean that factions are necessary in Christian churches, but to show that they actually happen as long as we are in this world, where the devil is ever active, to whom those who follow him bow, and through whom he attempts to destroy the unity of the church.

These factions happen for several reasons, of which are: the love by some teachers to have authority and to enjoy publicity; The preoccupation of the congregation with the teachers more than with the Lord Christ their Savior (1 Corinthians 1: 12); The unreasonable

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 27: 2.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 27: 3.

and exaggerated interpretation of a certain, or a group of verses in the Holy Book, without holding fast to the spirit of the

Book; And the un-enlightened zeal of the congregation, together with pride and haughtiness.

“That those who are approved may be recognized among you”; Those who are approved are those who are counted as true friends of God, who abide to His commandments, and consummate His divine will. Whatever publicity those who cause contentions and factions get, they will never be approved or justified, and will never be counted as friends of the Truth; not being submitted to the ordinance, full of wisdom, coming forth from the true love.

❖ By that, believers will be justified, and the unfaithful will be punished¹.

(Cyprian, the martyr)

❖ Speaking about factions, the apostle does not have in mind any heretic diversions; the same way Christ Himself said: *“Offenses must come”* (Matthew 18: 7); by which He does not cancel the free will of man, nor issue a committing command; but predicts the inevitable result of evil in the mind of man. Offenses did not come because Christ predicted them; but He predicted them because they necessarily happened¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ Paul here, does not speak about errors in teachings, but about ethical failure.

(Severian, Bishop of Gebalah)

“Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord’s supper”
(20)

It is as though he says to them: [Indeed you get together in the church to partake of the Lord’s supper; but this would not be realized. ...

Apparently, you do; but, because of greed (21), selfishness, and the spirit of separation, you in fact, are not partaking of the Lord’s supper; which is the supper of love and of unity, and not of division and separation].

❖ Let me add that there has been a custom in some churches, to offer the holy sacrifice after partaking of a collective aghaby banquet; depending on a misinterpretation of the words *“He also took the cup after supper”*... etc. But actually, the Lord calls partaking of His body as “supper”; which was followed by partaking of the cup; And the apostle says: *“When you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord’s supper”* (20); calling the communion in the Eucharist “the Lord’s supper”².

¹ *Unity of the Church, 10.*

¹ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 27: 3.*

² *Ep. 54: 7.*

(St. Augustine)

“For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others, and one is hungry and another is drunk” (21)

By saying: “*take ... ahead of others*”, he probably refers here, not to the holy communion, but to the aghaby banquets that used to follow it.

After having fellowship in communion, yet they used to corrupt their worship by their behavior in those banquets, in which the rich cared for themselves, ate with gluttony of what he brought over with him, and got drunk, leaving the poor hungry, instead of eating together with the spirit of fellowship and love.

As the majority of the congregation were originally of the pagan Gentiles who recently received faith; having been still ignorant of the true nature of the Christian faith on all its aspects, and assuming that the aghaby banquets are like those held in the idol temples where they used to go, hence they behaved without love, humility, and Christian wisdom.

Here, we have to understand that those who receive faith are not yet perfect, but are always in need of continuous guidance to experience the new life in Jesus Christ, and to walk along the path of perfection.

- ❖ By saying “***the Lord’s supper***”, he describes it as a collective feast; as though he says: [If it is the supper of your Lord, as it certainly is, you are committed not to count it as a private supper; but, being referred to Your Lord and Master, let it be offered before all as a collective one¹].
- ❖ He did not say “one is hungry and another is satisfied”, but said “ *...and another is drunk*”. Each of these expressions warrants rebuke. For, getting drunk is wrong, even without despising the poor, which is, in itself, an accusation even without getting drunk, You can imagine the seriousness of disobedience if the two of them are done together²!
- ❖ By turning the Lord’s supper into a regular meal, and depriving it from its great power, the Corinthians dishonor themselves. It was befitting to consider the Lord’s supper collective for everyone, being that of the Lord, what is His would not belong to one minister or another³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Eating without control, the rich dishonors himself, and errs on two aspects: first by increasing the burden of the poor who have nothing to offer; and second, by showing off his shameful extravagance before those who have¹.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 27: 4.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 27: 4.

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 27: 4.

¹ Paedagogus 2: 13.

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

“What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you” (22)

The apostle would rather not have those banquets held in the churches, than to be held in such an erroneous way. He would rather see them return to their own houses to eat, than to practice such selfishness and pride in the church; He rebukes them for dishonoring the church of God, and for shaming the poor who have nothing to offer; something so disgraceful to happen in the house of God in particular, where love and equality of all should prevail!

- ❖ Notice how, to give his words more power and deeper effect, he turns the charge of disregarding the poor to dishonoring the church, And, after referring to such great evils: dishonoring the Lord’s supper, dishonoring the church, and disregarding the poor; how he softens the tune of his rebuke to say all of a sudden: ***“Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you!”***¹.
- ❖ As though he says: [Your Lord counts everyone worthy to partake of His table, although it is so awesome and honored; While you count the poor unworthy to partake of your modest and humble one. While they are not asking you of any spiritual benefit, you are robbing them of the temporal ones, which are actually not your own²!].
- ❖ To rebuke them he says: While your Lord delivered Himself for your sake, You refrain from sharing your little food with your brother, for your own sake³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 27: 4.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 27 5.:

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 27:5.

3- COMMUNION IN THE EUCHARIST:

“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread...” (23)

Intending to warn them against being (guilty) of the body of the Lord and His blood, he did not use harsh words in his rebuke, but, very calmly he reminded them of the episode of the institution of that sacrament of the ‘Eucharist’, to show them how it was done by the hands of the Lord Christ, delivering Himself for the sake of all humanity; in order to let them share that deliverance with Him, so as not to be counted as guilty of the body and blood of Christ.

Although Saul of Tarsus was not with the disciples when the Lord instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist, yet he says: ***“For I received from the Lord”***; probably in one of the several proclamations of the Lord to him (2 Corinthians 7: 12); He received the sacrament, not from the disciples, but directly from the Lord Himself. While some others believe that by receiving that sacrament through the church, the apostle Paul counted it as though from the Lord Himself; which he then instituted in Corinth, being its founder, and its first preacher.

On the same night in which he was betrayed by His disciple, and delivered to be slaughtered (Matthew 26: 23-25, 48-50); the Lord presented the greatest of His gifts to His own – His body and blood given for the sake of the life of the whole world. How awesome were the moments of delivering that sacrament; namely, the moments of delivering the Lord to death on the hands of one of His own disciples, to whom He entrusted with the treasury, and whom He sent to preach in His name.

❖ How could he say ***“I received from the Lord”***, when he was not there, and was even one of His persecutors?! He so said so, for you to know that that first table was not different from those that followed; namely, up to this very day, which the Lord Himself still delivers as He did then¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said: ‘Take, eat, this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me’ (24)

The way the Lord Christ took the bread, gave thanks, and broke; the apostle received and so delivered to the church in Corinth. It is imperative to set the sacrament in the same way it was received from the Lord; for the hidden Minister of the Sacrament is the Savior Himself, who alone, can say: ***“This is My body; This is by blood”***.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 27:5.

“*My body which is broken*”. Although this was realized on the cross, yet it is a perpetual work; We enjoy the work of the cross which will never get old with time, but is present new in His church, to be perpetually enjoyed.

- ❖ The Lord Christ, on His part, gave His body equally to all, saying: “*Take, eat*”. While you do not do that with your regular bread¹.
- ❖ What do you say? Do not you get terrified when you remember Christ, and despise the poor²?!
- ❖ Let us all listen to these words; as many of us approach this holy table, together with the poor; Yet, once we go out, we seem as though we have never seen them; but we instead, get drunk and despise the poor, the same things by which the Corinthians were accused³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Do you wish to know how the sanctification happens by the heavenly words? Listen to them uttered by the priest: “*Consummate for us this sacrifice, written, reasonable, and well received; which is in the likeness of the body and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ*” ... Before the sanctification, it was regular bread; but after adding these words, it becomes the body of Christ.... Before the sanctification, it was regular wine, but after adding these words, it become His active precious blood that save us all⁴.

(St. Ambrose)

- ❖ After the Lord Himself said clearly about the bread “*This is My body*”; and about the wine: “*This is my blood*”, will anyone dare to doubt?! ... With complete confidence we partake of the body and blood of Christ¹.

(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

- ❖ Paul reminds us of how the Lord has delivered everything, including Himself, for our sake; while we refrain from contributing a little food to our fellow believers. .. When you approach the sacrifice of thanksgiving, do not do what does not befit it: do not dishonor your brethren or disregard them in their hunger, do not get drunk, and do not do wrong to the church. When you approach it, give thanks for the sake of what you enjoy, and do not cut yourself off your brethren².

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 27: 5.*

² *In 1 Cor., Hom. 27: 5.*

³ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 27: 7.*

⁴ *Sacraments 4: 5: 21-23.*

¹ *On the Mysteries, Lecture 1: 2.*

² *In 1 Cor., Hom. 27: 5.*

“In the same manner, He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do as often as you drink it in remembrance of Me’” (25)

After supper, having partaken of His holy body (or after having the old Passover, which was a symbol of the new Passover). He presented to them His blood for the new covenant; sealing the covenant with humanity, not with the blood of animals, but with His own blood.

- ❖ Why does Paul refer to the cup as being of the new covenant? Because there has been as well, a cup of the old covenant. After offering sacrifices of animals, the priests used to put their blood in a cup and sprinkle it (Leviticus 4: 5-7, 16-18), 25, 30, 34). But now, instead of the blood of animals, Christ delivered His own blood¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ The old things have passed away, and became new in Christ: an altar replaced an altar; sword replaced sword; fire replaced fire; bread replaced bread; sacrifice replaced sacrifice; and blood replaced blood².

(St. Augustine)

“For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (26)

By saying: ***“you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes”*** he reveals the “eschatological dogma” in the life of the church. The main task of the church is her fellowship of the death of the Lord Christ, and her perpetual anticipation of His ultimate coming, to share with Him His glory, and to behold Him face to face.

We enjoy Him here through communion in His body and blood; Whereas when He comes, He will bring us forth into the bosom of His Father; and by being partners of Christ in His glory, we realize His gladness, and that of the Father and of the Holy Spirit.

- ❖ Every time we receive Him, we proclaim the Lord’s death, by which the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed. If the shedding of the blood is for the sake of the forgiveness of sins, It is befitting of me to receive it to perpetually forgive my sins.

- ❖ Being a perpetual sinner, I need a perpetual treatment¹.

(St. Ambrose)

- ❖ The apostle Paul reveals that the Lord’s supper is not a meal in the general sense, but a spiritual treatment that purifies the one who receive it with reverence. It is a remembrance

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 27: 5.

² Letter, 36.

¹ The Sacraments 4: 6: 29.

of our salvation; Whenever we remember our Savior, we are committed to follow Him, attached to Him¹.

(Amrosiaster)

- ❖ By proclaiming the death, according to the flesh, of God's only-begotten Son; namely the Lord Jesus Christ; confessing His resurrection from the dead, and His ascension to heaven, We celebrate the non-blood sacrifice in the churches, approach the spiritual blessings, and become saints; partners in the holy body and the precious blood of Christ, our Savior².

(St. Cyril the Great)

“Therefore, whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord” (27)

By saying ***“in an unworthy manner”***, the apostle refers to the unworthiness of the Corinthians to partake of this sacrament. By being gluttonous, selfish, and by disregarding the right of the poor, they were guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

How can we be worthy of having communion? If the Lord Christ, by His love, died for the sake of all mankind, Worthiness to have communion in His given body and blood would be through opening the heart wide by the Spirit of the Lord to love all humanity, and to covet their salvation.

- ❖ Why so? He who dishonor this supper would be like a priest who pours down the blood, and turn death into a slaughter rather than a sacrifice; ... He would be like the one who pierced the side of the Lord with a spear on the cross (John 19: 43); ... He would be doing this, not to drink His blood, but to shed it. ... He who approach this supper in an unworthy manner would be doing all that, and would profit nothing from it¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Partaking of it in an unworthy manner means partaking of it lightly and slothfully².

(St. Augustine)

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup” (28)

Being such an extremely serious crime, man should examine himself, and search his depths, whether they are spacious with love toward the others. Yet examining himself is not realized through keeping away, and a deprivation of such a great gift; but through repentance, true desire for a new life, sanctified in the Lord, and through the spaciousness of the heart even to the opponents, in order to enjoy the fellowship in the body and the blood of the Lord.

¹ CSEL 81: 127-128.

² Letter 17:12.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 27: 6.

² Sermons 227.

Man should examine himself by himself, as no one knows the depths of man but man himself; being aware of his thoughts, intentions, and feelings; as well as his words, and his apparent and hidden behavior. Approaching the Lord's table is serious, being an approach to the Lord Himself, accepting unity with Him, and enjoying His body and blood.

- ❖ ***“But let a man examine himself”*** (28); And in his second epistle the apostle says: *“Examine yourselves ... prove yourselves”* (2 Corinthians 13: 5). Not as we do now, approaching the holy sacrament, for it is the season, rather than for zeal of reason. We do not care to prepare ourselves by uprooting the evil inside ourselves, and by presenting a complete repentance; but just because it is the feast, and everybody is doing it, except for Paul who knows only one season to approach the Sacrament and communion; namely, the purity of conscience¹.
- ❖ I notice that many rarely partake of the body of Christ; and when they do, it is as something by the way, and without proper thinking and understanding; when man says that the holy great lent, or the day of the Epiphany of the Lord, has come, and would partake of the communion whatever his condition is. Neither of these two feasts will make the time right to approach the sacraments; but the faithfulness and the purity of the soul, by which we can always approach them, and without which, you will not realize the saying, *“For as often as you do it, you proclaim the Lord's death”* (26); namely, you remember the salvation that took place for your sake, and the benefits you have been granted. ... Remember how those who have partaken of the sacrifices of the old covenant, used to practice a kind of strict abstinence from things they usually did, and how they purified themselves. ... Now, while you approach such a sacrifice before which the angels tremble with awe, you measure things with the measures of seasons? ... How will you dare stand before the throne of judgment of Christ, while you take His body with defiled hands and unclean lips? ... You would not dare to kiss the king's hand with an impure mouth; Will you kiss the King of heaven with a defiled soul? That will be a dishonor to Him²!
- ❖ There is no fixed time to enjoy this sacrifice. The feast of Passover is so called because Christ suffered for our sake. So do not use the time as a cause to approach Him; As at all times, the sacrifice bears the same power, the same honor, and the same grace; As it is the same body; no time will be more suitable to celebrate it (the divine liturgy) than another¹.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 28: 1

² In Ephes., Hom. 3.

¹ In 1 Tim., Hom. 5.

❖ The feast is when we show the good deeds, the reverence of the soul, and the sound behavior; by which you would be keeping the feast, and you would be fit to approach the holy sacrifice all the time¹.

❖ If we approach the table with defiled covetousness, it would be more harmful than being inflicted with maladies. He who intends to approach these holy sacraments should first empty himself of defiled covetousness; namely, those of the body, of wealth, of anger, of craftiness, etc., before ever touching them².

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ The table of the Lord Christ is set before you all the time. So why do you refrain from approaching such a great banquet³?

(St. Augustine)

“For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner, eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body” (29)

Slothfulness in examining oneself is a crime against the body of the Lord; not distinguishing between the regular bread which he eats anywhere and the eucharistic given body of Christ.

❖ I address you, O honorable guests in this feast: ***“He who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner, eats and drinks judgment to himself”*** (26). I address all who are as such, lest they would anticipate what is good on the surface, while they bear the evil inside⁴.

❖ With His own hands He gave the supper to His disciples; And, although we were not present in that feast, yet we are having the same supper by faith. Do not think it strange that in that supper given by the Lord’s own hands, one man was present without faith – Judas who betrayed Him; Whereas Paul was not there, yet believed. Many, who now partake of this supper, were not present at that table, nor saw with their eyes, or tasted with their mouths that bread given by the Lord’s hands; and yet, it is the same bread set before them today; And many, as well, who do partake of this upper **are eating and drinking judgments to themselves**⁵.

(St. Augustine)

❖ Someone may say it is preferable not to have communion of the Eucharist on a daily basis; and when you ask why so? He answers: Such a great sacrament should be approached in a worthy manner, by choosing the days in which he lives in particular purity and self-

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 28: 1.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 28: 1.

³ Sermons on New Testament Lessons, 82: 1.

⁴ Sermons on New Testament Lessons, 40: 1.

⁵ Sermons on New Testament Lessons, 62: 4.

control; ***“For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner, eats and drinks judgment to himself”*** (29). And another may also say: Surely, in case there happen a wound by sin, and a confusion of the soul; taking medications should be suspended for some time. To respond to this we say that communion in an unworthy manner would be if man has it when he should present a repentance; Yet it should not be left to the judgment of man alone, to retreat from the fellowship of the church or to resume it at his leisure; but should only be through the counsel of the Bishop, who has this authority. Anyway, in case his sins are not so great to be separated from his fellowship of the church, he should not retreat from partaking of the daily Eucharist for the healing of his soul¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ How could the table that flows with life, and is the cause of such a multitude of blessings, become as well a cause of judgment? That would contradict its nature. But Paul so says depending on the tendencies of him who approaches it. As the presence of the Lord Christ turned these unutterable blessings to judgment for those who did not receive Him, So it is for the holy communion; it would become a greater judgment to those who partake in it in an unworthy manner².

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ He who approaches the Lord’s table slothfully, is not better than a non-believer³.

(Ambrosiaster)

“For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep” (30)

Through slothfulness in taking the sacrament of the Eucharist, many would fall under chastisement, whether by physical weakness, sickness, or by falling into the sleep of death. Notice that he does not say by death, but by falling into the sleep of death; for God anticipates their repentance and wishes for their salvation, even while on their death bed, to sleep, then wake up together with Him.

- ❖ In case someone, instead of listening to the commandment, saying: *“Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread ... etc”* (28); disobeys these words, and haphazardly has fellowship in the Lord’s bread and His cup; he will become weak and sick, and he may even, if I may say, fall asleep⁴.
- ❖ The apostle indeed says in his epistle to the Corinthians who were suffering diverse ailments : ***“For this reason many are weak and sick, and many sleep”*** (30). Listen how

¹ Ep. 54: 4.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 28: 2.

³ CSEL 81: 130.

⁴ Commentary on Matthew, 10: 25.

he, in these words, binds between things, between diverse ailments and the weakness and sickness of many, and compares these to those fallen asleep.

Because of loosing their soul power, some would have the tendency to crawl into any sin. Although they may not be completely held in any form of sin, as sick, yet they are **weak**.

And there are others who, instead of loving God with their whole souls, hearts, and mind, they love riches, vain glory, wives, or children. These suffer what is worse than mere weakness; they are **sick**.

Those who **fall asleep**, instead of being alert, and watching with their souls, they, because of their serious slothfulness, would have their heads heavy with sleep, as though with a dizzy mind; and *“like dreamers, they defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries”* (Jude 8). Because they are asleep, and are living in an atmosphere of vain fantasies, as though dreaming, instead of living in the actual presence; they do not accept the truth, but are deceiving themselves with what they see through their vain fantasies. About such people Isaiah says: *“It shall even be as when a hungry man dreams, and look – he eats; but he awakes, and his soul is still empty”* (Isaiah 29: 8).

If we seem to lose the main issue, by talking **about the difference between the weak, the sick**, and those who have fallen asleep; because of what the apostle said in his epistle to the Corinthians; which we attempt to explain; We so did with the intention to give an understanding of the words: *“He healed their sick”*¹.

(The scholar Origen)

❖ Here, Paul does not present an example from Israel of the old as he did before, but from the Corinthians themselves, to make the lesson deeper and more effective in them. Everyone was waiting for an explanation of the early deaths among them, And here, Paul gives it to them².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged” (31)

Here Paul presents an advice and a warning: If we wish to escape judgment in this world and the world to come, to be justified before God, we are committed to judge ourselves.

Examining ourselves seriously, and accusing ourselves before God, will make us avoid judgment on the great day of the Lord, as well as the chastisement through sickness or through church chastisements.

❖ He does not say: ‘If we punish or avenge ourselves’, but says: ‘If we intend to acknowledge our disobedience, and judge ourselves in truth, on the the trespasses we

¹ *Commentary on Matthew, 10: 24.*

² *In 1 Cor., Hom. 28: 2.*

commi, we would spare ourselves the punishment in this world and the world to come. For he who judges himself will win God on two aspects: The first by acknowledging his sins, and the second by becoming careful and cautious in the future¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ I shall judge myself, so that I would not be judged by Him, who will later judge the living and the dead (2 Maccabees 7: 18-19)².

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Instead of slothfully disregarding what we may consider as little sins, let us judge ourselves and take account of our words, and our looks, , to avoid being judged later on; Hence Paul says: “If we judge ourselves on our daily sins here, we would certainly be spared the harsh judgment there.
- ❖ In case we are slothful here, we shall be judged and punished by the Lord. Therefore let us judge ourselves by good will, before the unseen tribunal of the conscience. Let us set for ourselves a befitting law, and examine our thoughts, that through fear of the expected punishment, we can control our mind, and keep our eyes wide open, against the continuous evil provocations of the devil³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Suppose that after a long journey in intensely hot weather, an exhausted and thirsty traveler, asked a brother to help him with a cup of water, to be told: As it is time for prayer, I shall go to pray, and when I come back I shall help you. While he was praying and before coming back, the poor traveler died of exhaustion and thirst. How would you judge that man? Was it the right choice to go to pray, Or should he help his brother first⁴?

(Father Aphrahat)

“But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world” (32)

In case we are judged through weakness, sickness, or even going to sleep, or through the church chastisements, because of our persistence, stubbornness and slothfulness in examining ourselves; We would be chastened here, that we may not be condemned on the day of the Lord, together with the world.

I wish we would benefit by the warnings of the Lord, who allows for us to go through some afflictions. I wish we reconsider our situation, And, by the Spirit of God, we search our

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 28: 2.

² Ep. 209: 10.

³ Genesis, Hom. 60: 16.

⁴ Demonstration 4: 15.

depths, that we may not be condemned with the evil world. I wish we accept whatever temporary chastisement God puts upon us, to be spared the eternal punishment.

- ❖ He did not say ‘we are punished’, or ‘**avenged**’, but he said “*chastened*” (32); As what would happen is a kind of reproach, and not a condemnation, to heal, and not to take revenge against us; to correct our path, and not to destroy us¹.
- ❖ Paul calls it ‘chastisement’, for it is a warning rather than a condemnation; a healing rather than revenge; a correction rather than a punishment.
- ❖ He makes the present look more bearable, if compared to the great evils which we are spared; namely the world judgment².

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ God’s chastisement is for the sake of edifying us, so that we would not be condemned with the world; according to the words of the prophet: “*The Lord has chastened me severely, but He has not given me over to death*” (Psalm 118: 18)³.

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

- ❖ Many sins seem to pass by without punishment, and as though forgotten,. Yet they are stored for the future; for it is not in vain that the day on which the Judge of the living and the dead will come, is called the ultimate day of judgment. On another aspect, some sins are punished here, to be forgiven, and not to bring any harm in the future.

(St. Augustine)

(33) *“Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another”*

After presenting an advice to examine oneself elaborately, and to accept the divine and church chastisements, the apostle asks us to wait for one another; namely, to care for others rather than for oneself in everything; and that the rich would not have priority over the poor.

“But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come” (34)

The table of the Lord is not offered for bodily satisfaction; He who intends to fill his stomach, let him stay at home rather than be judged through his erroneous and selfish behavior.

Finally, after dealing with certain essential issues that caused some confusion in the church worship in Corinth, he told them that the rest he will set in order when he comes.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 28: 2.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 28: 2.

³ Stromata 1: 27: 171-172.

❖ Here we understand that it could not be practical to deal with all issues that should be followed by the catholic church in his epistle; And that once he comes to them, he will set an unchangeable system in person¹.

(St. Augustine)

¹ Ep. 54: 8.

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 11

DO NOT SEPARATE ME FROM YOURSELF FOR YOU ARE MY HEAD

- ❖ You presented to me Yourself as my Head.
To keep You, and live forever.
Who will deny me this grace?
Who will take away my life, O Head of every man?
- ❖ You granted man to be the head of woman.
To be like You, O Head of the church – Your bride.
Seeking no authority for himself, and not behaving with haughtiness.
But as a head, he would bow and give his life for the sake of his household.
He would stretch his hands together with You, as though on the cross.
To embrace his household by practical love.
And You granted the woman to be a body like the church.
To receive the love, given with submission, as a sign of strength.
Not the submission of humiliation and ignorance, but a sign of mutual love.
To set out of her home a joyful heaven.
- ❖ Lead your church by Your fiery Holy Spirit.
The spirit of the practical love.
By letting the rich open the storehouses of his heart to his poor brother.
And together with his material gift, to offer true cheerfulness.
Grant everyone the spirit of unity and love.
To turn Your church into an aghaby banquet,
That angels covet to share.
Let the heavenlies find gladness in Your people.
When they recognize Your icon clear and obvious in them.
- ❖ You made Your body and blood a banquet of love.
Grant me Your righteousness' attire to attend Your banquet.
To hide in You, and to be qualified to unite with You.
To enjoy communion in the sacraments of Your love.
At which angels covet to look.
Yes, lest Your banquet be a judgment against me!

THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS

(Chapters 12 to 14)

The following three chapters deal with the issue of the great spiritual gifts that members of the church in Corinth have enjoyed, albeit many of them have abused.

In these chapters the apostle confirmed that:

(1) **All the spiritual gifts are offered by the Holy Spirit** for the sake of the one church. They have to be diversified, so that the members would be consummated together; None of them should boast over his brother what is freely given to him by God for the edification of his brethren (Chapter 12).

(2) **Love is better than all the gifts;** being the mutual element between all the members; and without which all the gifts, even faith and hope, would be of no benefit (Chapter 13).

(3) **As some members have misunderstood the significance of speaking** in tongues in particular, the apostle dealt with this gift under the light that love surpasses all gifts; and that prophesying and teaching for the sake of edifying the church is more important than speaking in tongues (Chapter 14).

CHAPTER 12

THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS

This chapter deals with the issue of the spiritual gifts, to confirm the following facts:

- (1) They are rich, many, and diversified.
- (2) The source of them all is God.
- (3) They all have the same goal, namely, the edification of the church; to realize the glory of God through the salvation of many, and their spiritual growth.
- (4) The church is the one body of Christ; none of its members do not enjoy a spiritual gift.
- (5) Being one body, all its members of the church work together, and each member has his own befitting gift.
- (6) The spiritual gifts are not a goal in themselves, they should be properly used, lest they should be the cause of divisions and contentions.

In his talk about the spiritual gifts in relation to the church ministry, the apostle presents a list of nine gifts of the spirit (8-10), all work for the edification of the church. He used the term 'body' 18 times (12 -31) as a symbol of the church, being 'the believers', the body of Christ.

As the Holy Spirit is the Giver of the gifts, no one can understand the Holy Book, or can offer a praise acceptable to the Lord, except by the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, many were preoccupied with the gift of speaking in tongues, of which they had no prior knowledge, as a kind of showing off. God did not grant the gift to have people gather around the person concerned, but to let them enjoy His divine salvation work that would not be realized without love.

1-The Grantor of the spiritual gifts	1 - 3
2- Diversity and unity of the spiritual gifts	4 - 11
3-The spiritual gifts are like members of one body	12 - 26
4- The church as the body of Christ enjoying the spiritual gifts	27 - 30
5- An exhortation to get the benefits of the spiritual gifts	31

1- THE GRANTOR OF THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS:

“Now, concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant” (1)

Some discern between the divine grace (charis) and the spiritual gift (charismata). Although both are free gifts from God, yet grace is a gift which the believer, as an individual,

enjoys for the sake of his own salvation and his spiritual edification; Whereas the spiritual gift is one which he enjoys for the sake of the edification of the church as a whole, and the salvation of others. It is still not possible to separate them completely, as the salvation of the believer is connected to that of his brethren.

The church in Corinth was rich in spiritual gifts; but unfortunately, many abused them because of pride, and the preoccupation with the gift itself rather than with the realization of its goal.

The apostle does not want his listeners to be ignorant of the spiritual gifts; their source; the role of every member of the church through the gift given to him by God; their rules, and the feelings of those who enjoy them. He does not want them to be abused, to turn into a cause of division and dissention, instead of being a cause of edification,

No issue is more important than the spiritual gifts in the life of the church; by which the Holy Spirit leads the believers along the royal path; responding of the salvation work of the Lord Christ; and caring for the salvation of every human soul. Through all the spiritual gifts, nothing would preoccupy the believer's heart except to realize the will of God, that all would be saved, and " ().

❖ Those who received the divine preaching in the early days of the church, and got baptized for the sake of their salvation, used to gain apparent signs of having the grace of the Holy Spirit. Some spoke in tongues of which they had no prior knowledge, while others practiced miracles, or prophesied. Although the Corinthians experienced all that, yet they did not use those gifts for the edification of the church, but only cared for showing them off¹.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

❖ Paul called those gifts "spiritual", being the work of the Holy Spirit alone, and nothing in them refer to any human factor².

(St. John Chrysostom)

"You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led" (2)

Guiding them to recognize the spiritual gifts, he reminds them of how they were before faith; having been Gentiles led by carnal covetousness and temporal lusts; not led by reason or truth, but were as though carried away by gusts of wind. How they were before, worshipping the dumb and senseless idols, but now they are led by the Holy Spirit of God, the Grantor of life. He reminds them of their past spiritual misery before receiving faith, of their past foolishness and ignorance of the true God; having been deceived by the pagan

¹ *Comm.. On Cor., 240.*

² *In 1 Cor., Hom. 29: 2.*

priests and their rulers; But now they enjoy the Living God who grants them, by His Holy Spirit, exalted gifts for the sake of edifying their fellow human brethren.

It was befitting of them, instead of boasting those gifts, to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God who led them to the Truth, and who granted them those gifts, it was befitting of them to work with every wisdom and strength; as they have no favor in what they have got.

- ❖ To demonstrate the great difference between the Christian prophecy and the pagan divination, Paul says that the pagans are possessed by evil spirits that utter on their tongue things they do not understand. While the soul of the pagan diviner is full of darkness, and knows nothing of what he utters, that of the Christian prophet is enlightened, and he says what he learned and understand.

(Severian, Bishop of Gebalah)

“Therefore, I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed; and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit” (3)

The Holy Spirit, the Grantor of all the spiritual gifts, leads humanity to believe that Jesus is the Lord. He who confesses the Lordship of Jesus Christ is being led by the Holy Spirit. By that, the apostle Paul intends to direct all the energies of the church, however different the gifts are, to the recognition by all, of the Person of Jesus as the Lord Savior, which would not be realized without the work of the Holy Spirit.

It so seem that some of the Jews who rejected the Christian faith, claimed to be led by the Holy Spirit who worked in the prophets of the old covenant. But here the apostle sets a clearly defined rule, that whoever calls the Lord Jesus Christ accursed, is not led by the Holy Spirit.

The work of the Holy Spirit is to reveal the Person of Jesus, to honor Him, and to exhort us to receive His salvation work, to worship Him, and to get connected to Him by love. That is the task of the church led by the Holy Spirit., and that of every living member in it.

- ❖ Our Lord – the cause of everything – shines in our hearts by the Holy Spirit; As, according to the apostle, it is not possible to truly recognize the Lord Jesus, except by the Holy Spirit¹.
- ❖ He who is born from the Spirit becomes a Spirit, and would testify to Christ; as, according to the apostle: *“No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit” (3)*².

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

¹ *Against Eunomius, 1: 36.*

² *On the Faith.*

- ❖ If “*no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit*”, What can we say about those who have called His name without having the Spirit? Here, it is befitting of us to understand that Paul was not speaking about the Catechumen who were not yet baptized, but about the believers and the nonbelievers¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ There are different kinds of the Spirit; And without the gift of discernment, who can discern what they are²?

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ It is befitting of us to ask: How could we conform between the saying of the Lord: “*Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’, shall enter the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 7: 21); and that of the apostle: “*No none can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit*” (3)? ... We can not say that he who has the Holy Spirit will not enter the kingdom of heaven, unless he endures up to the end. And we cannot, as well, confirm that those who say. “Lord, Lord”, without entering the kingdom of heaven, have the Holy Spirit.

In the saying: “*No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit*”, the apostle means by the word “**say**” its particular meaning; namely, (**having the will and understanding**); While by this same word “**say**”, the Lord Christ, means the general concept. As he who utters without meaning or understanding, may seem as though he “*says*”; while he who, by what he utters, expresses his will and mind, would be truly considered as “*saying*”.

This is like our interpretation of the word “joy” or “*rejoice*”, previously mentioned as one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit; as by it he means its particular sense, and not the general concept mentioned by the same apostle, when he says: “*does not rejoice in iniquity*” (1 Corinthians 13: 6). As though it is possible for man to rejoice in iniquity; when joy is only possessed by the good man. The same way with those who keep saying: “Lord, Lord”, but only with their mouth; Whereas, the apostle says about those who say it, expressing their true will and purpose,: “*No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit*”³.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Praising God is righteousness, and needs an upright heart to be befitting to Him. If “*no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit*”, How could the befitting praise to God be presented, unless the person uttering it has an upright Spirit in his heart⁴?

(St. Basil the Great)

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 29: 3.

² Comm.. On 1 Cor., 4: 47: 2-3.

³ Sermon on the Amount 2: 83.

⁴ Hom. Pn Ps. 32, hom 15: 1.

❖ If we cannot call the Lord Jesus without the Spirit, We certainly cannot proclaim Him without the Spirit¹.

(St. Ambrose)

❖ Any truth uttered by man, is uttered by the Holy Spirit².

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ The ‘legion’ of demons (Mark 5: 9) proclaimed that Jesus is Lord, not out of faith in Him, but of their knowledge of His Lordship and authority on everything.

(Severian, Bishop of Gebalah)

❖ There is no contradiction between the teaching of the only begotten Son and the teaching of the Holy Spirit. In the gospels, the Lord teaches us the greatness of the Holy Spirit; And the Holy Spirit proclaims His Lordship. No one, truly moved by the Spirit can say that Christ is not God³.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

❖ Whoever does not believe in the Spirit, would not believe in the Son; and whoever does not believe in the Son, would not believe in the Father, because “*No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit*”; and: “*No one has seen God, The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him*” (John 1: 18)⁴.

(St. Basil the Great)

2- DIVERSITY AND UNITY OF THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS:

“Now, there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit” (4)

There are many gifts (charismatoon) that lead to amazing results, like prophecy, teaching, divine proclamations, speaking in tongues, and performing wonders, that came in verses 8 to 11. These gifts have one source -- the Holy Spirit, who testifies to the Lord Christ, proclaims His Person and Work, for the realization of a divine goal. Therefore, no one has the right to boast what he has freely got, nor despise him who does not have this same gift.

The Holy Spirit distributes His gifts according to His divine will; by His authority; according to the need of every one; and for the benefit of all.

Some German critics attempted to claim that the word “Spirit” here refers to ‘nature’ (Eichhorn); which would not conform with what came here in this statement, and would even contradict it. It is obvious that the apostle means by the word “Spirit” here, the third Person of the Holy Trinity: the “Holy Spirit”, the Grantor of wisdom, knowledge, faith, and the

¹ *The Holy Spirit 1: 11: 124.*

² *CSEL 81: 132.*

³ *PG 82: 322.*

⁴ *On the Holy Spirit, 11.*

performer of wonders, etc.; as it came in many locations in the New Testament. And this phrase would lose every harmony in it, if the “Spirit” is interpreted otherwise.

- ❖ Even if you are given a lesser gift than that given to someone else; the Grantor is the same; and therefore, you have the same honor as his¹.
- ❖ Although there are differences between the gifts; yet the Grantor is the same; You all draw from the same spring².

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ This does not concern the perfection of the Spirit, nor it is a part thereof; As the human mind cannot visualize the perfection of God; Nor God Himself may divide into portions; but He pours the gift of the Spirit for the worship of God; who is worshipped in truth; as no one worships Him except he who retreats to the truth in His Godhead by a love of piety³.

(St. Ambrose)

“There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord” (5)

There are many ministries (diakonion), like those of the apostles, prophets, teachers; as well as bishops, priests, deacons, etc. who are qualified, not by themselves, but through the call of the Lord Jesus Christ to them. By saying “*There are differences of ministries*”, he confirms the diversity of those working in the vineyard of the Lord; who although different in rank, yet they are equal, as far the source of the call is concerned, as well as the goal of the work; namely ministering to the One God; And that all of them are essential and complementary to one another; Or else, why would the One God call them? Therefore no one should boast on the other, nor anyone should feel despised or left out!

“And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all”

(6)

“And there are diversities of activities” (energeia); namely working energies; like performing miracles, driving out demons, healing the sick, raising the dead; beside works of the heart, the mind, etc., whose source is God the Father, who “*works all in all*”. and whose works appear both in the great things like the creation of the sun, the moon, and the stars; and in the things that may seem very simple, not worthy of much attention, like a little worm. That is why all those working in the church should stand, not to boast of what they have got of gifts, that may be supernatural; but all to partake of presenting a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God, who works and grants the strength.

The apostle thus refers the gifts, to the Holy Spirit (4); the ministries, to the Lord Jesus (5); and the energies, to God the Father (6).

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 29: 4.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 29: 3.

³ The Holy Spirit 11: 71.

There are gifts, ministries, and energies for work, whose source is the Holy Spirit, the incarnate Son, and God the Father; Namely, the source of all these heavenly blessings, is the One Holy Trinity, who presents to every believer according to His divine pleasure.

- ❖ We are all the body of the One Christ, whose Head is God, and whose members are us:
 - Some may be (the eyes) like the prophets.
 - Some may be (the teeth), like the apostles, who pass over the food of the teachings of the gospel to our hearts.
 - Some may be (the hands), seen as carrying good deeds, those who present strength to revive the poor.
 - And some may be (His feet).
 - I wish I am good enough to be counted as (His heels). He would be pouring water on the feet of Christ, he who forgives the sins of the lowly; and he who liberates the regular man by washing the feet of Christ¹.

(St. Ambrose)

- ❖ Someone may be feeling like a failure, when he sees that someone else has got a greater gift than his; Yet it would be different with ministries, where labor and sweat are required. For, why would you complain if someone else is given more labor to make you more comfortable²?!

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ As the human body would be idle without the factors that provoke it to move, it is the same way, as far as the soul is concerned:
 - The eyes do not see except in the presence of light, or during the splendor of the day.
 - The ears do not hear in the absence of an audible sound.
 - The nose do not do their job, if there is nothing to smell.
 - That is not because of a lack of work; but of the absence of the cause for its appearance; Work is rather realized by the cause.
 - The same way with the soul of man; in case it does not comprehend the gift of the Spirit through faith; And even if it does possess the comprehension, yet it lacks the light of knowledge. The gift which is in Christ, is perfectly available for everyone, yet is given as much as we wish to have, and will stay in us, as long as we desire to be qualified for Him. This gift is ours even to the end of time.

¹ Letter to his Sister, 62.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 29: 4.

This is the comfort we expect through the activity of the gifts; the deposit of hope to come. That is the role of the mind, and the exaltation of the soul. It is therefore befitting of us to pray to this Holy Spirit¹.

❖ The words in our hands have four meanings:

The same Spirit is present in the different gifts.

The same God is present in the different ministries.

The same God is present in all these different things.

There is a proclamation of the Spirit in these beneficial given gifts².

(St. Hilary, Bishop of Boitier)

❖ The gifts, ministries, and energies, will all come to the same end; being different forms of the same ministry³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

To tell us about the role of the Holy Trinity in the gifts given to the believers, **the scholar Origen** says that the secret of their strength is in God the Father their Source; In the Son who uses them for ministry; and in the Holy Spirit who grants, and distribute them among the believers.

[These gifts come, and draw their strength from God; Are ministered by Christ; And we are indebted to the Holy Spirit for their true existence in men¹].

❖ Here, in case of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; their power is present in their nature. I say that it confirms that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are in the center of power to perform their will: ... The Holy Spirit gives life to whomever He chooses, and works “all in all” according to His will; ... The Son, by whom all seen and unseen things, in heaven and on earth, are created, does all things according to His pleasure, and gives life to whomever He chooses. And the Father puts times within His authority. Which means that everything happens in its designated time, according to the will of the Father².

❖ This Spirit is no doubt a royal Spirit, a life-giving Spirit; an almighty power; that sanctifies the whole creation; and “*works all in all*”, as He wills³.

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all” (7)

¹ *Trinity 2: 35.*

² *Trinity 8: 29.*

³ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 29: 4.*

¹ *Commentary on John 2: 6.*

² *Against Eunomius, 2: 6.*

³ *Against Eunomius, 2: 2.*

All believers without exception have their role; each has his own gift, ministry, or energy to work, for the manifestation of the Spirit. The word ‘manifestation’ came in Greek as (**phaneroodtis**), to mean the revelation of the real feelings, and the work of the Spirit in the depths of man.

The way the apparent nature reveals the unseen God, So are the life, works, and zeal of man reveal the Spirit working in him.

For the “*profit*”. God does not grant these gifts just for the personal profit of the believer, but for the profit of others, beside his own salvation.

Here, we cannot separate between the profit of the owner of the (talent), or the gift, or the church work, and the profit of others. As the edification of the church is set upon the harmony between the edification of the inner soul, and testifying to the Truth, and winning others to the fellowship in the enjoyment of the divine blessings.

❖ As no one man is able to receive all the spiritual gifts, the grace of the Spirit is given according to the faith of every one. When man lives in a congregation together with others, the grace, given specifically to each one is not his own possession, but would become a general possession of all¹.

(St. Basil the Great)

❖ Whatever is the measure of the Spirit given to you, it is for your own profit; Therefore there is no cause for you to complain that it is a little gift².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit” (8)

(1) **The gift of wisdom:** Demonstrating the diversity of the gifts of the One Spirit to the believers, the apostle designates for one the words of wisdom, and to another the words of knowledge, according to the Spirit’s pleasure, and to what is convenient for the individual, and to what profits the church as a whole. He starts by the word of wisdom, then follows it by that of knowledge; not that wisdom has the priority over knowledge.

The first appears as a wise and prudent guide, capable of revealing the wisdom of God in the ordinance of the salvation of mankind, and of presenting Christ as the “Wisdom of God” (Ephesians 3: 10; 1 Corinthians 1: 24) to those around him, to acquire Him, “*in whom are hidden all the measures of wisdom and knowledge*” (Colossians 2: 3). The preaching apostles were called “*wise men*” (sophoi) (Matthew 23: 34); called to teach by the gospel, “*according to the wisdom given to them*” (2 Peter 3: 15).

¹ *The Long Rules 7, PG 82: 323.*

² *In 1 Cor., Hom. 29: 5.*

(2) **The gift of knowledge:** By which, having by the Holy Spirit, got enlightenment, the believer presents the knowledge of the secrets of the Old Testament, and reveals the prophecies and the symbols in the law and the prophets. This knowledge could not be separated from the wisdom.

❖ In other words, he is given knowledge, not through learning from a book, but through the enlightenment by the Holy Spirit¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ Wisdom refers to the knowledge of divine issues; while knowledge refers to human issues¹.

(St. Augustine)

“To another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit” (9)

(3) **The gift of faith:** Granting the simple persons the trust in God, the Spirit surely realizes His divine promises; as by their prayers, the simple would realize much; and would have their role beside the wise and those of knowledge. Being characterized by the Spirit of prayer and piety; many would resort to them to support them with their prayers; While the wise and those of knowledge will take over the role of preaching and teaching.

Faith is one of the most precious of the spiritual gifts; given to all. But, being a rare gift, it is despised by some, in haughtiness and pride in human achievement, and not in God’s work.

Here, the apostle talks about faith that moves heaven and earth, and by which mountains could be moved (1 Corinthians 13: 2). While some believe that faith here means the role of the miraculous work in drawing the hearts to receive the salvation work of Christ.

❖ Faith given by the Spirit as a gift, is not that faith concerning the bare teachings, but the faith bearing power and activity that surpass human nature; the kind of faith that moves mountains ... Like the mustard seed, although tiny, yet it contains an explosive energy; when planted to produce great branches that turn into a refuge for birds; In the same way, faith produces in the soul great things. By it man puts God’s mind ahead of his own; and by the enlightenment of faith, he can behold God; His mind can also wander through the world from end to end; and can foresee the end of time yet to come, with the judgment day already set, and the promised rewards already given².

❖ Without the Spirit of faith, no one can truly believe. And without the Spirit of prayer, no one can raise a useful prayer. That does not mean that there are many Spirits; but in

¹ CSEL 81: 134.

¹ Trinity 14.

² Catech. Lect. On Faith 5: 11.

everything, the One and same Spirit, works, and gives each one specifically according to His will¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ *“To another faith”*; Here he does not mean dogmatic faith, but faith that performs miracles, about which the Lord Christ says: *“If you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘move from here to there’, and it will move”* (Matthew 17: 20)¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Faith, mentioned here, is not the faith given to every believer, but it is a kind of faith, capable of moving mountains².

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

(4) **The gift of healing:** After talking about the gift of faith, the apostle moved to that of healing the sick, given by the Spirit, yet within limits. The apostle Paul was granted this gift, that rags taken from his body could heal the sick; while, at the same time, he could not relieve himself of the thorn in his own flesh (2 Corinthians 12: 7); and could not heal some of his close disciples, like ‘Epaphroditus’ (Philippians 2: 26), ‘Trophimus’ (2 Timothy 4: 20), and ‘Timothy’ (1 Timothy 5: 23).

“To another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues” (10)

(5) **The gift of working miracles** (energeemata dunameoon). This is different from the last one, which concerns healing the sick; It concerns doing supernatural works, as mentioned by the Lord Christ in Mark 16: 18; when he gave His disciples the authority to trample upon serpents, and in case they drink a deadly poison, it would not harm them. He probably also mean raising the dead, and driving out unclean spirits. This gift most probably covers the *“diverse activities”* mentioned in (6); as the Greek word came the same in both phrases.

(6) **The gift of prophecy:** Meaning the teaching by the interpretation of the word of God concerning the life to come; It means as well revealing future events in the present world, as did ‘Agabus’ about binding Paul and delivering him into the hands of the Romans (Acts 11: 28); And when Paul did about the ship wreck on Malta (Acts 27).

- ❖ According to Paul, the prophecy is realized, not only by the father and the Son, but also by the Holy spirit; Hence it is one work and one grace¹.

(St. Ambrose)

¹ Letter to Sixtus, 191.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 30: 1.

² PG 82: 323.

¹ The Holy Spirit 2: 13: 143.

(7) **The gift of discerning the spirits:** By which one can discern between the true divine miracles and the false ones; and between the true and false teachers (1 John 4: 1). To him who gets this gift, God reveals the intentions of man, and what is in his heart, to expose the deception, and protect many from running after it. By such a gift, Peter knew what is in the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira who lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5: 1-10); and also in the case of Elymus the sorcerer (Acts 13: 9-11).

❖ In the distribution of the spiritual gifts, is added that of discerning the spirits about which the apostle John says: “*Test the spirits, whether they are of God*” (1 John 4: 1) ¹.

(The scholar Origen)

(8) **The gift of different kinds of tongues** (genee gloosoon): Uttering diverse tongues of which they have no prior knowledge; given by God for the sake of teaching and preaching.

(9) **The gift of interpretation of tongues:** As some speak in tongues of which they have no prior knowledge, Those who know these tongues among those present would help to interpret them for the benefit of all.

❖ As the Corinthians used to boast of having got this particular gift, Paul put it at the end of the list².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“But one and the same Spirit works all these things distributing to each one individually as He wills” (11)

These exalted gifts are not acquired through experience and normal human abilities, but are given by the Holy Spirit, distributed according to His divine will; according to what He sees as convenient to the person concerned, and for the benefit of the congregation as a whole.

Some believe that the word “*as He wills*”, does not only imply His mere pleasure, but means (according to His wisdom); He does not distribute them haphazardly, but according to the good and the true profit of all. Beside having the authority to distribute as He wills, Being, at the same time, the divine Spirit of wisdom, He will never err in distributing these gifts.

Therefore, it is befitting of the believer not to boast of his given gift, as though he has got it on his own, or for the sake of his worthiness and righteousness; nor to envy his brother for having some gift he, himself, would like to have; But to work under the leadership of the Holy Spirit of God, to flare up the gift he has got, as well as to encourage the others to do the same.

¹ Hom. 3 on Exodus.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 29: 5.

The task of the church is to create the spirit of living and working leadership; yet, together with the spirit of humility, and not of pride; and the spirit of strength and not of feeling failure.

- ❖ The universal gift which is the source of comfort, originating from the same source, the same treasure, and the same spring, is got equally got by all¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ The Spirit has spoken as well in the father Patriarchs, and the prophets; then finally in the apostles; to make them more perfect by receiving the Holy Spirit. There is therefore, no separation between the divine power and the grace; As, although the gifts are diverse, yet it is one and the same Spirit².

(St. Ambrose)

- ❖ Here, the apostle Paul gives comfort to those with little gifts, confirming to them that it is given as well by the Holy Spirit.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

- ❖ Let us then proclaim the Holy Spirit, only as it is written, and not to preoccupy ourselves with what is not written. Having inspired the Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit dealt with everything He intended, or everything we could understand. So, let us limit ourselves to what He says, and not do otherwise³.

(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

- ❖ It refers to God's justice in distribution, according to His will, or to His intention to grant each one what He knows will benefit him¹.

(St. Ambrose)

- ❖ Notice how Paul did not say: 'according to the will and wish of everyone', but "*according to the will of the Holy Spirit*"².

(St. Jerome)

- ❖ I wish those who intend to take away from the Holy Spirit His befitting power, listen to what the Lord says: "*The wind (the Spirit) blows where it wishes*" (John 3: 8); and to what the apostle Paul says: "***But one and the same Spirit works all these things distributing to each one individually as He wills***" (11). For fear that someone may assume that the Father and the Son do not do these things, he clearly referred to the gifts

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 29: 5.

² The Holy Spirit 2: 12: 138.

³ Catechesis 16: 2.

¹ Letter 20 to Bishops.

² Against the Pelagians 16.

of “healing the sick” and the “working miracles”, which no doubt includes driving out the demons. As when he says: “*distributing to each one individually as He wills*”, Does it not show clearly the power of the Holy Spirit, yet without any separation from the Father and the Son¹?

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Here, the apostle Paul refers to the Holy Spirit, what he previously referred to the Holy Trinity, being of one nature and having one power; The three of them do what one does. **There is only one God, whose grace is distributed among individuals according to His will, and not according to the worthiness of a specific person;** but for the sake of the edification of His church; All those things which the world need to acquire, and yet cannot, on account of being carnal; They are all seen in the church, the house of God, being granted as gifts of the Holy Spirit and His teaching².

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ The same rain that come down on the whole world, conforms itself according to its recipient; and turns into a diversity of colors and fragrances in different kinds of flowers, and trees, as is convenient to every plant; So is the Holy Spirit, despite being of one indivisible nature, grants everyone His grace according to His will.

Like when the dry tree blossoms when watered; So is the soul, while in sin, would, by repentance, be qualified for the grace of the Holy Spirit, and would blossom with righteousness. Through the one Spirit in nature, by the will of God, and in the name of the Son, will produce a diversity of good fruits: will provide the tongue of someone with wisdom, enlighten the soul of another with prophecy; another with the power of driving out demons; and another with the gift of interpretation of the Holy Scripture. He supports one with the gift of self-control; teaches another the gift of giving, another that of fasting and humility; another that of disregarding the things of the flesh; and prepares another for martyrdom. Although being one and the same Spirit, yet He works differently in different individuals¹.

(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

- ❖ No one can have all these gifts, but one will have this, and the other will have that; Yet all of them are provided by the same Spirit who gives according to what is convenient for every one².

(St. Augustine)

¹ *Sermons on New Testament Lessons, 21: 26.*

² *CSEL 81: 135.*

¹ *Catechesis 14: 12.*

² *Trinity, 15.*

❖ The Lord says: “They counted My bones” and not one was broken.

But talking about the resurrection of the true and perfect body of Christ, He says that He will bring forth together the members of Christ, that are dry bones, one bone to another, a nerve to another; And once they reach the perfect man, to the full measure of the body of Christ, the many members will become one body.

Only God can discern between the foot, the hand, the eye, the hearing, and the smelling. Meaning that God will strengthen the body as a whole, giving the weak members more honor; There would be no kind of division, but all members will enjoy a good situation, will share the goodness of each; And in case one members is glorified, all the other members will rejoice together with it¹.

(The scholar Origen)

❖ Every work worthy of mention, is not that of the Father alone, nor of the Son in particular, nor of the Holy Spirit separately.

While saying: the same Spirit distributes His good gifts to everyone in a diversity of ways, the movement of the goodness produced by the Spirit is not without beginning. We find behind it the power of the only begotten Son, the Creator of everything; without whom nothing existing would ever has its beginning. The same source of goodness is provided by the will of the Father¹.

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

3- THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE LIKE MEMBERS OF ONE BODY:

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ” (12)

Here the apostle Paul presents an amazing example to clarify how the gifts react together; namely, how the diverse members in one body work together in an amazing harmony. This example conforms to the concept of the church, being the body of Christ (27). All members of the body of Christ work together through the leadership of the Head.

Having his specific spiritual gift, the believer is committed to contribute to the edification of the church of God on earth. Yet as not all believers have the same gift, the diversity of gifts will make them all work together with the spirit of unity and mutual respect; as every member feels his need for the gift of the other; that unity would be set on the foundation of love.

The scholar Origen and many of the church fathers believe that, although we should love and appreciate all, being our members in the same body, Yet this love has a system to which we are committed. According to **St. Augustine**, the believer loves God with no limit,

¹ *Commentary on John, 10: 20.*

¹ *On "Not Three Gods".*

but his love for his neighbor is within the limit of his love for himself; as he is asked to love his neighbor like himself, but not at the expense of his own salvation. On another aspect, love for the spouse differs from that for one's children or parents; And love for the neighbor differs from that for the opponent or the persecutor of the church, We are committed to love all, yet with the spirit of discernment and wisdom.

- ❖ If, according to the apostle, we are members of one another, we should bear toward our neighbors a kind of feeling that makes us love them, not as foreign bodies, but as our own members. Being members of one another commits us to have a kind of love which is like and equal for all. Yet, with respect to the fact that certain members in the body have more honor, strength and beauty than others; there should be a kind of balance for love according to the worthiness and honor of the different members. He who walk with reason in everything, and controls himself in his behavior and emotions, according to the word of God, should acknowledge the proper system of love, and give it accordingly¹.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ As the body and the head are one person, So is the church and Christ, are One².
- ❖ Talking about the church, Paul talks about Christ; by which he raises the level of his talk, and gives a more sense of awe to his listeners³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Paul refers to the fact that, as the body has many members, some of which are more important than others, So it is in the church; yet every member is necessary and important⁴.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

- ❖ When we think of His body, **we see Him in us; how we are Him.**

For if we are not Him, how could the saying: "*In as much as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me*" (Matthew 25: 40) be true? ... Or how could the saying: "*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?*" (acts 9: 4) be true?

We, therefore are Him; The fullness of Christ is both the Head and the body (See Ephesians 1: 22-23)⁵.

(St. Augustine)

"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into of Spirit" (13)

¹ *The Song of Songs. Comm., Book 3: 7. (ACW).*

² *In 1 Cor., Hom. 29: 5.*

³ *In 1 Cor., Hom 30: 1.*

⁴ *PG 82: 326.*

⁵ *Sermons on New Testament Lessons, 83: 8.*

By the work of the Holy Spirit, we, in baptism, gained the unity together in the Head – Jesus Christ; and, although we practice different works, yet they consummate one another. Here the apostle concentrates on the commitment of all to work together. No true believer is without a role, being a living member in the body. All work together, although different in their talents, in citizenship, whether Jews or Gentiles, slaves or free; There is no discrimination, as all came to be on the same level, members in the body of Christ. By saying “*have all been made to drink of one Spirit*”, he probably means the cup of the Eucharist, from which we enjoy the same precious blood of Jesus Christ, that flows in our veins, for all to become as though one family of one blood.

- ❖ We were baptized, not to become many diverse bodies, but for all of us to keep the perfect nature of one body, into which we were baptized. He who conforms us (Christ) is One; And what He conforms is one.... The apostle says it well: “***We were all***”, adding himself to us; as though saying: ‘Even I, an apostle, have nothing more than you in this concern’¹.
- ❖ Look how he comforts them again, by saying that being many and diversified make them one body; Namely, if they are one and without diversity, they will not be one body².
- ❖ Now, do not ask for a better reason for this; more than to see that the Creator Himself (God) is pleased by it; to be convinced that so He likes it to be³.
- ❖ He means to say that, without having so much difference between you, you would not be one body. It follows again, that if you are equal in honor, you are not a body; And not being a body, you would not be one; And not being one, How could you be equal in honor⁴?
- ❖ Although there is nothing in the body less important than hair; yet, if you pull it off from the eye brows or eyelashes, you would be taking something from the grace of beauty of the eyes ... The same may be said if you cut off a finger from the hand, you would be reducing the efficiency of the other fingers ... Thus, he who fights his brother is as though fighting himself, as the harm would not only come over the later, but that which comes on the former is not less intense¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ *In 1 Cor., Hom 30: 3.*

² *In 1 Cor., Hom 30: 3.*

³ *In 1 Cor., Hom 30: 4.*

⁴ *In 1 Cor., Hom 30: 5.*

¹ *In 1 Cor., Hom 30: 6.*

❖ You are all one in Jesus Christ; although some of you are more enlightened, and others are less perfect in spiritual things. If we forsake all carnal covetousness, we shall be all equal and spiritual before the Lord¹.

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

❖ There is only one work, as there is only one sacrament; There is only one baptism, as there is only one death to the world; And there is a unity in the look which is indivisible².

(St. Ambrose)

❖ Paul teaches us, that it is not befitting of us to treat one another with despite; nor to think of anyone as perfect³.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ He who conformed the body is One; And the body conformed is one⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“For in fact the body is not one member but many” (14)

❖ Those of experience say that virtues could not be separated from one another; And that we cannot acquire one of them as is befitting, without having the other virtues; As wherever is one virtue, all other virtues, by necessity, will follow it⁵.

(Severian, Bishop of Gebalah)

❖ In this fact, the unity of the church is realized: Its many members are to fulfill the need of the other members¹.

❖ So says the apostle, that we should not despise the humble members of the church; for, although one may be less by nature, yet, he still belongs to the body of the church.

“If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body’, is it therefore not of the body?” (15)

“And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body’, is it therefore not of the body?” (16)

❖ Paul says that a weak person, or of a little less honor, should not think that he is not of the body or not important for it².

(Ambrosiaster)

¹ *Paedagogus 1: 5: 31.*

² *The Holy Spirit 1: 3: 54.*

³ *CSEL 81: 135.*

⁴ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 30: 2.*

⁵ *On Virginitiy 15.*

¹ *CSEL 81: 136.*

² *CSEL 81: 136.*

- ❖ Notice how Paul combine the two feet with the two hands; on account that we lean to envy those who are a little higher than we are¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?” (17)

- ❖ If the body is only formed of the more important member, it would be useless without the other members².

(Theodoret, Bishop of Curus)

“But now, God has set the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He pleased” (18)

- ❖ We have no right to ask why God did things this or that way; For we shall never find a more perfect answer, that it is His pleasure to do things the way He likes³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“And if they all are one member, where would the body be?” (19)

“And now indeed there are many members, yet one body” (20)

- ❖ If all members in the church are equal, there would be no body; as the body is controlled by the diversity of its members¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ Unless there is great diversity among you, you would not be a body. And if you are not a body, you would never unite, nor become equal in honor. Having not got the same gifts, you are therefore a body².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’; nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you’” (21)

- ❖ Even if the eye is sound and sees perfectly; What pleasure would it have if it loses the other members? How could it look perfect without the hands or feet, and the rest of the body members³?

(The scholar Origen)

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 30: 3.

² PG 82: 327.

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 30:4.

¹ CSEL 81: 138.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 30: 5.

³ In Leviticus. Hom. 7.

❖ He who is of a greater rank or honor, would not be able to work without those who are less than him; as there are things done better by those of less honor. The way iron can do what gold can not; the feet can realize things that would honor the head¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ In case the lesser members of the body are inflicted by harm, the whole body would not be able to work as is befitting. What is lower than the feet? And what is more honorable and more important than the head? Yet the head alone cannot do things on its own, without the service of the feet².

❖ A certain gift may seem of less importance than others, yet necessary; and if absent, several other gifts would get confused. Likewise in the church, Without a certain gift, its perfection would be distorted³.

❖ Nothing in us is without honor; being all done by God. The sexual organs may seem to be the least in honor; Yet even the poor, if they leave the rest of their bodies naked, they would never bear to leave their sexual organs naked! That is beside their great and crucial importance for keeping our race¹!

❖ We are commanded by God not to dishonor those who are seemingly less, not just for fear of being torn apart from each other, but for the sake of having more love and harmony. If the being of man is set upon the peace of his neighbor, the least you can do is to love him. As long as the body is alive and well, the diversity between its members is clear; which would not be the case otherwise. Its destruction would be certain in case its lesser members do not work as they should².

(St. John Chrysostom)

The eyes of the church are those who have the gift of interpreting the secrets of God in the Holy Scripture. Its feet and hands are those who, although they lack such a gift, yet, by their inexhaustible labor and continuous movements, they are indispensable. Therefore, the eye should not despise neither the hands nor the feet³.

(St. Jerome)

“No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary” (22)

¹ CSEL 81: 138.

² In 1 Cor., Hom 31: 1.

³ In 1 Cor., Hom 31: 2.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 312.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 31: 4.

³ On Matthew, Hom. 85.

- ❖ The great emperor is in need of an army¹.
- ❖ Because our feet are low and in need of honor, we adorn them with shoes; So are the private parts that seem without beauty, we cover them to spare them being dishonored or despised.
- ❖ Some poor brethren, with their unbecoming attire, may seem as nobody in the eyes of those richly clothed. Yet, being members of our body, they are not without grace, being the members of our body; and should rather be honored, for they probably have a more pure life. What men see as despised, God may see beautiful²!

(Ambrosiaster)

And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor. and our less respectable parts are treated with greater respect” (23); whereas our more respectable parts do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior members” (24), that within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another” (25)

- ❖ There is no bond of peace in the absence of harmony or the lack of compassion; but there is controversy, contention, and acute competition; and they would not dare to call themselves members of Christ, or claim to be walking under His leadership. It would be more honest to say that they are under the authority of, and are reigned by carnal wisdom¹.

(St. Basil)

“And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it” (26)

- ❖ Here, three things are sought:
 - All to unite in perfection with no dissension.
 - All to care for one another as is befitting.
 - All to cooperate with one another².
- ❖ When a thorn pierces the heel of someone; his whole body will feel it and care for it: he will bow his back and his head; concentrate his eyes; and stretch his hands to pull it out from his heel. Therefore, although his feet are the lowest parts of his body, yet by bowing the head, equality in honor, and a closer bond between them would then be apparent.

¹CSEL 81: 138.

²CSEL 81: 138-39.

¹ON THE Judgment of God.

²In 1 Cor., Hom. 31: 5.

And when the head is crowned; he whole body will feel honored, that the mouth will boast and laugh, and the eyes will sparkle with joy¹.

- ❖ When a church member proves prominent in his talk, the whole church would be commended².
- ❖ The devil is envious by nature, yet his envy is directed against humans. But man envies his fellow man, even those of his own family; something never done by the devil! What forgiveness do you expect to get; and what excuse would you give, when you envy a fellow man for his success, instead of rejoicing for his sake³?!

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ I suffer and grieve for our fellow believers who they deny faith under the bitterness of persecution; a part of our hearts will be torn off with them, causing us grief not less painful than their wounds⁴.

(St. Cyprian)

- ❖ Sharing everything, good and sad, is the only way to reach the perfection of fellowship⁵.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Far from it to reject listening to what is bitter and sad concerning those we love. For if one member suffers, all members suffer with it⁶.
- ❖ Watching the perpetual comfort you enjoy in Christ, We, as well, although we are going through great labor, and confronting difficulties, find comfort together with you, our beloved.

Being, all of us, one body under One Head, you share with us our labor, and we share with you your comfort; For, *“if one member suffers, all members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all members rejoice with it”* (26)⁷.

(St. Augustine)

St. Augustine believes that the believer, amid his sufferings and labor, does not seek from the others to share his sufferings; But, looking at the peace, comfort, and joy they enjoy, he shares with them this life, and forgets his own sufferings and labor.

- ❖ Through the fellowship in suffering, practiced by other member when one member suffers (26), in a way I can not explain, a certain kind of relief is realized, if not by an actual

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 31: 5.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 31: 6.

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 31: 7.

⁴ Letter 17.

⁵ In 1 Cor., Hom. 31: 5.

⁶ Letter, 99.

⁷ Epistle 48: 1.

practice of suffering, it would be through the power of the comfort of love. Sharing together in enduring it, they all share the same experience, the same hope, the same love, and the same divine Spirit¹.

- ❖ We long to hear that God has granted you some kind of comfort, as much as it is possible in this world; For *“if one member is honored , all members rejoice with it”*. It is our perpetual experience, that, amid our discomfort, when we go with our thoughts to our brethren who live in relative comfort, we feel as though enjoying together with them a greater peace².

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Having this knowledge or rather this faith, which I previously dealt with, namely, that everything that happen is allowed by God, ordained for the good of our spirits; we, not only refrain from despising them (those who deny faith under the bitterness of persecution), but will keep on praying for their sake, and would have compassion on them with all our beings and hearts; For *“If a member suffers, all members suffer with it”* (26). Knowing that, being our members, we cannot be made perfect apart from them, we also read that those who preceded us, could not get their full reward without us; As according to the apostle: *“All these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise; God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us”* (Hebrew 11: 39, 40)³.

(Father Serinus)

3- THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST ENJOYING THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS:

“Now we are the body of Christ, and members individually” (27)

- ❖ If our body should not be divided; It would be more so with the body of Christ; as long as the grace is greater than nature⁴.
- ❖ As the church of Corinth was not the whole body, but a part of the congregation of faith on the level of the whole world; It was befitting of it, if it is truly a member in the body. to be in peace with the church everywhere⁵.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ Epistle 99: 2.

² Epistle 145: 2.

³ Cassian: Conferences 7: 30.

⁴ In 1 Cor., Hom. 32: 1.

⁵ In 1 Cor., Hom. 32: 1.

❖ When Christ resurrected, all His members, by necessity, resurrected together with Him. Crossing over from the depths to the highest, He made us cross over from death to life¹.

(Maximus of Turin)

❖ In the text: “*You are the body of Christ, and members individually*” (27), we see now, how even the befitting harmony between the stones of the temple seem to have been dissolved, and the stones to have been scattered, as it came in the psalm 23 concerning the bones of Christ, as a result of the plots done against Him, and the persecutions and grieves by those who war against the temple. Yet the temple – the body was going to be raised on the third day, following that day of evil².

❖ “*But He was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said*” (John 2: 21-22). This refers to the body of Christ as His temple. Someone may wonder if this should be taken as the obvious meaning, or we attempt to bind it to every phrase concerning the temple, being the body of Christ; whether that He has taken from the Virgin Mary, or the church; according to what the apostle said that all of us are the members of His body. On one aspect, it may be assumed impossible to bind everything said of the temple to the body, whatever this body is. And on another aspect, the talk is taken in the clear and simple meaning, that the body (in both assumptions) is called the temple, and bears the glory of God dwelling in it; Hence, He, who is the image and glory of God, the Firstborn of all the creation, can truly call His body – the church – a temple bearing His image³.

(The scholar Origen)

❖ Being said: “*You are the body of Christ, and members individually*” (27); the body of Christ is not different from the church which is His body, and members individually. God attached those two together, to become, not two, but one body; commanding men not to separate the church from the Lord⁴.

(The scholar Origen)

❖ You heard, being her children (the children of love), that the body of Christ is the church; and if you wish, you could be as well. As according to the apostle in more than one location: “... *for the sake of His body, which is the church*” (Colossians 1: 24); and, “*You are the body of Christ, and members individually*” (27). Therefore, if we are His body,

¹ *Maximus of Turin: Sermons, 54.*

² *Commentary on John, 10: 20.*

³ *Commentary on John, 10: 23.*

⁴ *Commentary on Matthew, 14: 17.,*

What he has endured in His body from the mob, is also being endured now by the church¹.

- ❖ We can truly call all these as Christ, having been anointed with the anointment; as long as the whole body, together with its Head, is One Christ².

(St. Augustine)

“And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues” (28)

- ❖ *“God has appointed ... forms of assistance” (28)*. What is this assistance? Is supporting the weak a gift? Yes it is! It is also a gift from God to hasten to know the need of others, and present the spiritual treatment. Besides, the apostle calls all our good deeds as gifts; not disregarding our heart’s role, but to reveal our need for the divine help in everything; and to prepare them for the life of thanksgiving, by which to bring them forth to progress, and to incite their minds.
- ❖ Having been puffed up because of the gift of speaking in tongues, the apostle kept putting it the last of the list ... He put the “apostles” in the first place, as they possess all the gifts ... Then the “prophets” in the second place; like the daughters of Philip, Agabus, and a few among the Corinthians, about whom he said: *“Let two or three prophets speak”* (1 Corinthians 14: 29) ... Then the “teachers” in the third; because he who prophesies speaks everything by the Spirit; whereas he who teaches, sometimes gives sermons out of his own mind³.

Then he mentioned “the deeds of power”, followed by “the gift of healing”, because the power is greater than healing; as he who has the power can punish **and**⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ “Teaching” which is supposed to be church teaching, having turned sometimes into some kind of flattering, because of greed or for seeking the glory of men, should no longer be counted as teaching⁵.

(The scholar Origen)

“Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?” (29)

“Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?” (30)

¹ *Sermons on New Testament Lessons, 12: 5.*

² *City of God, 17: 5.*

³ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 32: 2.*

⁴ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 32: 3.*

⁵ *Commentary on Matthew, 11: 15.*

- ❖ As the great gifts are not given to everyone; but to some one is given, and to some another; So it is with the lesser gifts. He does this to reach a certain kind of harmony and love; when everyone feels his need for the other, he would stick to him.

(St. John Chrysostom)

4- AN EXHORTATION TO GET THE BENEFITS OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS:

“But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way” (31)

- ❖ The gifts of God to certain persons are not given for the sake of their worthiness, as much as they are to glorify God¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ Looking at the exaltation of happiness of someone, would flare the instinct of competition in us, not through envy, but according to the counsel of the apostle: *“Earnestly desire the best gift”* (31)².

(Father Valerian)

- ❖ The saintly apostle exhorts us in one of his epistles to be zealous in desiring the best gifts; not for the sake of acquiring the desire for what is good (as tendency toward what is good is one of the features inherited in the human nature); But it is befitting of us not to fail to recognize what is truly good; as, in our life, we often fail to discern between what is good, and what we may wrongly count as good³.

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

- ❖ The work of the devil causes confusion, folly, and great darkness; Whereas the work of God enlightens ... That is what distinguishes between a diviner and a prophet⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ CSEL 81: 143.

² *Homilies (Frs. Of the Church)*. 13.

³ *The Beatitude, sermon 5, (ACW)*.

⁴ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 29: 3.*

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 12

REVEAL TO ME MY GIFTS TO MAKE ME WORK WITH YOUR SPIRIT, THANKING YOUR LOVE

- ❖ You have set me a member in Your holy body.
Not a member without a gift,
Reveal to me what you have given me.
Then guide me by Your Spirit, to ignite my gift through seriousness and faithfulness.
- ❖ I will not preoccupy myself with the kind of gift I have, nor how the others appreciate it;
Yet I shall cherish it, being Your gift.
I wish I shall be faithful in practicing it.
As You are faithful, You embrace him who is faithful to You.
- ❖ My soul praises You, for my gift differs from that of my brethren.
Diversity gives unity to Your church.
I need the diverse gifts of my brethren.
And they need the gift you have given me.
I should not boast over my neighbor of what you gave me.
- ❖ By Your amazing Spirit, I work with love.
Together with the moans of every member, my own soul moans.
And with the honor any member gets, my depths exult.
Yes, love is the greatest of all gifts.
Without it, I would lose my life.

CHAPTER 13

A PRAISE OF LOVE¹

This chapter is considered as the most amazing of what was written about “**love**”; as the Spirit reveals its concept, exaltation, and practical practice. This magnificent praise came in between the talk about the “*spiritual gifts*” and that of speaking in tongues. If the previous chapter revealed the enjoyment by every member of the church of one or more gifts; yet, it is not befitting of man to boast of what he has got, nor belittle those of the others. It revealed as well that we should not misuse these gifts, by showing them off, nor boasting of them, but should use them for the edification of the church and the salvation of men; in harmony with the gifts of others.

In the present chapter the Spirit reveals the commitment of the believer to love, in order to get the benefit of his gifts; as without love, the gifts would not only be destroyed, but the believer may even lose his life, and will not benefit from faith or hope.

This chapter therefore, prepares us for his talk about the gift of speaking in tongues, which the Corinthians have misused.

Love is opening the heart wide to bear inside it God, the Love (1 John 4: 8); And through it, man loves all mankind beyond the limits of emotions, human instincts, and all the natural energies; as man bows before everyone, to offer everything for his brother’s sake.

Love is not to admire another, nor to get along well with him, or to get attached to him; but surpasses all that. It is giving with all possibilities for the sake of everyone, without expecting any material, carnal, or mental benefit, but to love for the sake of God, who, Himself is Love.

As long as God is Love; and the Father and Christ are One (John 10: 30); we can put the word “Christ” here, instead of the word “love”. As love is the work of Christ in us, and our fellowship with Him in His features. The positive work of Christ in us, conforms us to be like Him, to follow Him, and to share His life with Him. ... Positively, love produces “longsuffering” and “kindness” (4), “rejoicing in the truth”, “bearing all things”, “believing all things”, “hoping all things”, “enduring all things” (7), and “continuation without failing” (8). While negatively, In love there is a rejection of practicing the covetousness of envy and pride (4); of selfishness, of rudeness, of thinking evil (5); and of rejoicing in iniquity (6).

❖ (in his talk to the catechumen) he says:

Love alone is the sign that distinguishes the children of God from those of the devil.

¹ للإفاضة في مفهوم الحب وأقوال الآباء فيه راجع كتابنا: الحب الأخوي.

Let us seal ourselves with the sign of the cross of Jesus Christ ... And let us all be baptized.

Let us come to the church to build its walls; As nothing distinguishes the children of God from those of the devil but love.

(St. Augustine)

❖ The (true man) is he who, by the truth and wisdom, portrays in himself the ordinance of the love of God, and the truth of Jesus our Lord, holds fast to Him, attaches to Him, and becomes one Spirit with Him. This is the new man who bared himself of the old man, and clothed himself with the portrait of Christ (the Love).

(St. John El-Tabaisy)

❖ He who loves, consummates the law; and he who consummates the law will be honored, and will receive a spiritual gift.

(Severian, Bishop of Gebalah)

❖ Those who joyfully minister to God, are those who love Him above anyone else, and who show a brotherly love toward one another. What a servitude by full liberty is this! What a ministry that exalts above all forms of authority¹!

(Cassidorus)

1- Love controls all the spiritual gifts **1 - 8**

2- How exalted is love! **9 - 12**

1- LOVE CONTROLS ALL SPIRITUAL GIFTS:

Here, the apostle presents to us different angles of the signs of true love for neighbors:

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, but have not love, I have become a sounding brass or clanging cymbal” (1)

❖ The apostle does not only prefer love to fear and hope, but even above all those gifts that are counted as great and amazing... After demonstrating the gifts and virtues of the Spirit, he, intending to describe its elements, says: *“And yet I show you more excellent way. **Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, but have not love, I have become a sounding brass or clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, its profits me***

¹ Cassidorus: *Explanation of Psalms*, 2.

nothing” (1 Corinthians 12: 31; 13: 1-3). Do you notice how nothing is more valuable, perfect, or honorable than love¹!?

(Father Sherimon)

- ❖ Here he talks about **the tongues of angels**; not that angels have bodies that can speak; but what he means here is: If I speak the way angels relate to each other, yet without love, I am not only nothing, but would be a burden and a cause of boredom. .. Here he does not mean with the tongue as a body tool, but intends to refer to the communication with one another, according to our knowledge, the way it happens between us humans².
- ❖ For his saying to be acceptable, and for the portrait to be complete, he does not stop at speaking in tongues, but his talk extends to belittle the value of the rest of gifts as well. And to make his argument stronger, **he started with the less valuable**, then ascended to what is greater. When he referred to the order of gifts according to their value and importance, he put speaking with tongues at the end of the list; but here he puts it first, ascending to what is greater³.
- ❖ No wonder that he says that all gifts are of no great profit without love, taking into consideration their secondary **importance regarding our way of life**⁴.
- ❖ In other words Paul says that if I have no love, I shall not only profit nothing, but I shall even cause disturbance⁵.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ The tongues of angels are those that are comprehended by the mind and not by the ear⁶.
(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)
- ❖ Love is the head of religion itself; He who has no head is dead⁷.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ As the apostle presents before me such a wonderful collection of amazing things, I say to him: ‘Reveal to me, if there is among them the wedding gown’. He goes on enumerate one gift after another: “**Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels ...**” What a wonderful collection of gowns! But where is the wedding garment (see Mathew 22: 12)?! ... Why do you leave us, O apostle, so anxious? ... “**If I have not love, I profit nothing**”.
Watch for the wedding garment! Put it on, O guests, to sit secure¹!

¹ Cassian: *Conferences* 11: 12.

² *In 1 Cor., Hom. 32: 6.*

³ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 32: 7.*

⁴ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 32: 8.*

⁵ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 32: 6.*

⁶ *Comm.. On 1 Cor., 251.*

⁷ *CSEL 81: 147.*

(St. Augustine)

“And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing” (2)

St. John Chrysostom believes that referring to prophecy and faith (2), the apostle means to gather all the gifts including the making of miracles².

❖ Balaam prophesied, although he was no prophet (Numbers 22: 38; 24: 25); So did Caiaphas (John 11: 49-51); And so did king Saul, while, in his disobedience, was filled with an evil spirit (1 Samuel 16: 14-23; 9: 19).

Judas has been in the company of the other disciples, understood all the mysteries, and got all the knowledge they have got; Yet, as an enemy of love, he betrayed the Savior (Matthew 26: 47-50; Psalm 14: 43-46; Luke 22: 47-48; John 18: 2-5).

Both Tertullian and Novatian were of high knowledge; Yet because of their pride, they lost the fellowship of love, and fell into the dissension of heresies for their destruction.

(Ambrosiaster)

“And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing”(3)

St. John Chrysostom believes that, talking about giving, the apostle does not say “though I bestow half, or three quarters of my goods, but says “*all my goods*”. And he does not say “present”, but says “*I bestow*”, showing that he gives with care and good intention³.

❖ Mentioning the worst and most terrifying kind of death, namely burning, he still says that it, without love, would profit him nothing⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ He who dishonors love, whatever great gifts he may get, would become as good as nothing! ... He who has all these things (1 Corinthians 13: 1-3), will not have a goal of benefit, if he does not have the one tool by which he can use them well⁵.

❖ Giving his body to be burned is not a permit to commit suicide, but the commandment is not to resist suffering, if the other alternative is a commitment to practice what is wrong⁶.

(St. Augustine)

¹ *Sermons on New Testament Lessons, 45: 7.*

² *Cf in 1 Cor., Hom. 32: 7.*

³ *Cf in 1 Cor., Hom. 32: 8.*

⁴ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 32: 8.*

⁵ *Sermons on New Testament Lessons, 38: 21.*

⁶ *Letter 173 to Donatus.*

“Love suffers long and is kind” (4)

He who suffers long with others, will learn how to love God and men practically. For the sake of loving God he does not care for the insults or bad behavior of others against him. By that he walks along the path of perfection, that of the holy love.

- ❖ **“Love suffers long and is kind” (4).** Notice by what point the apostle starts; and what he says as the first reason of the greatness of love; namely, the **“longsuffering”**; the origin of all self-denial. As according to a wise man: [He who longsuffers is great in his understanding; Whereas the reckless is great in his foolishness¹].
- ❖ Longsuffering is a stronger hold than a fortress, that will easily stand against all attacks.... Like a sparkle that falls into a closed pit would be quickly quenched, so will be anything that fall on a longsuffering soul, it will soon vanish and disappear. Leaving the soul utterly undisturbed.... **Nothing is stronger than longsuffering!**
- ❖ You may talk about armies, riches, horses, strongholds, weapons, etc.; But he who is preoccupied with such issues, is often overcome by anger, and would become as helpless, confused, and agitated as a little child, A longsuffering man, on the other hand, like a ship in a harbor, is filled with calm and reason; If surrounded by loss, he would be as steady as a rock; If reviled, he would be like an unshakable castle; and if struck with a cane, he will not be wounded, for he is harder than diamond.

Yet, Paul did not stop at that, but added another feature of love, saying: **“Love is kind” (4)**. As there are some who practice longsuffering, yet not for the sake of self-denial, but to provoke those against them to anger. That is why he added: **“It is kind”**; dismissing the idea that longsuffering could be meant to ignite the fire of anger in the opponent, but it is rather for quenching it altogether. We will heal the pain and cure the wounds of anger by enduring others with kindness and compassion².

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ How could he get the perfection of the purity of heart, he who does not keep the commandments revealed by the apostle: **“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ”** (Galatians 6: 2).; and he who does not have the virtue of love, which **“does not envy, ... does not behave rudely, ... thinks no evil, ... and bears all things”** (4-7); For **“A righteous man regards the life of his animal; but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel”** (Proverbs 12: 10)³.

(Father Sherimon)

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 32: 8.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 33: 1.

³ Cassian: Conferences 11: 10.

❖ As the true love is to love everyone, In case someone knows that he hates even a single man, he would be committed to hasten to vomit this bitter lump, to be worthy of tasting the sweetness of true love¹.

(Caesarius, Bishop of Arl)

❖ To a brother who told an elder: 'I wish I could be a martyr for the sake of God'. His response was: 'He who bears with his brother in the time of difficulty, has become inside the furnace of the three young men.

(St. Baladius)

❖ He who endures injustice for the sake of the Lord could be considered like a martyr.

(St. Moses the Black)

❖ Longsuffering is perseverance; ... perseverance is conquest; ... conquest is life; ... life is the kingdom; ... and the kingdom is God. The well is deep, yet its water is good and sweet; ... the door is narrow and difficult, yet it leads into a city full of joy; ... the tower is huge and mighty, yet it includes inside it rich treasure.

(St. Maccar the Great)

❖ If man gets angry, on account of that he is human; he controls his anger, on account of that he is Christian.

(St. Eronimus)

❖ Some brothers came to **St. Anthony** and said to him: Tell us, O father, how can we be saved?

He answered: 'Keep the commandment of the Lord: "*Whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also*". They said: 'We cannot do that'.

He said: 'If you cannot do that, endure the first slap'. They said: 'Nor that, we can endure'.

He said: 'If you cannot, Forgive him who does you injustice'. They said: Even that, we cannot do'.

The saint then called his disciple and said to him: 'Give hospitality to them, then send them away, for they are sick. This they cannot endure; and that they cannot do; and the Lord's commandments they cannot keep. What can I do for them?!'

(St. Balladius)

"... does not envy" (4)

Love is self-denial, namely putting the 'ego' to death, and to replace it by God. Love does not seek what is hers, but what is the others'.

¹ Sermons 23: 4.

Hence he who loves will rejoice and be glad for the growth of others, both spiritually and physically; And wishes that he would forsake all that he gained of earthly and heavenly blessings for the sake of his brethren.

Jonathan, when he loved David (1 Kings 18: 1), wishing to see his father's crown on David's head rather than to see it on his own; said to him:

"You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you" (1 Samuel 23: 17). And a loving mother would consider the success and prosperity of her children, as her own.

Many, and probably all of us, sometimes feel the burden of the thoughts of envy inside us, although we are utterly aware of the evils that the envious would bring upon himself, and of his inability to harm the one he envies. The cause of not being able to get rid of envy is probably an ignorance of how it got into us in the first place. When Satan fell, he felt void filling his heart; and being unable to satisfy it from God, he started to envy those satisfied among humans; So Adam and his seed fell, and their hearts became full of void as well, longing to be satisfied! ... Resorting to Jesus Christ, as the source of satisfaction, the soul would be filled, love all, and wish that she would take the last row of humans in this world, and the world to come. Yet, in this world, she will still find Jesus Christ taking the last row; having no place to rest His head, spat on His face, driven out of the camp, blasphemed, and crucified like the meanest thief! ... And in case the soul, seeking first the salvation of her brethren, intends to keep on retreating backward, she will find Moses there, and will hear him say to God: *"Now, if You will only forgive their sin – but if not, blot me out of the book that you have written"* (Exodus 32: 32). ... And it will find Paul, and hear him say: *"I could wish that I myself be accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people"* (Romans 9: 3).

But in case the thirsty soul would, in the hope she would get satisfied, intends to find for herself another one of the fountains of this world, her thirst would increase. If she seeks the glories and possessions of this world, she would still envy those who possess more; and would even envy those who are less; for

Envy makes man take an adversary position against God Himself; and it would be impossible for peace to be established in such a heart; or in such a congregation.

❖ Love does not envy, for it does not puff up; as pride is usually followed by envy; for pride is the mother of envy¹.

(St. Augustine)

❖ Man could be longsuffering, and yet envious at the same time, corrupting his exalt gift of longsuffering; ... Yet love would not allow this to happen².

¹ Letter to Honoratus, 22.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 33: 1.

- ❖ Those people would never enjoy food or drink; would always moan, sigh, and be sad. Their hearts would be torn apart, day and night, with envy.

All evils have limits, and every transgression may end by committing a crime: whether it is sexual immorality, robbery, deception, or murder; But envy has no such limitation, it is an evil that perpetually works, and a sin without end.

(Cyprian, the martyr)

- ❖ No sin can separate man from God and men like envy. It is meaner than the love of silver; as the lover of silver would rejoice when he wins something; whereas the envious rejoices when someone else loses something, or when his labor ends in nothing; he considers his loss as a profit that surpasses any other. What evil could be greater?!

The adulterer falls into adultery for the sake of a temporary pleasure; and the robber may have poverty as a motive; But what would be your excuse, O envious one?! ... The adulterer after committing his sin, may reject it, repent, and be saved. Whereas, the sin of envy is the worst and the most horrible of all sins; for the envious cannot forsake his sin, but becomes like a swine that; and would liken the devil.

That is why I say to you: Even if you perform miracles, if you keep your virginity, if you keep on fasting or stretching your hands in giving, if you sleep on the bare floor; reaching by all those means up to the virtue of angels, yet you are suffering from the pains of envy, you will certainly be worst than all sinners.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“... is not boastful or arrogant” (4)

He, in whom the love of God flows by the Holy Spirit, realizing the truth of his membership and that of his brethren in the body of Christ, he would never despise anyone, would count all as honored for God’s sake; and would have the same feelings of the apostle who says: *“Those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our less respectable parts are treated with more respect. Whereas our more respectable parts do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior parts; that there should be no dissension within the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another”* (1 Corinthians 12: 23-25). The poor who counts himself as though without honor, has his own role in the church that could be greater than that of the rich. And in the church the Bishop, the Priest, the monk, or the Laic, do not despise one another, but each gives honor to the other.

- ❖ Love knows no arrogance; hence the wise say: *“Do not be ashamed to (greet) a friend”* (Sirach 22: 25).

- ❖ **“Love is not boastful”**, meaning (does not). He who loves is reasonable, serious, and steady. Where there is no anger within, all and rude despite would flee away. Love

would be like a farmer who sets his chair inside the soul, and would never allow any such thorns and thistles to grow in it.

Love purifies everything to perfection.

He who is longsuffering is not always kind; and in this case, longsuffering would not be a virtue, and man would be prone to falling into craftiness. Hence love provides kindness as a remedy, to keep this virtue pure.

In case a kind man sometimes exaggerates his desire to please others; this as well is corrected by love. ... Longsuffering and kindness may sometimes take the form of pretending; which is also corrected by love. ... Notice how the apostle adorn love, not only by the things it has, but by the things it lacks as well; saying that, as it brings forth virtue, it destroys iniquity, and will even not allow it to start in the first place¹.

❖ Notice that the apostle does not only say: “*Honor one another*”, but says: “*In honor, give preference to one another*” (Romans 12: 10). Namely, Do not wait for him to give you preference in honor, but do your best to initiate it by giving preference to him.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ Having known that with love, the Lord has “*laid down His life for us, we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*” (1 John 3: 16). If our love for Christ ought to reach that extent, it would rather reach to many lesser things we experience every day, namely, which are far less costly than delivering ourselves for them. One of these things would be to esteem our neighbor better than ourselves; as on it will depend all the building of love. The more we esteem them, the more we love them. That is why the apostle exhorts the Philippians, saying: “*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself*” (Philippians 2: 3). And he also says to the Romans: “*Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another*” (Romans 12: 10).

(St. Basil the Great)

❖ No military officers whatever his rank is, is self-sufficient; Every one executes the role assigned to him by the higher command; Without the lowest in rank, there would be no higher rank; and vice versa; There is always mutual benefits.

Let us take our body as an example: The head without the legs is nothing; so are the legs without the head. All members, even the smallest and the least respectable, are important and useful to the body; all work together in harmony under one leadership for the sake of the body as a whole.

Let us then keep our bodies safe in Jesus Christ, submitting to one another, each according to the gift he has got from God. Let the strong not despise the weak; and let the

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom., 33: 1.

weak honor the strong. Let the rich satisfy the needs of the poor; and the poor thank God who provided him with someone to satisfy his needs.

(St. Clement the Roman)

“... *does not behave rudely*” (5).

- ❖ He who lives in seclusion cannot recognize his shortcomings; as there would be no one around him to counsel him, or to correct his faults with compassion. A counsel even from an enemy, will actually create in a wise man the desire for reform¹.

(St. Basil the Great)

“... *does not seek its own*” (5).

- ❖ That is why Jesus rejected, and even snubbed Peter for his remark he thought as good (Matthew 16: 23); And He descended from the mountain to those who could not be up there to see His transfiguration. The righteous man with this kind of love that “*does not seek its own*”, though he liberates himself from all, yet, enslaves himself to all, in order to win many².

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ Love, unconditionally “ ... *does not seek its own*”. ... Love let the one beloved become everything for the lover; And the lover counts himself as not doing enough, in case he is not able to liberate his beloved from what is not befitting of him for that is friendship as it ought to be; namely, the lover and the beloved are no longer two separate persons, but in some way, are one; something that could never be achieved without love.

Therefore, do not seek your own, to find yourselves; For he who seeks his own will not find it. According to the apostle Paul: “*Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s well-being*” (1 Corinthians 10: 24)³.

- ❖ Your benefit is set in that of your brother’s, and his in yours; otherwise, even if you both do tens of thousands of good works of love, you would be more cruel than an enemy.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ If you are truly born by Christ; Everyone born by Christ would be your brother. But if you love yourself more than you love your brother, this extra love is not of Christ.

(The spiritual elder)

¹ *The Long Rules*, 7.

² *Commentary on Matthew*, 12: 41.

³ *In 1 Corinth.*, Hom. 33: 3.

- ❖ If you scatter the darkness of the angry whom you encounter by your silence; you will acquire the joy in your heart, and the peace with the brethren who are like you in mind, zeal, and care to keep the churches of God¹.

(St. Basil the Great)

- ❖ He who is prone to anger would be lacking the longsuffering and love; would be easily disturbed by little things, would provoke controversy for any unworthy cause; and would be where he ought not be.... Who could not be sorry for such a man, despised by God and men?!

(Mar Ephram the Syrian)

“... thinks no evil” (5); “does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth” (6)

- ❖ *“does not rejoice in iniquity”*; meaning, has no pleasure in seeing others harmed; *“but rejoices in the truth”*. Love would *“rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep”* (Romans 12: 15) ... Do you see how love can gradually turn him who acquire it into an angel?! For once he gets rid of anger, be purified of envy, be liberated of the evil human nature, he would reach the tranquility of angels².

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Love hates injustice, and rejoices in everything good and honorable³.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

“... bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (7)

- ❖ *“... hopes all things”*. Love does not despise the one beloved, however lowly he is, but keep on correcting, supporting, and caring for him.. *“... believes everything”* with all the energies of her emotion. It does not just give hope, but, even if good things do not go, the way she hoped for, yet she still *“endures everything”*¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ He who loves in a perfect way, would find nothing he cannot endure. If we cannot endure certain things, or certain burdens, it would be because we have not yet acquired that kind of love that endures everything. In our struggle we provoke against the devil, we often fall; for we lack the kind of love that never fails².

(The scholar Origen)

¹ Letter 65 to Atorbius.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 33: 4.

³ Comm. On 1 Cor., 253.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 33: 4.

² The Song of Songs, Comm. Prologus 2. (ACW).

- ❖ The greater love for God, acquired by the saints, the more they endure anything for its sake¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ He who has this kind of love, would fear nothing, for love drives fear away; And when fear is driven away, “*love endures anything*”, and “*bears anything*”. He who, by love, bears anything, would not fear martyrdom².

(St. Ambrose)

- ❖ Love turns violence into calm; and lawlessness into chastity. That goes without question. A man as violent as a vicious beast, would, by love turn into a meek lamb³.

- ❖ As love is the creator of all virtues, let us then sow it particularly in our souls, to provide us with many blessings, to make us have an abundance of fruits, always new, and would never corrupt; By that we all would crop not less than the eternal blessings, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and His mercy⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ He says as well: “*Let us put on the breastplate of faith and love*” (1 Thessalonians 5: 8). Love actually surrounds the vital parts of the chest, to protect them against the wounds of the increasing evil thoughts, keep them safe against blows, and would not allow the arrows of the evil one to enter deep into the inner man; For “*love endures all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and bears all things*” (7)¹.

(Father Serinus)

2- HOW EXALTED IS LOVE!

“Love never fails; But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease’ as for knowledge, it will vanish away” (8)

Love is the most prominent among all the activities connected to virtue and to all the commandments of the law. Once the soul acquires love, **she will need nothing more**, having reached her perfect being. It seems, a some believe, that it is only love that will keep in itself the feature of divine beatitude; while knowledge will become love; for what is known by nature is beautiful².

(St. Macrena)

- ❖ “*Love never fails*” means, it will never fall into sin.

¹ *Patience, 17.*

² *Letters to Priests 49.*

³ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 33: 9.*

⁴ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 33: 9.*

¹ *Cassian: Conferences 7: 5.*

² *On the Soul and the Resurrection.*

(Severian, Bishop of Gebalah)

❖ Concerning our pagan enemies; Are we not allowed to hate them? ...

No! We should not hate them, but hate their teaching; We should not hate the person, but his evil behavior, and his corrupt thought.

Do not marvel to hear that prophecies and tongue will come to an end; And it is obvious that Paul adds knowledge to them as well¹.

❖ “*never fails*” means that it will never be destroyed nor dissolved because of endurance².

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ Use your knowledge as a tool to build the **mighty love that endures forever**; so that after knowledge comes to an end, that knowledge used for the growth of love would still be of benefit; while, in itself, and separated from love, will not only be useless, but may even be harmful³.

(St. Augustine)

❖ (Oil in the lamps of the wise virgins)

I will tell you why by the oil he means love. ... According to the apostle: “*I shall show you a still more excellent way*” (1 Corinthians 12: 31). “*Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, but have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal*” (1). Love is the more excellent way, which, for a good reason is referred to as oil; on account that, whether you pour oil first, then water or any other fluid, or the other way round, oil will keep floating above. ... So it is with love; “*It will never fail*”¹.

(St. Augustine)

❖ **The eternity of love or the purity of heart.**

Why would you marvel to hear the apostle say that all the previously mentioned gifts (even those of the Holy Spirit) shall come to an end? saying: “*As for prophecies, ... for tongues, ... and for knowledge, all will come to an end*” (8). While “*love will never fail*”. The other gifts are given for the sake of a need for them for use for some time; and once this need ceases it will vanish away; But Love never fails, for its benefit will never cease with the end of this life, but will cross over to the life to come. Even when the burdens of the body are no more, love will go forth with greater activity and with more abundant happiness; It will not weaken under a certain influence, but because of its perpetual non-corruption, it will attach more to God².

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 35; 2.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 35; 5.

³ Letter 55.

¹ Sermons on New Testament Lessons, 43: 5.

² Cassian: Conferences 1: 11.

(Father Moses)

“For we know in part, and we prophesy in part” (9)

- ❖ Although our knowledge in this life is in part, but we could depend upon it within limits. Believers trust in the testimony of their senses, which are faithful servants to their reason. They may sometimes be deceived; and yet they are still in a better situation than those who call for not trusting the senses altogether¹.

(St. Augustine)

“But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away” (10)

- ❖ Although everyone of us perpetually seek more knowledge; Yet it remains “*a knowledge in part*” in all issues, compared to “*the perfect knowledge*”; until the time for the perfect to come, and that which is in part will be done away¹.

(St. Basil the Great)

- ❖ What happens is that our knowledge will not completely disappear; but we shall see in its incompleteness that it is utterly limited. Everything, that we now know in part; we shall know more².

As an example, now we know that God is everywhere; but we do not know how! ... We know that He created all creation from nothing; but we have no idea how that was realized! ... We know that Christ was born from a virgin, but we do not how; ... and so on.

- ❖ It is not the knowledge that will pass away, but the situation where knowledge is in part. Later on, we shall not only know much, but what is far greater³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Everything in part will be done away with, by making it complete, and not through being utterly destroyed⁴.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ Now we know, and understand in part; But then we shall comprehend what is complete, when, not the shadow, but the truth of God’s greatness and eternity, will shine and proclaim itself without a veil before our eyes⁵.

(St. Ambrose)

¹ *City of God, 19: 18.*

¹ *Concerbibi Faith.*

² *In 1 Cor., Gom. 36: 2.*

³ *In 1 Cor., Gom. 34: 2.*

⁴ *CSEL 81: 148.*

⁵ *On His Brother Satyrus, 2: 103.*

❖ It is befitting of us to remember the greatness of him who said: **“For we know in part and we prophesy in part; (until) that which is perfect has come”** (10). For even now we could have vision of the saintly angels, known as our angels. Once we were saved from the authority of darkness, and received the zeal of the Spirit, we moved to the kingdom of Christ, and started to belong to the angels, with whom we have the fellowship of enjoying the Holy and joyful city of God¹.

❖ Once this faith working with love starts to pierce the soul, it would tend, through the vital power of goodness, to change in insight; that what is holy and complete in the heart will quote glimpses of that inexpressible beauty, in the completeness of which we find our great happiness.... We start by faith, and consummate by vision².

(St. Augustine)

“When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (11)

❖ This is a kind of symbolic talk by Paul, concerning the way he used to be under the law, when he persecuted the Word; and still he was without sense; ... Like a child he blasphemed God³.

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

❖ When he says that he has put away childish things, he is not referring to growing taller with time, nor to a secret teaching kept only for mature grown-ups;; But he rather intends to say that those who live by the law are like children, namely, like children, they submit to be afraid of ghosts; Whereas those who obey the word, and were completely liberated ; ... he believes, are the mature⁴.

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

❖ In this life we are children, if compared to how we shall be in the life to come; As everything in this present life is incomplete (in part), including knowledge⁵.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ **“When I was a child, I spoke as a child...”** (11).It is not that the soul in a grown-up man differs from that in a child; Or that the childish reasoning fails, and is replaced in us by the manly reasoning; But that the soul that carries out an incomplete role in one, carries out a complete work in the other⁶.

¹ *City of God* 22: 29.

² *Enchiridion*.

³ *Paedagogus* 1: 6: 33.

⁴ *Paedagogus* 1: 6: 33.

⁵ *CSEL* 81: 149.

⁶ *On the Making of Man*, 31.

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

- ❖ Having too much fun makes the soul frail and slothful; stirs it up in an exaggerated way; and, in the majority of cases, it ends up causing violent acts and even fights. To make a long story short, you would not be a real man, unless you forsake those childish things¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known” (12)

Once we all believe the same faith, then, there will be unity; That is what he clearly calls “**a complete man**”. Yet, somewhere else, he calls us “children” (11), even when we are grown-ups. But considers another comparison: Taking into consideration our future knowledge, he call us now “children”; By saying “**we know in part**” (12), he also adds the word: “*dimly*”; While, in his epistle to the Hebrews, concerning the change, he says: “*But solid food belong to those who are of full age*” (Hebrew 5: 14)².

- ❖ This is the meaning of the expression “**Even as I am fully known**” (12); not that we shall know Him as He is; but the way He hastens toward us now, we shall be attached to Him, we shall get to know much of the things that are now secret; and we shall enjoy the a place of more blessing and wisdom³.
- ❖ “**Now I know in part, but then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known**” (12). Do not you see how, in some way, he is taking away their boasting? Beside referring to the fact that their knowledge is in part, it is not even their own. He says: “**For I do not know Him, but He has made Himself known to me**”. Hence, even now, it was He who first revealed Himself; and He is the One who hastens toward me, to make me hasten toward Him, more than I do now⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ In the sound of the turtledove heard in the promised land, it is befitting of us to see Christ personally teaching by Himself; to see Him face to face; and no more seeing Him in a mirror, dimly⁵.
- ❖ If knowledge is to be proclaimed to those who are worthy to receive it in a mirror, which is “dimly” in the time being, but eventually will be completely revealed; It would be foolishness to assume that it will be different for the rest of virtues⁶.

¹ In Ephes., Hom. 17.

² In Ephes., Hom. 11.

³ In 1 cor., Hom. 34: 2.

⁴ In 1 cor., Hom. 34: 2.

⁵ The song of Songs, Comm., Book 4: 14. (ACW).

⁶ On Prayer 11: 2.

- ❖ He encourages and exhorts her (the human soul) not to stay idle, but to come out to Him, and try to see Him face to face, and not through windows, nor “*in a mirror, dimly*”. For now, being unable to see Him, He stands behind her back, behind a wall, and not in front of her¹.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ Humans see Him as much as they put themselves to death for this world; whereas as much as they live for it, they do not see Him. And although this light starts to appear more clearly, not just with a more possibility to see it, but more joyfully; Yet it is still seen as though “in a mirror, dimly”. We say that we see it, with faith, and not by sight; while wandering in this world as sojourners. In this stage, washing the eyes of his emotions, man discovers that he did not put his neighbor before himself; having still not loved him like himself².

- ❖ Concerning this vision, kept as a reward for our faith, the apostle John says: “*We know that, when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*” (1 John 3: 2). By “*God’s face*” we understand (His revelation), and not as the part of the body, we call it as such³.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ We know ourselves through the reflection, like in a mirror. As much as possible we can look at the cause – the Creator – by the divine element in us⁴.

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

- ❖ God certainly has no face; but Paul uses this portrait to refer to a greater clarity and a deeper understanding.

Sitting in the darkness of the night, man does not follow the light of the sun which he cannot see; But once dawn starts to appear, and the splendor of the sun starts to shine on him, he will follow its light⁵.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ “*face to face*”. That is the way the saintly angels (those called our angels), see God; meaning that, once we get rid of the authority of the darkness, receive the deposit of the Spirit, and turn into a kingdom for Christ, we then start to belong to the angels⁶.

(St. Augustine)

¹ *The song of Songs, Comm., Book 3: 13. (ACW).*

² *On Christian Doctrine 7.*

³ *City of God 22: 29.*

⁴ *Stromata 1: 49.*

⁵ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 34: 2.*

⁶ *City of God 22: 29.*

- ❖ This means that we now believe in the things we hear about, at the responsibility of the Holy Book. But after the resurrection, when the knowledge in-part is no more, we shall see them by our own eyes, and actually recognize them; For knowledge based on hearing is a part of the testimony based on sight and experience¹.

(St. Dedymus the blind)

- ❖ No one has yet discovered, or will discover God in His nature and essence. This will only happen in the future. So, I wish those who have some thoughts about this to search and think about what will happen then.

My mind -- created in the image of God, when this divine thing mixes with its likeness, and the image return to its origin to which it longs -- tells me the meaning of that great phrase, that in the future *“I shall know fully, even as I am fully known”*².

(St. Gregory, the Neanzian)

- ❖ When we have the spiritual body in the resurrection, as we are promised, we shall be able to see Him, either with a mental vision, or a miraculous way; as the spiritual body could not be described.

We shall be able to see Him according to our ability without the limit of space,; as He is not a body, but exists everywhere³.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Concerning the nature of Divinity -- unattainable, yet granted to us as a testimony about the Truth, completely proclaimed to us -- We are told by the teaching, to reverently accept the meaning of those things we utter, that conform to the faith set up by the Lord of the Holy Books⁴.

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

“And now abide faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these is love” (13)

- ❖ Love will always be in the kingdom, eternally dwelling in the unity of the brethren in harmony together; There will be no dissension in the kingdom of heaven; He who unfaithfully challenge the love of Christ would not gain His reward⁵.

(St. Cyprian)

- ❖ Love is the greatest; As, while preaching is by faith; and hope is referred to the life to come, ... Love reigns⁶.

¹ *On The Trinity 103: 2.*

² *Oration 28: 17.*

³ *Letter to Consentius, 120.*

⁴ *Against Eunomius, 2: 1.*

⁵ *Unity of the Church, 14.*

⁶ *CSEL 81: 149.*

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ Love is the bond of brotherhood, the foundation of peace, and the abidance and firmness of unity. Love is greater than both faith and hope; exalts above the good deeds, and the sufferings of faith; as a virtue to dwell in us eternally in the kingdom of heaven¹.

(St. Cyprian the martyr)

- ❖ Paul tells the Corinthians, among whom there were envy and contention; and where the church was in danger of dissension, that love is the greatest of all.

(Theodor, Bishop of El-Messisa)

- ❖ If “*faith is the substance of things hoped for*” (Hebrew 11: 1); as we reach those things, faith will become a secondary matter; and the same for hope. Whereas concerning love, it is greater than all those; For once all labors come to an end, and our bodies are transformed in the resurrection, our minds will abide by love, and we shall seek nothing more².

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

- ❖ It is necessary for you to have love, as well as faith and hope, for then, these gifts, given by God would become sweeter to you. He gives us faith, as it is written: “*God has dealt to each one a measure of faith*” (Romans 12: 3); hope, we receive from God, to whom we say: “*You have caused me to hope*” (Psalm 119: 49); and is love “*The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us*” (Romans 5: 5). Although these three things are alike, yet they are different to a certain extent, they are all gifts from God “*Now abide faith, hope, love, but the greatest of these three is love*” (13)³.

(St. Augustine)

St. Augustine, dealing with the issue of faith, hope, and love, in the life of some relatively perfect men, particularly the monks and the hermits, says that they are as though they need no more reading in the Holy Book, the goal of which they reach by these three gifts. As a clear example of this is St. Mary the Egyptian, who lived in the wilderness without the Holy Book, yet knew much of it without reading it.

- ❖ Those who lean upon faith, hope, and love, and abide in them, would need the Holy Books, only to teach others; Hence many live without keeping a copy of the Holy Scriptures in their seclusion, depending on these three graces.. On another concept, “*Prophecies will fail, tongues will cease, and knowledge will vanish away*” (8); yet, by these tools, (as they could be called), the building of faith and love will be great in them; holding fast, as much as they can, to what is complete, and forsaking what is in part, in

¹ *The Cood of Patience, 15.*

² *Comm.. On 1 Cor., 255-256.*

³ *Sermons on New Testament Lessons, 55: 5.*

this life, compared to the life to come; in this life here, a righteous man or a saint are not complete; Hence, the saying of the apostle: “*Now abide faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these three is love*” (13). But once man reaches the eternal world, only one of these gifts will abide, while the two others will pass away¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ These things will become no more; whereas love will abide, and will even grow more exalted in strength and vitality².
- ❖ If the virtue of love is with such greatness; Is it not well to add: “*Follow love*”? for, actually, if it, in some way flee from us, there is need to follow it, and hold fast to it with flaring zeal³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ *On Christian Doctrine* 39.

² *In 1 Cor., Hom. 34: 5.*

³ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 34: 5.*

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 13

LET ME IMITATE YOU, O WHOLE IN LOVE!

- ❖ By love You begat me as Your son.
To imitate You, O whole in love.
Yet, how can I imitate You, unless I acquire You?
And unless Your Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love works in me?
Lifts me up to Your level, to experience the new life;
whose tongue is love, and whose law is love!
Your Spirit, dwelling in me, grants me the fellowship of the divine nature.
To taste the sweetness of love, and reject anything that is not in harmony with it.
It produces inside me love, joy, and peace.
- ❖ My soul praises You for the sake of the abundance of Your gifts to me and my brethren.
Yet, without love they will profit us nothing.
We shall even be nothing!
What would I gain by talking to everyone in his tongue?
And even to talk to angels in their tongue?
Unless I acquire love inside me?
As without love, my voice turns into an awful sound, that disturbs both heaven and earth.
- ❖ By You, O eternal Love, I do not seek to perform miracles.
But, by faith, I ask You to move the mountains of hatred.
And to cast them away from me.
By love, I faithfully open the storehouses of my heart for all the needy.
And by it I desire exultingly to deliver my life for Your sake.
By love I know how to worship You and how to deal with my brethren.
- ❖ Dwell in me, O Loving One.
To drive away the envy of the devil from my heart.
Desiring the salvation, success, riches, and glory, of everyone.,.
I would rejoice in him when he precedes me to You, and enjoy the blessings.
By You, it is alright for me to take the last row.
To find my pleasure in enjoying Your humility and meekness.
I exultingly partake of Your crucifixion.
And bear every suffering with a wide open heart.
By love I hide in You, and hope for the fellowship of glory together with You.
By love I see eternity not too far from me.
I taste its deposit, and desire its dwelling.

- ❖ Yes, When are You coming, O Love, on the clouds?
To set forth to You, having become an icon of You.
All gifts and knowledge will come to an end.
As I live with the spirit of perfection, and comprehend Your amazing secrets.
- ❖ When I remember my life here, I see myself as a child.
But now by You, I enjoy an exalted maturity.
All what is in part will come to an end, to enjoy maturity and perfection.
Even faith and hope will come to an end.
But love will eternally abide, and will never fail.

CHAPTER 14

SPEAKING WITH TONGUES

After dealing with the “spiritual gifts”, and showing the importance of love in practicing these gifts, the apostle now deals with the position of “speaking with tongues” among the other gifts; He put it at the bottom of the list; and talks about the wrong concepts concerning them, and their abuse.

I have already dealt with this subject in a previously published pamphlet; But I feel the importance of including it here in this chapter.

- 1- Prophecy exalts above the speaking with tongues 1 - 5
- 2- Speaking with gibberish tongues is non-profitable 6 - 14
- 3- Worshipping with the spirit and with understanding 15 - 20
- 4- Speaking with tongues is a sign to unbelievers 21 - 25
- 5- Gifts and confusion 26 - 33
- 6- Keeping the order in the church 34 - 40

1- PROPHECY EXALTS ABOVE THE SPEAKING WITH TONGUES”

The apostle demands from them to diligently put the gifts they enjoyed into use within certain limits; and to be filled with zeal to prophesy, exhort and interpret the Holy Book.

“Pursue love ...” (1)

By this verse, which is a continuation of the last chapter, the apostle exhorts us to pursue love, and to strive with zeal to acquire and to practice it; in order to bear, to believe, to hope, and to live like the angels of God. This commandment may seem difficult to keep, yet it becomes natural and easy for him who delivers his life in the hands of God, and who counts the commandment as a divine promise, he seeks from God to realize in his life. He who practices it in truth, will find in it pleasure, for it brings forth peace to his heart, and a deposit of the blessed heavenly life.

By saying “*Pursue love*” the apostle means to make it our main goal, on account of that, it is greater and more abiding than faith and hope, which we seek by persistent prayer and submission to the will of God (1 Corinthians 12: 11, 31). The apostle considers love as the richest and the greatest of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the believer, that lifts him up to heaven, grants him a taste of the fellowship in the features of the heavenly creatures, and opens before him the door of testimony with love even to the opposing adversaries.

❖ +He did not say: “*Practice love*” but said: “*Pursue love*” (1), as there is need for a strong zeal...

The love of God unifies earth with heaven.
The love of God made man sit upon a royal throne.
The love of God proclaimed God on earth.
The love of God made the Lord a servant.
The love of God let the beloved be delivered into the hands of his enemies; the Son to His haters; the Lord to His servants; God to men; the free to slaves¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“... and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy” (1)

Bearing love, **we seek spiritual gifts**; For without love those gifts become the cause of pride, envy, jealousy, struggles, and dissensions in the church. Enjoying love, and practicing the blessed life, we shall strive to testify to God by the word of preaching and interpreting the word of God; and not to seek speaking with tongues, or to perform miracles. Comparing between speaking with tongues and interpreting the word of God (**prophesying**), the apostle exhorts us to seek the latter, being the greater for the edification of the congregation.

Discerning between **“prophesying”** and **“teaching”**, some believe that “prophesying” implies the flaring of the heart with the Spirit of God to draw every man to the living faith, and to experience of the new life in Jesus Christ. Whereas “teaching” implies revealing the vagueness in some texts of the Holy Book, and clarifying the doctrines of faith for the sake of the edification of the church and of every believer. Prophesying and teaching are among the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and both are indispensable.

❖ According to Paul, **prophesying is the greatest gift after love**; being for the benefit of the church, and by which everyone learns the bases of God’s law².

(Ambrosiaster)

“He who speaks a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however in the spirit he speaks mysteries” (2)

Dr. Lightfoot believes that the (unknown) tongue here is the Hebrew language; as the texts of the Old Testament of the Holy Book were read in Hebrew; including the exalted secrets of God, of prophecies about the Lord Christ, symbols, and shadows; which no one could understand, unless there is someone to translate them to the language understood by the listeners. Thus he who reads from the Old Testament understands and speaks to God, but the listeners understand nothing. The reader needs that the Spirit would grant him the possibility of translation to clarify the hidden secrets of God in the language of his listeners.

¹ In Ephes., Hom. 9.

² CSEL 81: 149.

The apostle does not belittle the importance of speaking with tongues in the presence of foreigners, or when preaching to foreigners (22); but belittles its importance when it is of no benefit, and when all those present speak the same language.

By the ‘**mysteries**’ here he means the exalted evangelic facts, and the plan of God for salvation, exalted above the human mind.

- ❖ The Corinthians assumed that the gift of speaking with a foreign tongue is a great gift; on account of that the disciples received it first; and that it bears an impressive appearance. Yet it was not without a goal that the disciples got this gift first, for it was meant to help them go everywhere to preach the gospel¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort (consolation) to men” (3)

He who has the gift of prophecy or spiritual talk that draws the heart toward the life to come, and to the heavenly thought, is better off than him who has that of speaking with tongues; Yet it is befitting of both to present the same evangelic truth, for they both work for the sake of the edification of the church, namely its enlightenment and enjoyment of the spirit of strength.

“... **and exhortation**”, namely, the actual practice of the life of sound faith, and the sanctified behavior in the Lord.

“... **and comfort (consolation)**”, namely, encouraging the believers by presenting the divine promises, and opening the doors of hope before them, to make them feel comfort amid their sufferings, and the blessed life amid the afflictions and persecutions.

- ❖ A man is edified when he finds the answer to the points under investigation; is encouraged when he could endure; and find comfort when he consistently has hope, even if the others look scornfully at his system. Knowledge of God’s law brings encouragement to his soul to hope for better things².

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ This gift is considered by the apostle, as exalted and worthy of the greatest of honor, on account that it is used for public good, and for the benefit of everyone³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“He who speaks with a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church” (4)

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 35: 1.

² CSEL 81: 150.

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 35: 1.

He who speaks with a tongue, known only to him and not to others, understands the truth, and edifies himself in Christ Jesus, yet he does not benefit the others. He who reads texts of the Old Testament in Hebrew, understands the secrets of God, and comprehends His plan; Whereas he who speaks to the congregation with a language they understand, edifies the church of God.

- ❖ The difference between speaking with tongues and prophesying, is the difference between the individual benefit, and that of the church as a whole¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification” (5)

It is obvious here that he talks about known tongues², and not about unreasonable nonsense. And according to ‘Lightfoot’, when many speak in Hebrew, it would be befitting to have someone who interpret what they say.

- ❖ Concerning this point, the apostle compares between the greater and the lesser gifts (like speaking with tongues); showing that the later are neither completely useless, nor greatly beneficial in themselves. But the Corinthians actually were puffed up because of them, on the assumption that it was a great gift, and because the apostle has got it first, and used it perfectly. Anyway, they had to realize that it does not exalt above the other gifts³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ ***“... but even more ...”*** (5); does not imply that prophecy contradicts the speaking with tongues; but is more exalted than it. It is also obvious that the apostle does not belittle that gift; but leading them to what is better, he shows his interest for their own good with a spirit that bears no envy; not saying, ‘I wish two or three spoke with tongues’, but ***“I wish all spoke with tongues”***; and ***“even more that you prophesied”***, ***“for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues”***. And having proved his point, he cleverly adds: ***“unless indeed he interprets”***, namely unless he is capable of interpreting what he says; for he would then be equal to him who prophesies⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 35: 1.

² JAMIESON, Fauset and Brown Commentary

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 35: 1.

⁴ In 1 Cor., Hom. 35: 2.

- ❖ Paul could not forbid speaking with tongues, for it is a gift of the Holy Spirit; but was keen to underscore that, to be preoccupied with prophecy is more acceptable, for it is of more beneficial¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

2- SPEAKING WITH GIBBERISH TONGUES IS NON-PROFITABLE:

“But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?”

(6)

The apostle Paul has got the gift of speaking with tongues (18); yet he did not use it as a kind of showing off, but to bring the word of the gospel to those in a certain location, who do not understand the original language in which it is written.

Instead of speaking with tongues, the apostle speaks to them by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching.

Revelation: is to reveal hidden, yet exalted divine mysteries.

Knowledge: is to interpret what seems vague, and an enjoyment of knowledge instead of ignorance.

Prophecy: is the spiritual talk to draw the heart to the eternal life.

Teaching: is to present clear Christian principles.

These four expressions bear the meaning of revelation of issues; the frank yet simple talk; the proclamation of the truth to enjoy it, together with the practical evangelic life; and bringing the listeners over into the heavenlies.

- ❖ Paul so says so as to reveal that he cares for the profit of the church, not to belittle those who have the gift of speaking with tongues; which he himself has, albeit using it properly and for the general profit².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Even things without life (musical instruments), whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played?” (7)

The apostle likens those who speak tongues not understood by the listeners, to him who pipes a flute or plays a harp without distinction in the tunes, and with no system, or harmony; Although he produces musical sound, yet awfully disturbing, and would make the listener lose his tranquility and peace; instead of creating an atmosphere of joy or comfort, and inciting the feeling of the listeners toward a clear goal, which the music is supposed to do.

¹ CSEL 81: 151.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 35: 2.

- ❖ If we should seek different levels of distinction, harmony, and befitting use, of the musical instruments without life, how much more would we seek of humans, characterized by life and reason, to give meaning to the issues they talk about in the spiritual gifts¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?” (8)

Trumpets are used in battles; and every tune has its different meaning: whether calling the warriors to gather together, to advance with zeal to battle, to charge against the enemy, to relax for some time for comfort, or to retreat completely. It is as though the trumpet has a language of its own and a distinct purpose in battle. For if the trumpet blows, and the soldiers do not realize that it is a call to get ready for battle, it would lead to their perdition; So would it be with those who speak with a tongue not understood by the listeners.

- ❖ Like a trumpet as a tool for battle, So it is with the soul when it realizes its need to be provided with great virtues to war against the principalities, hosts, and the rulers of this evil world².

(The scholar Origen)

“So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air” (9)

He who speaks with a tongue not understood by the listeners, is like someone speaking into the air; as though there is no one before him to benefit from his talk.

- ❖ If speaking with tongues is without benefit, why were they given? It is given for the benefit of him who has it; and in case it is interpreted, it would be for the benefit of others as well³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance” (10)

With so many kinds of languages in the world, none of them is merely for showing off, but through them there would be relationships between men.

“Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me” (11)

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 35: 3.

² In Numbers, Hom. 27.

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 35: 4.

The power of a language lies in understanding its meaning; If I do not understand what someone is telling me, he would be to me, and I would be to him like foreigners; and it would be impossible for us to work together or to cooperate.

“Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel” (12)

In case you wish to have such a spiritual gift, I ask you to seek to speak in a clear and understandable language, to use it to the account of edifying the church, the most important of the goals of the Spirit. It is well and good for man to wish to enjoy a spiritual gift, but its goal should be the edification of the church. It is more befitting of man, not to wish to have the gift of speaking with tongues, or of performing miracles, but to have the salvation of his soul, and that of his brethren.

❖ The edification of the church for Paul is the main issue in everything he says¹, his goal everywhere, and the law which he puts before his eyes.

He does not say **“to get the gifts”**, but **“to excel”** (12); namely, to get them in abundance. Far from him to wish that they do not get them, but to wish that they excel in them, on condition that you use for the general benefit².

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ The soul would rejoice and become excited when she learns more of the Holy Scriptures; and the more it aims to this goal, the more it distances itself away from iniquities³.

(Ambrosiaster)

“Therefore, let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret” (13)

I wish he who reads the prophecies mentioned in the Old Testament in its original language, would pray to God to let him understand it, and to grant him the grace to interpret it in such a reasonable and accepted way, in order to present them to others in new depths; and to support him in testifying to the Lord Christ.

❖ If the person who speaks with tongues does not have the possibility or the gift to interpret, let him resort to someone who can, to make his own gift of more benefit through him.

In every situation, the apostle refers to the lack of perfection, in an attempt to bind his listeners together⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unproductive” (14)

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 35: 5.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 35: 5.

³ CSEL 81: 152.

⁴ In 1 Cor., Hom. 35: 4.

If my prayers are quoted from prophetic phrases and expressions in the language by which it was written, my spirit prays, my heart is preoccupied, but my mind is unproductive in the life of others, for they do not understand my prayers, and I cannot interpret them for them.

Some scholars believe that the talk here concerns the collective prayers and the church praise done in a language not understood by the congregation; For although the worship bears a spirit with effect on the depths, yet the mind remains idle, for it is unable to follow the meaning.

What does he mean by saying: “*my spirit prays*”? The ‘spirit’ here refers to the inner intent or the heart, as the center of feelings and emotions; whereas the mind refers to the ability to understand, and to the mental capacity.

- ❖ If I present a praise to God, not new, nor revived by the teaching of the spirit and that of the grace of God, your mouth will be presenting the sacrifice of praise, while your mind will be accused of the barrenness of the old body of the past¹.

(The scholar Origen)

3- WORSHIPPING WITH THE SPIRIT AND WITH UNDERSTANDING:

“What is the result then? I will pray with the Spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the Spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding” (15)

I pray with the Spirit, namely, with the heart and with all my senses and feelings, dedicated to the account of God; My mind will also take part. By that my heart will be lifted up to heaven, together with the hearts of my brethren, who understand what I say in my prayers and praise to God.

Here, the apostle clarifies the following:

The church is committed to present praise and thanksgiving to God, together with the prayers and the supplications.

Worship should be practiced with the whole heart, feelings, and senses, to proclaim the inner love toward God.

Worship should be practiced with an understood language, for the sake of the edification of the congregation.

By saying: “***I pray with the Spirit ... I also sing with the spirit***”, he means practicing the worship led by the Holy Spirit, who flares the depths with love.

- ❖ Our minds would not pray, unless the Spirit prays for their sake, and they obey Him. We cannot even praise and sing to the Father in Christ, with befitting voice, music, and

¹ IN Leviticus, Hom. 5.

harmony, unless the praise and singing is initiated by the Spirit who searches even the depths of God, and sings to Him, who knows his depths and capabilities¹.

(The scholar Origen)

❖ It so seems to me that worship and prayers should be done simply by the Spirit².

(St. Gregory the Nezenzian)

❖ The prayers would be well received by God if the heart is pure, and bears the same message revealed by the words of the praise³.

(Cassiodorus)

❖ The Egyptian monks did not care for the number of verses they use in their prayers, as much as they cared for controlling the mind, aiming to realize the saying: *“I pray with the Spirit, and I also sing with the Spirit”*. They considered that praising with ten verses with understanding is better than saying a whole psalm with a confused mind, which sometimes happen when the mind is preoccupied with the number of the psalms remaining to be said, and hastens to bring the service to an end, more than caring for making the meaning of what he says clear⁴.

(St. John Cassian)

“Otherwise if you say a blessing with the Spirit, how can one who finds himself among the uninformed say ‘Amen’ to your thanksgiving. since he does not understand what you say? For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified” (16, 17)

The most exalted form of prayers and praises is when the believer joins the heavenly creatures in blessing the name of the Lord, and the congregation responds by saying ‘Amen’, which was followed by the Jews (Deuteronomy 27: 15-26; Nehemiah 6: 1), and in the early church⁵.

The prayer of the commemoration of the saints was known as ‘*eulogie*’, namely, (blessings); by which the congregation present praises of thanksgiving and blessing to the name of God, for His abundant grace and gifts.

It is befitting of the believer not to be selfish; As while feeling with his whole being that he is indebted to God for his life and salvation, and presenting to Him a sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise; he should not leave his brother not understanding what he utters, and not partaking of his sacrifice. The believer should not, in good conscience, assume that his thanksgiving and praise, raised in a foreign language, is well received by God, when his brother who does not understand what he says, does not partake of it.

¹ *On Prayer*, 4.

² *Oration 31*: 12.

³ *Cassiodorus: Explanation of the Psalms*.

⁴ *Institutes*, 11.

⁵ *St. Justin Martyr: Apology 2*: 97.

- ❖ Look at how the apostle in every occasion, seeks the edification of the church. By ‘the uninformed’ he means the illiterate. He also means that if you give the blessing with a foreign tongue, not understanding, yourself, what you are saying, and, consequently, cannot interpret it, the uninformed listener will not say ‘Amen’. Again he says to him who utters mysteries, or talks to God by the Spirit, that he edifies himself, and gives it comfort: “*You indeed give thanks well*”, Yet the other understands nothing of what you say, and is not edified¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all” (18)

Here it is clear that the apostle does not belittle the gift of speaking with tongues; when he thanks God who granted him that gift more than others, to help him, being the apostle to the Gentiles, to minister in several countries, and talk to many in their own tongues.

- ❖ The gift of speaking with tongues was a novelty; whereas prophecy was old and well known and was given to many. Yet, although the apostle has got the former, he did not care much for it, for he always sought things that are of more benefit; since he was liberated of any vain glory, caring only for one thing, for making his listeners in a better condition²!

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others also,, than ten thousand words in a tongue” (19)

According to ‘Pearce’, it is very important to understand what the apostle mean by the two terms: ‘Spirit’ (pneuma), and ‘mind’ (nous) that came several times in this chapter. It is clear that he means to direct the church to conduct the prayers and praise, not in the Hebrew language, by which the Old Testament was written, particularly when singing the psalms; but to pray and sing in the language of the people, to let the congregation understand the sermon, prayers, thanksgiving, and praise to God.

According to Pearce, the apostle means by praying with the ‘Spirit’, that the speaker or the chanter, and not the congregation around him understands what he says; While by praying with the mind, that the congregation understand as well.

“Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature” (20)

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 35: 6.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 35: 7.

It is befitting of us not to behave like children without commitment, responsibility, or understanding; but to be mature and perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect. Let us be babes, not bearing the spirit of malice, but the simplicity of heart and love.

Here, we have to comprehend the meaning of three Greek words, mentioned in this text:

1- ‘paidia’, meaning (**children**) in the general sense; and in particular those who are old enough to be sent to school and receive the preliminary teaching.

2- ‘neepias’, derived from ‘nee’ meaning, in the early stage of infancy, who still cannot talk, much less than to have malice.

3- ‘teleioi’, derived from ‘teleoo’, meaning he who reached the stage of complete maturity and understanding, both physically and mentally.

That is how the apostle Paul see those who are puffed up on account of that they have got the gift of speaking with tongues; he see them practice a childish and immature behavior, and need to enter the school of ministry to be trained on the practical love and the serious search for the salvation of their brethren with understanding and reason, and not with childish nervous reactions; ... For faith is not for childish play, but is a mature reasonable work. ... In infancy, the apostle respects simplicity and lack of malice; as, according to the Lord Christ: “we are committed to become babes to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18: 3); Yet the apostle demands from us not to be babes in not understanding, comprehension, and non-commitment to responsibility.

❖ To those who have got the gift of speaking with tongues, the least of the gifts, who assumed that they have got everything; he says: “***do not be children***”, namely, do not be without understanding; You have become like simple children, as far as vain glory and pride are concerned. For he who is a babe in malice, has to be wise as well. And as wisdom together with malice is not wisdom, so is simplicity together with foolishness is not simplicity. Together with simplicity, **we should avoid foolishness**; and together with wisdom we should avoid malice¹.

❖ To be a babe in malice, is not to know what malice is².

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ The apostle Paul wants them to be mentally mature in order to be able to pluck what is necessary for the edification of the church. By such a way, they would leave behind malice and faults, and strive instead for the sake of things that lead to the good of the brethren³.

(Ambrosiaster)

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 36: 1.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 36: 1.

³ CSEL 81: 155.

- ❖ “Do not be children in understanding, however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature” ... Which could be expressed as: “Do not be children; however, be children¹”!
- ❖ The divine Wisdom Himself, having carried our weak nature, came to gather the children of Israel under His wings, like a hen gathering her chicks; not to keep them perpetually as such; but so that when they are babes in malice, they are no longer babes in understanding².

(St. Augustine)

4- SPEAKING WITH TONGUES IS A SIGN TO UNBELIEVERS:

“In the law it is written: ‘With men of other tongues and other lips, I will speak to this people; And yet for all that, they will not hear Me; says the Lord’” (21)

By the ‘law’ here, he means the Old Testament as a whole, Isaiah in () refers to that God teaches His rebellious Jewish people how to submit to Him, by chastening them through captivity amid a foreign people who speak another language, like He did when He delivered them to be humiliated by the Chaldeans (the Assyrians captivity of Israel)), then by the Babylonian captivity of Judah. The apostle did not refer to a specific prophecy concerning the speaking with tongues; but refers to how God used the foreign tongues to chastise the people who reject His voice. He uses the speaking with tongues, as well, as a sign to the unbelievers among the Gentiles. Speaking with tongues is therefore not for the sake of showing off, but to speak to unbelievers in their tongue not known by the speaker; as a free gift given by God. By that, both the Jews and the Gentiles would understand that God is the Savior of all.

“Therefore, tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers, but for those who believe” (22)

As speaking with tongues is a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers, like when God spoke to His old people by the tongue of chastisement through the Babylonians, namely, by a foreign language, to make them stop their disobedience and believe; So it is in the New Covenant, He gives them the gift of speaking with tongues, to be able to speak with the unbelievers of the Jews and the Gentiles with foreign languages (other than the Hebrew), for all to believe. ... It is a divine voice directed to those who reject faith in the gospel, and God’s salvation work for the whole world! ... Once they believe in God and received the gospel, there will be no more need for the Jews to listen to the apostles speaking with the tongues of the Gentiles; and no more need for the Gentiles, in case there is someone who comes to know their tongue (that he did not learn), to preach them with it.

¹ *The Harmony of the Gospels*, 2: 30.

² *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* 1: 18: 36.

Speaking with tongues is not for the Christians who received the evangelic Truth, but for the non-Christians, to let them realize the call of God in their own language, unknown before by the apostles.

Yet the edification of the church needs the calm word of prophecy, in order for the believers to enjoy the sound knowledge, and to draw their hearts to the heavenly life and the world to come.

- ❖ The tongues are a sign for unbelievers, not to teach them; whereas prophecy is for both believers and unbelievers to exhort them¹.
- ❖ The believer needs no sign to see, but seeks teaching and preaching².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Therefore, if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind?” (23)

Here, the apostle reveals how this gift was abused by the Corinthians, who used to gather together in one place and each speaks with a different language, to turn the assembly into a kind of confusion and foolishness. Instead of talking to the people with the language they understand, which the speaker did not know before, they were babbling with foreign languages not understood by the general congregation.

By “**uninformed**” he means those who do not understand the language spoken by the speakers; An indication that the speakers were speaking with foreign languages already existing in the world, and were not just babbling vague nonsense. However, this is still refused by the apostle, for fear that the church worship gathering would turn into a sort of confusion, and would become like those whose tongues God confused, when they intended to build a high tower to oppose God; instead of their enjoyment of the Pentecostal atmosphere, when everyone heard the tongue in which he was born (Acts 2: 8).

“But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is judged by all” (24)

In case an unbeliever comes in the church and finds everyone in his turn speaks about faith with reason, understanding, and comprehension, with a calm and meek spirit; Understanding the word of faith directed to his heart, his conscience will rebuke him, and he will accept faith,

“he is judged by all”; Realizing that his sins became revealed to everyone, having not yet enjoyed forgiveness, nor the righteousness of Christ in him, he will realize his need for the Savior, to enjoy the new life, sanctified in the Lord.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 36: 2.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 36: 2.

“And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you” (25)

There is a great difference between a congregation that utter unknown languages, not understood by the unbeliever who comes in, and a holy congregation who worship and preach the calm and meek Lord. Concerning the later congregation, the apostle says:

(1) It gives the chance to the unbeliever who comes in, to realize calmly the sins that lie in his depths, as though they became revealed and in need of treatment. And as though his heart is split open by the sword of the Spirit (Hebrew 4: 12; James 1: 23); by the word of God uttered by the preacher. Feeling that the word is directed personally to him, to enjoy the salvation work of God, he would say together with the Samaritan woman: “*A man told me all things that I ever did*” (John 4: 29).

(2) His heart will exhort him to submit to God, seeking the enjoyment of salvation; namely, he will receive faith in Christ the Savior, and will prostrate himself before Him.

(3) He will testify before his family, friends, and all those around him, to the work of God in His church, and to its effect on him; proclaiming that “***God is truly among you***” (25).

❖ Once he sees that God is praised, Christ is worshipped, with no confusion, nor secret rites, like what happen among the heathens; he will clearly realize that this is a true religion¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

5- GIFTS AND CONFUSION:

“How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification” (26)

When the church gathers together for worship, the apostle Paul wishes that all partake of praise; and everyone should have his own role according to the gift given to him; yet in order, confirming that “*all things be done for the edification of the church*”.

❖ Here you see the foundation and system of Christianity? As the work of a clever worker is to build, so it is of a Christian -- to edify his neighbor in everything. In zeal, Paul, attempting, not to belittle the gift of speaking with tongues on account of that they were abusing it, but to destroy their pride; lest it may seem as something of no importance, he included it among the rest of the gifts, saying: “***has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue***”

Since the old days they considered reciting psalms, and teaching as gifts; Yet he says: “Let all things be done with one goal, namely, for the sake of the edification of your neighbor”; or else, Why have you come to church?!

¹ CSEL 81: 157.

I do not mean to concentrate on the difference between the gifts, I am only preoccupied with doing all things for edification. For if not, the gift would become for the judgment of its receiver¹.

(St. Jhn Chrysostom)

“If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two, or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret” (27)

In every meeting, only two or at the most three speak, each in turn, in the language not understood by some of the audience, and let one interpret what they say.

- ❖ Paul, although belittling the gift of speaking with tongues, yet he does not forbid it; but insists that it should be done within limits and under control, for the edification of the church as a whole².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church, and let him speak to himself and to God” (28)

In case there is no interpreter, it is not the right of anyone to speak in a language not understood by the congregation. Let him speak to himself, and to God, and not raise his voice

- ❖ You come to the church, not to show off your gift, but to edify the listeners, Therefore, let everything be for this goal³.
- ❖ From the beginning, he discerned between prophecy and divination; and exhorted them to be aware lest a demonic teacher would attempt to crawl into their meeting⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ He who speaks by the Holy Spirit will do that when he chooses and when finds it convenient to do so, then he will keep silent; Whereas those with unclean spirits, on the other hand, speak even against their own will, and utter things they do not understand.

(Severian, Bishop of Hebalah)

“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge” (29)

Caring for the spirituality of the church meetings, whether for worship or for sermons, the apostle demands that no more than two or three would speak in the tongues not understood by all those present, and within the limits already mentioned; So would those who prophesy, so that the spiritual word would have its activity, within the endurance of the listeners. Some believe though, that, of the three prophets who speak in the meeting, one

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 36: 4.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 36: 5.

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 36: 5.

⁴ In 1 Cor., Hom. 36: 6.

would sing the psalm, the second would reveal the divine secrets, and the third would exhort on the practical life of faith. While the (others), having the spirit of discernment, would judge whether those who spoke did work with the Holy Spirit of God, for the edification of the church, and not for showing off their gifts.

“But if a revelation is made to someone else sitting nearby, let the first person be silent” (30)

In case another teacher have a revelation about an important issue, let him speak with the spirit of truth, and the first one keep silent. To have everything in the church run in order, each of them should make his speech short, to give the chance to the other; and the two should not speak at the same time.

- ❖ On account of that, it is no place nor situation where all privileges are to be given to a certain individual; and taking into consideration that everyone has his own grace of God; let him who occupies a higher rank give the chance to the one of lesser rank¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

“For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be encouraged” (31)

- ❖ Paul probably demands from them to follow an old tradition practiced in the Jewish Synagogues, where members used to debate while sitting on chairs, on couches, or on the floor, everyone according to his rank. In case any of those who sit on the floor gets a revelation, they are committed to allow him to speak, and not to despise him because of his lower rank².

(Ambrosiaster)

“And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets” (32)

Because some preachers who claimed that the Holy Spirit has revealed something to them, used to speak without proper order; the apostle confirms here that even the prophets, whether of the Old or the New Covenant, to whom the Holy Spirit truly revealed certain divine secrets, were inspired by the Holy Spirit to chose the right time to speak; and with the spirit of discernment, to know when to talk and when to keep silent.

By saying “*subject to the prophets*”, the apostle revealed the collective nature of the work of prophecy; how each prophet never held fast to his opinion; as though the Spirit of God has led him alone and not the rest of his fellow prophets.

“For God is not God of disorder, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints” (33)

¹ CSEL 81: 159.

² CSEL 81: 159.

Improper behavior by the church leaders does wrong toward God Himself, who is not God of disorder but of peace.

The Greek term translated as “*disorder*” came to mean (commotion) and (lack of tranquility). He is the God of peace, calm and order. So is His heaven which bears the same features; Hence in the churches of the saints, being churches of the King of Peace, and the living icons of heaven, no screams should be heard, and no disorder to be found.

- ❖ The church in the days of Paul were truly like heaven, everything was ordained, and every member was moved by the Holy Spirit. But it so seems that what we have now are only symbols of those gifts. Although we have, as well, two or three who minister, yet they are but a shadow of what used to happen in those days. The church nowadays is like a wealthy woman who passed the days of her prosperity, and is now showing just its outer signs; the boxes and baskets in which she used to put her jewelry are still there, yet empty. This applies, not only to the gifts given by the Holy Spirit, but also to the ways of life and virtue¹.
- ❖ If Paul has forbidden speaking with tongues if there is no one to interpret, It would be only logic to apply the same ban to prophecy, in case they are not according to order; for they would also cause confusion, disturbance, and unreasonable mental provocations².
- ❖ The church having been truly like heaven, the Spirit used to control everything in it, to move everyone of its leaders, and give him an inspiration³.
- ❖ Again he slaps those who chose to behave improperly, to walk disgracefully, and not to keep the honor of their ranks. As nothing edify like good order, peace, and love; all of which the opponents try to take away of the church⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

6- KEEPING THE ORDER IN THE CHURCH:

“Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak, but they are to be submissive, as the law also says” (34)

It so seems that some Corinthian women used to speak with tongues, causing disorder in the churches.

- ❖ Someone may say: If the four daughters of Philip were allowed to prophesy (see), why should not our prophetesses be equally allowed? We can answer this in the following way:

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 36: 7.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 36: 6.

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 36: 7.

⁴ In 1 Cor., Hom. 37: 4.

1- Any woman who claims to be a prophetess has to reveal the signs of prophecy in her.

2- The daughters of Philip who prophesied, did not do that in the churches. Moreover, in the Old Covenant, although Deborah was said to be a prophetess (Judges 4: 4), and so was Huldah (2 Kings 22: 14).there was no reference that they gave a speech to the multitude like Isaiah or Jeremiah¹.

(The scholar Origen)

❖ The serpent was weakened, and its name was a synonym of curse. Whereas Eve, was condemned to silence, which, although something of benefit, yet she could minister, singing as a guitar to praise God².

(Mar Ephram the Syrian)

❖ I wish I can see the zeal in every man, and the piety in every woman; Let all of them put their disobedience on the anvil under the hammer of the law ... for then, the gate of paradise would open before every man and every woman among you³.

(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

“And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church” (35)

❖ The blessed Paul demands from women to have great humility and behavior acceptable by the congregation, not only concerning their attire and appearance, but also in the way they talk⁴.

❖ If we manage to ordain our own homes, we may be qualified to ordain the church; as the home is truly a little church. We could surpass the others, if we are good husbands and wives, the way Abraham, Sarah, and the 318 born in their house (Genesis 14: 14) had their household full of harmony and piety. Just listen to the words of Sarah, saying: *“After I have grown old, and my (Lord) is old ...”* (Genesis 18: 12); ... Watch how her husband also used to love her and to obey her counsel in everything; ... And read how the young men born in their house were so well brought up, that they did not hesitate one moment to put their life in harm’s way, in obedience to their Lord; how they never questioned his decision to go to war against the kings (Genesis 14)⁵.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ COMM. On 1 Cor., 4: 74: 6-16.

² Hymns on Paradise.

³ Catechetical Lectures 15.

⁴ In 1 Tim., Hom. 9.

⁵ In Ephes., Hom. 20.

“Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached?” (36)

The apostle admonishes the leaders of the church in Corinth, wondering if they thought that their church was the mother church in the world, from which preaching set forth; to have its own system and own ways! ... Actually it has become the only church with such confusion and disorder; where some speak with tongues, not for the sake of edification, but for showing off; Others disorderly prophesy; And where some women behave with haughtiness, raise protests and ask questions for no good reason, etc. ... Not being the mother of churches; nor the only one where the apostle preached, it is befitting of it to do better than that, and to be in harmony with the rest of the churches.

“If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord” (37)

If anyone thinks that he is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and that he is capable of teaching according to the counsel of God, and in the proper spiritual way; let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord, which they should keep and obey. ... What he writes are not the product of his eloquence, nor of his own mind.

“But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant” (38)

As I write the commandment of the Lord; he who chooses to disregard my apostolic authority, I leave him to his ignorance, to bear the consequences of his stubbornness and opposition of the truth.

“Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues” (39)

This is the summary of the whole chapter, and the goal of writing it. The apostle asks them to desire earnestly and with zeal, to prophesy; and not to forbid the speaking with tongues, if it is for the edification of the holy congregation.

❖ Notice how until the end, although he discerns between the two of them: prophecy and speaking with tongues, Yet he ends up saying that one is earnestly desired, while the other should not be forbidden¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Let all things be done decently, and in order” (40)

By “*decently*” and “*in order*”, he means that everything should be put in its proper place, without any disregard nor exaggeration;

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 37: 3.

Here, the apostle, as far as order is concerned, quotes the military expressions, where order is not an option; for any looseness or shaking in the military order may lead to the collapse of the army, and the loss of the whole state.... So it is the case in the church.

❖ Nothing edifies like good order, peace, and love; And nothing destroys like the contrary; not only in the spiritual issues, but in everything else¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 37: 4.*

AN ANNEX TO CHATER 14

SPEAKING WITH TONGUES

With the end of the era of the apostles, the gift of speaking with tongues almost disappeared. Yet, with the beginning of the twentieth century, there appeared the 'Pentecostal Movement' to proclaim the necessity of baptism by the Holy Spirit, who should be certainly accompanied by the gift of speaking with tongues "glossolalia".

What does it mean to speak with tongues?

Why did this gift disappear?

And is there a need for it in this present time?

SPEAKING WITH TONGUES AND THE SALVATION:

The Book of Genesis informs us about the beginning of appearance of several languages and tongues; when humans intended to build for themselves a tower with its top in heaven; not that they longed for heaven, but to escape from God, who confused their language, and scattered them all over the earth (Genesis 11: 7); and diverse tongues came to appear, as a sign of the division of mankind and non-unity. ... And when God intended to set out of the Gentiles a holy church, the One Body of Christ, He did not cancel the tongues, but granted His disciples on the day of the Pentecost the gift to speak with the tongues prevailing at that time; so that all would receive the "one faith", and enjoy the new heavenly life, to sing together with the apostle: "*God raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places*" (Ephesians 2: 6).

The gift of speaking with tongues appeared with the birth of the church on the day of the Pentecost (Acts 2: 1-13), when the disciples were given the gift of speaking languages they have not learned before (Acts 2: 4, 6, 8, 11), by which they could relate to their listeners in their own tongues (Acts 37: 2), according to the promise of the Lord Christ Himself (Mark 16: 17). On another aspect, when the apostle peter gave his first speech in his own Galilean tongue, he was understood by all; as though the Holy Spirit has done an instant interpretation into the tongue of everyone present.

The Holy Spirit presented two gifts: The first, according to **St. John Chrysostom**, was that every disciple was given the language of the field where he was appointed to preach¹; And the second, according to **St. Augustine**², was that every disciple was given by the Holy Spirit, on certain times, the possibility to speak in the tongue of the people he happened to encounter, proclaiming that the catholic church embraces all

¹ *In Acts. Hom. 4.*

² *City of God 18: 49.*

THE NEED TO SPEAK WITH TONGUES:

(1) For the apostles, this gift was not for the sake of showing off; as, according to the Holy Scripture, our Christ came “*not to quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets*” (Matthew 12: 19); and He granted His church His fiery Spirit to ignite the hearts with the fire of divine love, by the spirit of meekness and humility, that all work, not in appearances of showing off, nor speak with gibberish strange tongues, but in a tranquil, balanced, and wise way of life.

On the day of the Pentecost, everyone of those present heard his own language in which he was born (Acts 2: 8). Because the Holy Spirit gave the apostles understood human tongues, all glorified God.

(2) Shutting themselves off, concerning faith, the Jews opposed the translation of the Holy Book to the Greek language, the universal language at that time; and demanded from the Proselytes to worship in their language alone; as though heaven, itself, itself speaks it and nothing else. Therefore it was befitting for the Gentiles to hear their languages from those who have not learned it, as a confirmation to them and to the Jews, that the gate was wide open for their salvation; hence the apostle says: “*Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers*” (1 Corinthians 14: 22).

St. Erinaos described the day of the Pentecost in his work ‘Against heresies’, saying: [That Spirit, according to Luke, dwelt, on the day of the Pentecost, upon the disciples after the ascension of the Lord, presenting them with a power to draw all nations to the entrance of life, and to open a new era; by which everyone in diverse tongues, praised God. The Spirit brought forth the distant tribes to unity, and presented the firstfruit of all nations to God the Father].

(2) The Holy Spirit granted the church the language of spiritual love, and the unity of faith, honoring the actually distinct tongues, and the diversity of cultures.

(3) As the New Testament have not been yet collected and written down, the Holy Spirit comforted and edified the church through the gifts of prophecy and tongues, with their interpretation.

WHY DID THE APOSTLE PAUL, AND NO ONE ELSE, CARE FOR THAT PARTICULAR GIFT?

(1) Being the apostle to the Gentiles, and this gift concerns opening of the gate of faith before them, he was committed to deal with it.

(2) As the Corinthians abused this gift, and turned it from a gift to edify the soul into boasting, haughtiness, and confusion, that is why in dealing with it he followed the following system:

a- Talking about the spiritual gifts in general (1 Corinthians 2), he put the gift of speaking with tongues at the bottom of the list (12: 10, 22); confirming the importance of all

those gifts, with no boasting nor haughtiness, saying: “*Seek what is for the edification of the church*”.

b- To destroy their boasting, he ended his previous talk proclaiming the superiority of the edifying love over the other spiritual gifts, by saying: “*But earnestly desire the best gifts, and yet I show you a more excellent way*” (1 Corinthians 12: 31).

c- He started his talk about love by destroying the abuse of the gift of speaking with tongues, saying: “*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal*” (1 Corinthians 13: 1). Notice here that he did not stop at speaking the languages of humans, but said that even if man utters the language of angels, which is not an actual kind language with voice and sound waves, for the angels have no larynx nor vocal cords, but it is the tranquil language of the holy spirits; As though he says: Even if you reach what is heavenly without love – which is impossible, you will still be in the sight of God, just noisy creatures.

d- Lest they may think that he belittles the value of this gift because of feeling inferior, he says: “*I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all*” (1 Corinthians 14: 18).

SPEAKING WITH TONGUES IN CORINTH:

The gift of speaking with tongues has so turned from being a gift for the edification of the church, to a serious problem that threatened the faith of the church, that the apostle Paul was committed to write about it in some detail:

(1) According to **St. John Chrysostom**, There were two categories in Corinth, of those who had this gift: The first category was those who had it as a tool to edify the congregation, and to draw the Gentiles to faith; And the second category was those who practiced it as ademonic work, who used to utter vague gibberish words, and sometimes even words of blasphemy against the Lord Christ – a phenomenon known among the ancient Greeks, as testified by ‘Phogil’ the Roman Poet (70-21 B.C.) in the poem of Eliad¹.

(2) Some scholars believe that the pagans had such hysterical reactions during their worship; and they got to curse their gods to make that spirit forsake them. That is what happened in the church of Corinth, where some blasphemed against the Lord Christ, saying: “*Jesus is accursed*” (1 Corinthians 12: 3).

(3) Because the Corinthians fell into pride, for getting the gift of speaking with tongues, and thought that they have risen to a high spiritual status; the apostle put this gift at the bottom of the list of gifts (1 Corinthians 12: 28); and proclaimed a more excellent way, namely love (1 Corinthians 12: 31; 13: 1).

(4) Amid that deadly competition, the Corinthians created an atmosphere of confusion in the church (1 Corinthians 14: 23); uttering gibberish words, crying out with high

¹ Hoking: *speaking in Tongues*, p. 114.

الفصص زكريا بطرس: التكلم بالسنة، 1984، ص 43.

screams; and looking at those with quiet meek spirit with scorn, considering them, spiritually not good enough to to get such a gift; something that was bad for the mentality of the later.

(5) The appearance of a spirit of envy and jealousy among the worshippers, who sought more of such gifts for the sake of vain glory.

(6) The apostle instigated his people, not to seek more of such gifts from God, but rather to seek greater gifts; namely, faith, hope, and love (1 Corinthians 13: 1, 13).

THE POSITION OF THE APOSTLE PAUL IN THIS CONCERN:

In chapter 14 of his first epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul set certain measures and conditions for this gift, of which are the following¹:

- ❖ “... **that the church may receive edification**” (5); “*Even so, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel*” (12); and, “*Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation; let all be done for edification*” (26).
- ❖ “*Unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance*” (9, 10).
- ❖ “**Tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers**” (22).
- ❖ “**Let all things be done decently and in order**” (40). “*If the whole church come together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind?*” (23). “*If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret*” (27). Which means that in case there are strangers in the meeting, only two or at the most three of those with the gift of speaking tongues, should speak the language understood by the strangers present, and an interpreter will interpret what they say for the benefit of the congregation, and to help them judge with the spirit of discernment.
- ❖ **This gift should be practiced with the spirit of discernment** (1 Corinthians 12: 10), which is not given to all as a sign of being filled or baptized by the Spirit, but for the goal previously mentioned to be realized.

HAS THIS GIFT BEEN SUSTAINED IN THE CHURCH?

From the talk of Tertullian in the second century A.D., it is clear that this gift was not present in his days. Miltiades, as well, writing against the Montanian heresy, exhorted them to stop uttering words that are not understood, when the gift of speaking tongues got mixed

¹ القمص زكريا بطرس: التكلم بالسنة، 1984، ص 31-52.

up with that of prophecy.... Now, why did all testimonies by the fathers come to confirm the disappearance of that gift?

1- The gift has already realized its goal, by receiving the Gentiles into faith.

2- Claiming by some sects of the twentieth century, that speaking with tongues is the only sign of what they call the 'baptism of the spirit', contradicts the apostolic view: [The International Pentecost Convention 5 / 31 / 1912], that puts it at the bottom of the list of spiritual gifts.

3- The use of such hysteric reactions by those contemporary sects, contradicts with the calm and meek Spirit of Christ.

4- The use of vague words that someone or other claim to understand, and pretend to interpret, contradicts what came in 1 Corinthians 12: 10, concerning the presence of the gift of discerning the spirits (1 Corinthians 12: 10) to judge the authenticity of the gift.

5- This specific gift was specifically given by the Spirit for the sake of drawing the Gentiles to faith; While what these sects practice tend to divide and split the church instead of uniting it.

6- Those recent movements that appeared in the beginning of the twentieth century, being connected to the speaking of tongues; as an ecstasy, during which man utters vague words and practices serious mental reactions; having mixed that gift as an edifying spiritual work with some reactions practiced by certain non-Christians¹; These extremes have led some scholars to proclaim other contradictory extremes of their own, saying that the gift of speaking with tongues, said to happen on the day of the Pentecost, was no more than a symbolic story, aimed to represent the truth of the work of the Holy Spirit to overcome the deep dissensions between humans, including that in tongues².

¹ Alan Richardson: *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*, SCM 1976, p. 132.

² Alan Richardson: *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*, SCM 1976, p. 255.

AN APOLOGY BY SOME PENTECOSTALS:

The tongues of the angels:

They depend on the words said by the apostle: “*Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels*” (1 Corinthians 13: 1); and, “*For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however in the spirit he speaks mysteries ... He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church*” (1 Corinthians 14: 2, 4).

It is impossible that the apostle meant to say that those with such a gift could utter in the tongues of angels, for the following reasons:

1- Angels have not fallen in the confusion and the diversity of tongues, like that mentioned in Genesis 11; and do not represent nations with diverse languages; or else they would need interpreters among themselves; as well as being deprived of the spirit of unity.

2- Whenever angel speak to humans, it is a condescension on their part to utter our human tongues, for us to be able to comprehend the divine message sent through them.

3- The apostle says: “*Tongues will cease*” (1 Corinthians 13: 8). If he included in that the said tongues of the angels and the heavenly creatures, Will the angels cease to communicate among themselves in eternity?

Some were given to pray in a certain language like Farsi or Latin, to confirm to all that God has, not only opened the door to preaching, but also to worshipping, in true existing diverse tongues. There is nothing as one single language for worship, as was assumed by some Jews. On another aspect, the apostle confirms the need of the one who prays to understand what he prays and what he sings; saying: “*For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the result then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding*” (1 Corinthians 14: 14, 15).

THE LANGUAGE AND THE DANCES OF THE SPIRIT:

Some Pentecostals believe that speaking with tongues is an experience of the spirit, like a shining of light that could not be photographed by a camera with a strong flash ... An experience of the spirit, to be practiced, yet could not be described; ... expressed by vague words, dances, and dreams by the subconscious¹. For that, they quote certain historical episodes, like when St. Pachom, the founder of the system of fellowship in monasticism, spoke with languages he did not learn²; And the talks by the fathers, specially the hermits, concerning having a condition of heavenly vision.

¹ D. Christie Murray: *Voices the Gods, Speaking in Tougues*, 1978; *Westminister Dictionary of Chistan Theology*, p. 225-226.

² M. T. Kelsey: *Tongue Speaking*, 1968, p. 38.

This could be rebutted as follows:

1- The ecstasy of the spirit or the so-called dances in the stories of the saints, is an expression of a hidden inner exultation, yet without any hysterical body movements. They are nothing but an opening of the heart on heaven.

2- The high spiritual life of the saintly fathers is a hidden mystery, that was sometimes revealed through their disciples, and is not a kind of showing off among the congregation.

3- What happened with **St. Pachom** was with a divine ordinance and wisdom. As when his monastery started to include monks of diverse nationalities, the Spirit granted him the tongue to talk to a specific party; which was an actual and true existing tongue.

It also came that, when one of the Roman elites came to **St. Maccari** and wished to talk to him secretly, without the presence of an interpreter for the sake of secrecy, the Saint prayed, and God granted him the ability to talk in the tongue of his guest, as though he was born in it.

And a message from the church of Smyrna called '**The martyrdom of polycarp**', mentioned what happened with the elderly Bishop in the year 155 A.D. when the soldiers who came to execute him gave him the permission to pray. Filled with the grace of God, he stood to pray incessantly for two full hours in the tongue of those soldiers who were utterly astonished.

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 14

GRANT ME THE TONGUE OF LOVE TO SING TO YOU BY THE SPIRIT AND BY THE MIND

- ❖ Grant me the tongue of love!
My heart search for my brethren, and for You, O Love!
To follow love, and to strive to ignite Your gifts to me!
Not to think, nor talk, nor work, except by love.

- ❖ You have granted Your early church the gift of speaking with tongues;
To open by Your love, the doors of hope before the Gentiles.
Open my heart, for everyone to find a place in it.
I do not seek a gift for mere showing off.
But I seek love that let me enter into the hearts, even of my adversaries.

- ❖ By love, teach me to pray by the spirit, as well as by the mind.
And to sing to you by the spirit, as well by the mind.
To become in harmony with my brethren in worship.
That we all partake of it with understanding, and spiritual wisdom.
That, in my worship, by love, I can bring forth every man to you.
That I be rejoiced in his salvation, and his glory of having a fellowship with You.

- ❖ Grant us all to worship You together with the spirit.
To worship You with an understood tongue, for our mind to share it with our spirit.
To worship You with the spirit of tranquility and order.
As You never cried out, nor let Your voice be heard in the streets.
Being God of Order and not of confusion.

- ❖ Grant us the church, the icon of heaven.
From which joy would never be taken away
Which perpetually exult and rejoice in the repentance of sinners.
Which perpetually work on the return of every soul to You.
Which prepares every man to bear Your image.
And to get filled with hope for the day of his eternal wedding.

- ❖ Grant me and my brethren the spirit of love and wisdom.

So that our worship would be in harmony with our behavior on the way of Your love.
So as to enjoy the heavenly life.

DIVISION 5

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**ESCHATOLOGICAL ISSUES
(THE RESURRECTION FROM THE
DEAD)**

(CHAPTER 15)

CHAPTER 15

THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD

Some believe that this chapter is the most important part of this epistle; if not of all the writings of the apostle Paul. In it he presented to us an essay in response to the questions of many concerning the main evangelic truth; namely, the enjoyment of the resurrection from the dead through Christ, the Firstborn of those who have fallen asleep. It lifts us up, from looking at ourselves as weak creatures living in this world, where some other creatures may seem mightier and stronger, to see ourselves in Christ, as the most beautiful creatures of God in the whole universe, who challenge death to stay together with Him eternally in His glory.

The sanctification of the church as a whole, and of its members in particular, on all aspects of life, connects with the Eschatological thought, by which we anticipate the resurrection from the dead, and the encounter with our Lord. Hence came the conclusion of the Creed of faith to confirm our sure anticipation of the resurrection from the dead. As the goal of our faith is to be raised and be present eternally with our God. Our belief in the resurrection from the dead challenges, not only the death and the tomb, but even nature itself, to gain what is supernatural.

As some of the Corinthians have denied the resurrection of the body; and questioned the possibility of its realization, the apostle Paul presented to us the resurrection of the Lord Christ as a confirmation and a firstborn of our own resurrection from the dead, the firstfruit of the harvest among the dead; and the fellowship of the body with the soul in the eternal glory. In this chapter, as well, he answered four important questions:

- ❖ **Is there a resurrection from the dead? (verses 1 to 34)**
- ❖ **With what body shall we be raised up? (verses 35 to 51)**
- ❖ **What will be the position of those who will be living when the Lord comes? (verses 51 to 54)**
- ❖ **What is our practical role through our hope in the resurrection? (verses 55 to 58)**

The teaching of the apostle came bearing certain strong positive points, **of which are the following:**

(1) He introduced the teaching with a spirit exulting in Christ, risen from the dead, together with a great joy in the spirit of conquest over the last enemy, namely, death.

(2) He showed that, although the resurrection is something beyond imagination, yet it is a reasonable teaching. Denying it, on the contrary, would not be acceptable by the sound human logic; as it would make man be like a mere beast that lives only for sometime, then eternally comes to an end.

(3)The apostle confirmed that the resurrection is set upon an elaborate divine ordinance and system: Christ is the firstborn of those who fall asleep; to be followed by the righteous believers; The devil with his hosts would be punished eternally, to bring everything to an end. On another aspect, every believer will have his designated glory, according to his response to the exalted grace of God.

In this epistle the apostle gave the following answers to two questions:

What, if Christ has not been raised from the dead?

- ❖ The Scripture would be vain (14)
- ❖ There would be no atonement to our sins (17)
- ❖ There would be no hope after the grave (18, 19)
- ❖ There would be no divine power in life (Galatians 2: 20; Philippians 3: 10; Colossians 3: 1)
- ❖ We would have no Living Savior (Acts 5: 30-31)
- ❖ Christ would not be declared the Son of God with power (Romans 1: 4)
- ❖ There would be no Head to the church (Matthew 16: 18; Ephesians 1: 22; 2: 20)

What, if there is no resurrection from the dead?

- ❖ Christ would not have risen from the dead (13).
- ❖ We would be still in our sins (17). For without the resurrection, there would be no proof that God the Father has received the sacrifice of Christ for our sins.
- ❖ Our faith would be vain (14). For without the resurrection, there would be no place for faith nor hope.
- ❖ Our preaching would be vain (14). For without the resurrection, there would be no place for the gospel as a whole; We would be worshipping a dead Christ; There would be no good news.
- ❖ We would be found false witnesses (15)
- ❖ There would be no hope for those who have fallen asleep (18)
- ❖ We would be of all men the most pitiable (19)

1- The resurrection of Christ and the Creed of faith 1 - 11

2- The resurrection of Christ is the foundation of our resurrection

12 - 19

3- The resurrection of Christ is a guarantee of our resurrection

20

4- The resurrection of Christ is a divine treatment of our fall

21 - 23

5- The resurrection and challenging death 24 - 26

6- Our eternal situation 27 - 28

7-The resurrection of Christ and the new motives 29 - 34

8- The risen body 35 - 44

9- We will bear the image of the heavenly Man 45 - 50

10- The last trumpet 51 - 58

1- THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST AND THE CREED OF FAITH:

Dealing with the issue of the resurrection from the dead, the apostle does not see in the resurrection just an important element of our creed of faith, but see it as the backbone of our faith; As the goal of the gospel is the enjoyment of the resurrection that was realized by the death of Christ for the sake of our sins; to proclaim that He is greater than our sins, and mightier than death; granting us the resurrection by His resurrection. This is the gospel of our salvation, resurrection, and our heavenly glory.

Some Corinthians have denied the resurrection from the dead, with the assumption that talking about it was only symbolic; like what ‘Hymenaeus’ and ‘Philetus’ did, saying “*the resurrection is already past*” (2 Timothy 2: 18); As some heretics proclaimed that it is just a change in the way of life; And as some of them denied it completely, on account that it is difficult for the reason or science to accept it,. The resurrection from the dead was for a long time, a stumbling block to philosophers, and still is to the contemporary thought movements, like the ‘Humanists’.

God allowed for the presence of such deniers of the resurrection, so that the apostle Paul would present to us such a living portrait of the importance of belief in the resurrection from the dead on a living basis, and such a true testimony to support the successive generations.

“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, and in which you stand” (1)

❖ Calling the Christian Corinthians “*brethren*”, Paul sets the foundation for the most important of his successive proofs; that we became brethren through the work of Christ in His life on earth, and His death. And after all that, What is the gospel but a message that God has become man, was crucified, and resurrected? That is what the angel Gabriel

proclaimed to the Virgin Mary (Luke 1: 26-38), what the prophets preached the world; and what all the apostles truly proclaimed¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

What the apostle presents to them is not a new teaching, but he is reminding them of what he has previously preached them, and what they accepted; having been the one who founded the church there (Acts 18: 1). The apostle Paul confirms to them that what he presents to them is the same gospel he received and delivered to them before. His preaching is set upon the unchangeable God's word, the eternal truth. That is the steadfast foundation in which they stand, which, if taken away, they would fall. Belief in the resurrection from the dead is the foundation of Christianity, which, if anyone doubts, his whole soul being, faith in God, and hope in heaven, would all fall. He presented to them the gospel as good news, that started with the first coming of Christ to present salvation, and will be consummated by His ultimate coming, and our resurrection, to enjoy the fruit of His salvation work eternally.

- ❖ The Corinthians were in no need to be given this teaching, as they have already received it; but they were in need of being reminded of it, and of correcting their understanding of it².

(St. John Chrysostom)

The gospel which the apostle Paul preaches is: "*Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day*" (3, 4).

"In which you stand" (1). The subject of our gospel or preaching is the enjoyment of the resurrection from the dead; If we abide in it, in it we stand and would never fall; And our standing in the gospel would become the deposit of the eternal life. By saying: "*In which you stand*", the apostle shows his astonishment, how, after receiving this teaching, and on which their church, hope, and spiritual growth stand, they again, tend to deny. By doing that they are destroying all what he, and all the others have built, what they have strived for, and what they have enjoyed of divine grace and blessings.

"By which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you – unless you believed in vain" (2)

He did not say "you were saved", but "*you are saved*"; for salvation is a present and a continuous work, which we enjoy, as long as we remember and practically practice our upright faith.

- ❖ Here, the apostle Paul tells the Corinthians that in case they diverge from his teaching, and in particular, faith in the resurrection from the dead, on which his teaching is founded, they will lose all what they believed³.

¹ In 2 Cor., Hom. 38: 2.

² In 2 Cor., Hom. 38: 2.

³ CSEL 81: 164.

(Father Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ The resurrection of the body is the whole subject of the message of our gospel; without which, all the works of our prayers and fasting would become meaningless¹.

(Pelagius)

“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture” (3)

The apostle did not say: “what I taught you”, and “what I was taught”, but “*what I delivered to you*”, and, “*what I received*”. As the teachings of the resurrection, and of all Christianity, are not merely a collection of mental teachings, in which we are convinced, and which we believe, but they are ‘life’, that we are delivered, receive by our hearts, minds, and feelings, and interpreted in our words and behavior.

- ❖ Look at how he calls on them to testify to the issues he utters. He did not say: “which you heard”, but “*which you received*”, seeking from them to consider them as a kind of deposit they have received, have been delivered, not only through the word, but also by works, signs, and miracles, and are committed to keep them safe².

(St. John Chrysostom)

St. John Chrysostom notices that the apostle did not say “**which I have learned**”, but “***which I have received***”, by which he confirms two things: the first is that he says nothing on his own; and the second is that what we are taught or what we know, is portrayed through work and not through mere words. The apostle confirms that the source of teaching is Christ Himself, and not any man³.

What the apostle received, and what he delivered as a deposit to them, is that “***Christ was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification***” (Romans 4: 25). He presented Himself a sacrifice for the sake of the forgiveness of our sins; And the Father, by the resurrection, declared its acceptance, and His pleasure with us. The death of Christ on the cross and His resurrection are therefore the essence of the evangelic Truth.

According to the Scripture”

Having clarified that the resurrection from the dead is the backbone of our faith, the apostle confirms its truth, by confirming that the death of the Lord Christ and His resurrection from the dead is a realization of the prophecies of the Old Testament (1-4), and the testimonies of the eye witnesses (5-11). This truth was previously prophesied by men of the Old Testament that presented symbols of it like Jonah in the belly of the great fish (Matthew

¹ PL 30: 763.

² On 1 Cor., Hom. 38: 2.

³ CF. in 1 Cor., Hom. 38: 2.

12: 40); and the offering of Isaac as a sacrifice (Hebrew 11: 19); Then our gospel came in harmony and consummation of the prophesies, the symbols, and the shadows of the evangelic Truth. By saying: “*according to the Scripture*”, he shows that the death of Christ as an atonement sacrifice, and His resurrection for our justification, is not something new, but something immensely coveted by men of the old Covenant, and prophesied (See Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Daniel 9: 26; Zechariah 12: 10; Psalm 16; Luke 24: 26, 46).

❖ Isaiah said: “*He was led as a Lamb to the slaughter*” (Isaiah 53: 7); etc. And the Book of Revelation adds that He was slain (by His own will) before the foundation of the earth (13: 8); And the Book of Deuteronomy (28: 66) says: “*Your life shall hang in doubt before you, with no assurance of your life*”; all of which were written in the future tense, lest the wicked would say that they do not apply to the Lord Christ¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ The evils of the sinners are not greater than the righteousness of Him who died for their sake. The sins committed were not greater than the justice that was realized when He delivered His life for our sake².

(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

❖ One died for all; that we live sanctified, to enjoy life through His blood; and be justified as a gift we enjoy by His grace³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ He did not say Christ died’, although that would be enough to proclaim His resurrection, but he added: “... *for our sins*”⁴.

“*And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures*” (4)

The Lord Christ was buried in a grave, which, for Him, was not a place for corruption, but was a way to life (Acts 2: 26-28).

The prophet Hosea refers to the resurrection of the Lord Christ on the third day (Hosea 6: 2).

❖ “*He was buried*”: This is to confirm that Christ truly died the human death. Then again, the apostle Paul sends us back to the holy Scriptures to learn that it was not without cause, nor haphazardly, that those things happened. As how could they be, when many prophets referred to them beforehand⁵?!

¹ CSEL 81: 164-65.

² Catechesis 13.

³ Letter 41: 11.

⁴ In 1 Cor., Hom. 38: 2.

⁵ In 1 Cor., Hom. 38: 4.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Paul reminds us that we should confess the ways of Christ's death and resurrection in a literal way, and elaborately according to the testimony of the Scripture, so that our understanding of His death would conform with that of the apostles.... He did that to spare us being swept by the winds of vain debates, lest, into us the wrong views would secretly crawl¹.

(St. Hilary, Bishop of Poitier)

The testimony of eyewitnesses:

After introducing the testimony of the prophets and events of the Old Covenant, he now introduces that of several actual eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Christ, or of Christ risen from the dead. He presents five apparitions prior to that of the Lord Christ to him personally:

- To the apostle Peter (Cephas)
 - To the twelve apostles
 - To five hundred brethren at once
 - To the apostle James alone
 - To all the apostles just before He ascends to heaven
 - Finally to him last of all.
- ❖ After referring to proofs from the Holy Scriptures, he adds proofs from the actual events as testimony to the resurrection. After referring to the prophets, he mentioned the apostles and other believers².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“And that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve” (5)

He referred to the apostles as “the twelve”; while in certain other versions like the Syrian, the Slavon, and the Volgata, beside some writings by the fathers, they were referred to as “the eleven”. Anyway the expression “**twelve**” does not mean here the figure 12, but bears a reference to the apostles as a group together; having been so called even after the betrayal of Judas, whose place was later on taken by a twelfth apostle – Matthias – who was most probably with them during the events of the resurrection and ascension (Acts 1: 22-23),

The apostle Paul did not refer to all the eyewitnesses of the resurrection; but only to those trusted by the Corinthians, most of whom were still living, to give them the chance of asking them what they did see. He started by the apostle Peter, then the rest of the apostles;

¹ *Trinity 10: 67.*

² *In 1 Cor., Hom. 38: 5.*

but he did not refer to the Marys, even to St. Mary, the mother of God; as they would not have a chance of meeting any of them.

- ❖ The Holy Book tells us that He appeared first to Mary of Magdalene (Mark 16: 9). But when He appeared to men, He did to those by whom He demanded to be seen. It is to be noticed that Matthias was not yet added to them except after the ascension. Anyway, it so seems that the apparitions of Christ continued even after His ascension to heaven. Here Paul does not designate the timing, but the experience¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep” (6)

In Matthew, the Lord Christ risen from the dead demanded from His disciples to go to Galilee where they could see Him; an encounter to which none of the other evangelist referred. There, in the Galilee He spent most of the time of His ministry, and where He has chosen most of His disciples.

That encounter most probably took place on Mount Tabor in Galilee, as it came in the church tradition, where most of His public apparitions were realized, according to His promise (Matthew 26: 32; 28: 7, 10, 16). That location was chosen far from Jerusalem, as it was not possible, nor safe, for such a number to get together in the capital after the events of the crucifixion.

- ❖ That was not recorded by the gospels; yet Paul most probably knew it from those who were present².

(Ambrosiaster)

The expression “*have fallen asleep*” refers to the departure of the saints who, on one aspect, receive death as a temporary comfort which brings them forth to the eternal comfort. They die in deep peace and calm, as though entering into their own beds to sleep and have rest. On another aspect, this expression bears hope for the anticipated resurrection; as though it is an act of waking up from sleep (see John 11: 11; 1 Corinthians 11: 30).

- ❖ Paul does not say that “some have died”, but “*have fallen asleep*”, confirming by that the truth of resurrection³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles” (7)

The apostle Paul did not tell the location nor the circumstances of that encounter; but it is clear that he is talking about the younger James, brother of the Lord (Galatians 1: 19)

¹ In 2 Cor., Hom. 38: 5.

² CSEL 81: 166.

³ In 2 Cor., Hom. 38: 5.

who was still alive, **According to the false gospel of the Hebrews**, it came that James vowed not to eat bread after drinking the cup of the Lord (on the great Thursday), until he sees the lord risen from the dead.

By the time this epistle was written, the other James, the brother of John, has already fallen asleep (Acts 12: 1); The real reason for Paul to mention James in particular, was because he heard the testimony of the Lord's resurrection from his own mouth; saying that he saw none of the other apostles except James, the brother of the Lord (Galatians 1: 19).

- ❖ **“After that He was seen by James”** (7), most probably the lord's brother, whom, according to tradition, the lord Himself ordained a Bishop over Jerusalem¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

As to saying: *“all the apostles”*, he probably means here the seventy disciples (Luke 10), beside the twelve apostles. He probably refers to His encounter with them at the Sea of Galilee (John 21: 14); to whom, gathered together, He continued to appear during the forty days between His resurrection and His ascension.

- ❖ The apostles referred to here include the seventy disciples beside the twelve².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one untimely born” (8)

- ❖ **“He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve”** (5). So if you do not believe the testimony of one, you have twelve beside him. **“After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once”** (6). So if they still do not believe the twelve, let them hear the testimony of five hundred persons. **“After that He was seen by James”** (7), His brother, and the first Bishop of Jerusalem. And if you still doubt the testimony of His own brother, he added, **“He was seen by me also”** (8). But who is **“me”**? I Paul His enemy, who was first His persecutor; but now I preach the good news of His resurrection³.

(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

- ❖ If he says: ‘you have to believe me when I say that Christ is risen from the dead; I have seen Him; I who is more worthy than any other; having labored more than all of them’; they would have shut their ears. But now, having dealt with the subjects and the accusations against his person, and having taken away what could disturb them concerning it, he paved the way for them to believe his testimony⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 38: 5.

² In 2 Cor., Hom. 38: 5.

³ Lect. Catechesis 14: 22.

⁴ In 1 Cor., Hom. 38: 6.

As was his custom, the apostle Paul finds a chance to show his humility, by considering himself like one untimely born, in the moments of his encounter with Christ risen from the dead. While still opposing, persecuting, and slandering, he was called to faith at a time he did not expect, and in a way he did not imagine. Counting himself as one untimely born, who should be cast away; the divine One risen from the dead granted him a new life and a new birth. He probably called himself as one untimely born, on account that this usually happens suddenly, in an unexpected way, and before the proper time of birth. That was how his transformation to the Christian faith happened suddenly, on his way to Damascus, not expectedly by him, nor by the church, nor by the Jews.

He mentioned his encounter with Christ risen from the dead, that happened after His ascension to heaven, to confirm that what the apostles and the disciples have seen was not a shadow nor a vision, but was the true Person of the Lord Christ. And by that same body with which He resurrected, He appeared to the apostle Paul, and spoke to him; An appearance that was equally, not a vision nor a dream, but a true apparition of the Person of the Savior, who ascended to heaven.

❖ By “the one untimely born”, Paul also means that he was untimely born again; having been delivered his apostleship from Christ after His ascension to heaven¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ “*Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one untimely born*” (8). This expression shows humility more than anything else; As it is not on account of that he was the least; Because even if He did appear to him the last of all, yet He appeared to him in a way more amazing than His apparition to those before him; Yes more amazing than all²!

❖ Although Paul was the last of all, yet not the least; as his splendor was more than many who preceded him; greater than all³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“*For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God*” (9)

He counted himself the least of the apostles. In his depths, he felt that he is not worthy of this call, nor of this title; yet at the same time he does not disregard the gifts of God that he enjoyed at the hands of his Savior, nor his strife, labor, and sufferings for the sake of the ministry, by which he says: “*I am not all inferior to the most eminent apostle*” (2 Corinthians 11: 5). In other words, the apostle Paul, always remembering his past, to walk with the spirit of humility; he does not forget to offer, every day a perpetual sacrifice of thanksgiving for

¹ CSEL 81: 167.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 38: 5.

³ In 2 Cor., Hom. 38: 5.

God's goodness to him, beside a sacrifice of a contrite heart, not despised by God, bound to the perpetual sacrifice of thanksgiving that would open before him the gates of heaven to profit with no limits.

He counted himself not worthy to be called an apostle because he has been a serious persecutor of the church of God, namely, the church of Christ, something that none of the other apostles did. And although his persecution of the church was out of ignorance, was forgiven by God, and was even chosen to be an apostle, yet he, himself, encountered a great difficulty to forgive himself what he has committed.

He counted himself as not worthy to be called an apostle, not out of lack of qualifications, nor of possibilities to testify; but because of that great crime he committed, a feeling of guilt which never quit him. God allowed that for him, to create in him the spirit of humility, and the feeling of unworthiness. Referring to it gives more credibility to his personal testimony, as a previous opponent of the evangelic truth, and the persecutor of the Person of Christ in His church; something he would not be able to do without being absolutely sure of the resurrection of the Lord and His ascension to heaven.

❖ He called himself "*one untimely born*" (8), and "*the last of all*", a great and exalted position on his part. And although he calls himself "*the least of the apostles*"; yet he was given the grace to preach among the Gentiles about the inexpressible riches of Christ¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ By calling himself "*the least of the apostles*", Paul presents to us a lesson in humility².

(St. Augustine)

❖ He was the "*least*", on account of being "*the last*" time-wise, and not because he was inferior to the others in any way.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ He, who endured prison, wounds, and strikes; ... he who caught the world in the net of his epistles; ... he who was called to apostleship by a heavenly voice; says with humility: "*I am the least of the apostles*", and, "*I am not worthy to be called an apostle*"³.

❖ Although he is sure that he was forgiven his previous persecution of the church, yet what he did was a disgrace he would never forget; from which he learned the greatness of God's grace on him⁴.

¹ In Ephes., Hom. 7.

² Sermons on New Testament Lessons, 27: 3.

³ On Repentance 5: 29.

⁴ In 2 Cor., Hom. 38: 6.

- ❖ How could you, who are most jealous on the law of your fathers; you, who were raised at the feet of Gamalael; ... how could you persecute it?! When the tax-collectors, and those who used to spend their life, earning their bread fishing at the shores of the lakes and rivers, have all received the gospel?!... That is why the apostle Paul condemned himself, saying: ***“I am not worthy to be called an apostle”*** (8). He confess his ignorance that produced in him that lack of faith¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“But by the grace of God, I am what I am; and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (10)

The apostle is not denying God’s gifts to him, for what he has reached is the product of the divine grace. We are nothing, but it is God’s grace that made us what we are, the children of God, filled of holy zeal, inflamed by the Spirit, working by the spirit of strength and not of failure. The apostle got the grace of apostleship, not through his own wisdom or planning, but as a free gift through the divine grace that accompanied him, and granted him the possibility of the apostolic work.

Repeating the expression **“the grace of God”** three times in the same phrase, confirms the extent of his preoccupation with it; as there is no subject that preoccupied the mind of the apostle Paul in all his writings, like **“the grace of God”**, the only cause of his exalting and even miraculous transformation, that brought upon him the amazing salvation of God, renewed his nature, granted him the continuous growth, and that supported him to endure the labors and sufferings, for the sake of God, more than any other apostle. Now, whenever he refers to himself and to the other apostles, he always referred to the grace of God, the source of all what they have accomplished.

Having been granted the grace of God, he utterly accepted the crucifixion of the ‘ego’, to say: ***“yet not I”*** (10); to let the grace with and in him work, to grant him a strong new will, and an exalted possibility to work.

The grace of God did not rob him his living role in strife, as he has been more diligent than any other in preaching, enduring and responding to the persistent troubles, as is evident from the records of his life. Yet this fact did not lead him to pride nor self-esteem, for he still remembers his disgraceful past, not to destroy his soul, but that, by humility, he could work stronger, and turn every success he realizes in his life into a praise of thanksgiving to God.

- ❖ Paul says all that to show that despite the greatness of his past sins, and his unworthiness, the grace of God was not given to him in vain

(Ambrosiaster)

¹ In Titus, Hom. 3.

❖ **“I labored more abundantly than they all”** (10). *“He who is clothed in purple and fine linen, and fares sumptuously every day of his life”* (Luke 16: 19); He who avoid the labor necessary to reach virtue, will find the eternal life far away from him, when he suffers in the fire of the furnace¹.

(St. Basil)

❖ Fondly, and with the eyes of faith, all who are in the city of God, will look at such a great man – Paul, the wrestler for Christ, who was anointed and taught by Christ Himself; who, together with Him, he was nailed to the cross; and through him he was glorified. Such a man became an amazing spectacle to angels and men; by a canonical strife he entered on the stage of this world, and persisted to the end, to gain the crown of his heavenly call².

(St. Augustine)

❖ Having been so humble, why would he boast his labor?! He was committed to do so, to justify his right to the trusted testimony as a teacher³.

❖ Paul, well known to you, who labored and triumphed abundantly in his battles against the devil; who physically roamed the earth, the ocean, and the air; and circled the world as though with wings; who was stoned, and scourged; who endured everything for the sake of the name of God; has been called for ministry by a heavenly voice from above for a grace that found him ready⁴.

❖ Paul, who was called after the ascension of the Lord to heaven; Like the other apostles, who did not wait for another call, but instantly forsook their nets and everything they had and followed Him; he, as well, moved at once with his whole energy; and directly after being baptized, entered into battles against the Jews everywhere. Surpassing in this respect the rest of the apostles, he **has the right to claim that he “labored more abundantly than they all”** (10)⁵.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ **“The grace of God which was with me”** (10). This is the complete glory in God; for man, not to glorify his own righteousness, but to count himself as lacking the true righteousness, and as being justified by the faith in Christ alone. Paul was glorified by despising his self-righteousness, seeking the righteousness of faith in God by Christ, whom he only sought to know, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His passion; counting

¹ *Unto the End* 19: 5.

² *City of God* 14: 9.

³ *In 2 Cor., Hom. 38: 7.*

⁴ *Concerning Almsgiving and Ten Virgins* 3: 22.

⁵ *In Galat., Hom. 1.*

himself in the likeness of His death, to gain the resurrection from the dead ... It is only God who grants us the activity of our labor¹.

(St. Basil)

- ❖ Do you see how he harvested an abundance of God's blessings; and how, on his part he contributed abundantly by his zeal, faith, courage, perseverance, exalted mind, unflinching will; for which he was worthy of a more exalted help from above².

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Look again to his great humility! How he refers the weaknesses and nothing of the goodness to himself, but refer them all to God, saying: "**Not I, but the grace of God which was with me**" (10). What an amazing soul! ... He utters the word "I preached", only if it is absolutely necessary³!

- ❖ Listening to these things, let us expose our weaknesses, and never refer to our goodness! I wish no one falls into despair when in sin, nor have self-esteem when in virtue; but let the former rather fear, and let the later grow in virtue; For no slothful will hold fast in virtue, nor a diligent will stay weak in fleeing from evil⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Paul did not strive to gain grace; but he gained grace to strive⁵.

- ❖ How then could man consummate the commandment of God, even with difficulty, without His help⁶?

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ By the grace of God, the teacher of the Gentiles reached the rank of apostleship, saying: "**His grace toward me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all**" (10). When he says: "**I labored**", he reveals the strife of his will; And when he says: "**Yet not I, but the grace of God**", he refers to the value of the divine protection; And when he says: "**which was with me**", he confirms the cooperation of the grace with him who is not slothful, but diligent⁷.

(Father Sherimon)

"Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed" (11)

¹ *On Humility*, 20.

² *Baptismal Instructions*, 4: 10.

³ *In 1 Cor.*, Hom. 38: 7.

⁴ *In 1 Cor.*, Hom. 38: 8.

⁵ *Proceeding of Pelagius*, 14: 36.

⁶ *Letter from Alypius and Augustine to Paulinus*, 186.

⁷ *Cassian: Conferences* 13: 12.

Here the apostle confirms that it was not just him alone who preached the gospel everywhere and all the time; but it was the same gospel preached by the other apostles; all of whom presented the same Truth, and the same case; preached the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of the Lord Christ; All of them had the same faith, in which they lived, and in which they died. ... That is the apostolic faith preached by the apostles, and received by the believers; ... Whoever preaches another faith is not practicing the apostolic work.

The main issue is to establish the evangelic Truth concerning the resurrection of Christ from the dead; While the identity of him who preaches it, is not important; For all preach the same Truth.

- ❖ Paul did not mean to make the Corinthians choose between him and the other apostles; He established his authority as a teacher, and at the same time he did the same for the other apostles; with no difference between them, as they all had the same authority.
- ❖ He did not say: ‘In case you do not believe me, believe them’; Confirming to them that all the apostles have the same authority; and counting himself as worthy to be believed, he wrote to the Galatians, saying: “*they added nothing to me*” (Galatians 2: 6).
- ❖ He says well: “*we preach*” (11); referring to their great courage in uttering the word; not secretly, nor in an alley, but in a voice louder than a trumpet. He does not say “we preached”, but we still “*preach*”; But here does not say: “*you believe*”, but says: “*so you believed*” (11); As having been shaken in thought, he brings them back to the past, adding their own testimony¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

2- THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IS THE FOUNDATION OF OUR RESURRECTION:

Having confirmed the resurrection of Christ, as a realization of what came in the Scripture, and through the testimony of eyewitnesses; now he confirms the resurrection through rejecting the adversary teaching that contradicts the faith in resurrection, demonstrating the seriousness of such a teaching:

- (1) Denying the resurrection of the dead, is a commitment to deny the resurrection of Christ (13)
- (2) Denying the resurrection of Christ makes our preaching and faith vain (14).
- (3) That false teaching bears an accusation that the apostles are false witnesses and wicked (15).
- (4) Without the resurrection of Christ, the Corinthians shut before themselves the gates of hope for the forgiveness of their sins (16, 17).

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 39: 1.

(5) Without the resurrection of Christ, all those who have fallen asleep in Christ would be counted as perished (18).

(6) Without it, the believers would be of all men the most pitiable (19).

(7) Without it, faith in baptism would be vain; as it would be just a burial with Christ, yet with no resurrection (29)

(8) Without it the endurance of the labor of preaching and martyrdom would be useless (30-32).

“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (12)

If all of us (the apostles), as eyewitnesses, preach the resurrection from the dead; how could some Corinthians deny it? The talk of Paul clarifies that, although the Corinthians have already realized, through sure evidences, the truth of the resurrection of Christ; yet some of them claimed that it is something impossible to happen. Those were either of Jewish origin who are still committed to the views of the Sadducees, the deniers of the resurrection; or of the Gentiles, who were influenced by some of the Gnostic philosophies that corrupted their minds.

❖ Paul sets his proof of the resurrection of the dead on the fact that Christ is risen. The later fact gives a guarantee to the former one¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ What a serious crime to deny the resurrection of the dead; as if we would not be, Christ would have died in vain, and is not risen; And if he did not rise for our sake, he is not risen at all; as there would be no reason that commits Him to rise for His own sake²!

(St. Ambrose)

“But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen” (13)

Having shared with us in flesh and blood, the incarnate Word of God promised to resurrect humanity from the dead by His own resurrection;

If there is no resurrection of the dead, Christ would not have risen as well.

If there is no general resurrection from the dead; It would follow that there is no resurrection by Christ; As the later would become meaningless, if it does not present to us the possibility of resurrection.. What is enjoyed by the Head, would also be enjoyed by the rest of the body. Our resurrection is bound to His, and is not separate from it (1 Corinthians 15: 20, 22; John 14: 19).

❖ As one depends on the other, You either believe in both, or deny them both³.

¹ On 1 Cor., Hom. 39: 2.

² On His Brother Satyrus, 2: 103.

³ Comm.. On 1 Cor., 15.

(Pelagius)

- ❖ It is not as though, what happened need a proof; but to reveal that both are worthy of believing in them on equal basis¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain, and your faith is also vain”

(14)

The word “vain” means (void), (not true), or (useless).

- ❖ Paul here, means to say, that beside contradicting the historical facts, the denial of the resurrection of Christ would become for the Corinthians something absolutely terrifying; as in that case, his preaching to them would be useless, and their faith would consequently be meaningless².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He has raised Christ, whom he did not rise up – if in fact the dead do not rise” (15)

As the apostle and all the others testified that Christ is risen from the dead; denying the resurrection of the dead would therefore be an accusation against them all that they are found false witnesses of God. And if they are, would it be possible for over five hundred to testify falsely, of some event they have all together seen at the same time?! Was there not a single one who may expose the falsity of their testimony?! The testimony to the resurrection of Christ is therefore a well established fact, that could never be denied.

“For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen” (16)

“And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile, you are still in your sins” (17)

- ❖ Look how great is the secret of that divine ordinance! If after death, it could no more take away sin, Sin therefore, would remain, and so would death and the curse that dwelt on them; Our preaching would be vain, and so would be your faith³.
- ❖ If that is unreasonable, and if God has not risen Him as you say, that would also be followed by other unreasonable things ... If He is not risen, he would not also be slain; ... and if He is not slain, sin would not be taken away, and you would still be in sin; ... our preaching would be vain, and so would be your faith that you were reconciled. ... Moreover death would be forever, if He has not taken it away; As how could He take

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 39: 2.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 39: 3.

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 39: 3.

death away from others, if He Himself is held in it?! ... Hence he adds: “*Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished*” (18)¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ If the cross is a wrong view, so would be resurrection; And if Christ is not risen, we would still be in our sins. If the cross is deception, so would be ascension; and everything therefore, would be useless².

(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

“*Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished*” (18)

On account of that their hope is without basis, and their faith is not set on the truth; Those who were martyred or died in faith in Christ Jesus, have perished, their bodies would get corrupt in the earth, and the promise of the Lord Christ would not be realized, that they would be risen on the ultimate day of judgment (11: 25, 26).

When the apostle talks about Christ, he says: He “*died*”, to confirm the truth of His passion, crucifixion, and death; Whereas, when he talks about the believers, he says: they have “*fallen asleep*”, to confirm that through their fellowship with Him as members of His body, they have the hope of resurrection; they are more like fallen asleep to eventually wake up. Concerning Christ, as His resurrection is already been realized, he did not hesitate to say that He died; because His death became glorified by His resurrection; While concerning us, as the resurrection of our bodies will be realized through hope; hence he uses the expression “fall asleep” to put our souls at peace.

It is difficult for man to accept the idea of not being risen from the dead, when a relative or friend falls asleep, while sanctified in the Lord; As by it, he would count him as forever lost! Who can accept a teaching that bears such a bitter end?!

- ❖ “*Fallen asleep*”; So Paul says; that the Corinthians would not listen to the false teachers who claim that their loved ones who have fallen asleep, are taken away forever from them³.

(Ambrosiaster)

“*If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable*”

(19)

If our hope in Christ stops at our present life, we would be deceived, on account of that we endure sufferings more than anyone else; are daily put to death; and are persecuted. If the pagans are without hope (Ephesians 2: 12; 1 Thessalonians 4: 13); We would be more miserable than them, because we deny ourselves any enjoyment of the present pleasures! ...

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 39: 3.

² Catechetical Lectures, 13.

³ CSEL 81: 170.

Our hope is not in the separation of the soul from the body; but in the union of the soul with the body risen from the dead.

Some scholars assumed that Paul is talking here about the apostles; but it is clear his talk covers all believers who are true in their faith and strife; As, on one aspect, the previous phrases did not concern just the apostles alone; and on another aspect, all the true believers are called to bear the cross, and to enter through the narrow door and the difficult road, to share with Christ His sufferings and crucifixion.

If the true Christian feels that he is the happiest being on earth, this would be through his union with Christ, risen from the dead, and through the opening of the gates of heaven before him, in the hope of the perfection of eternal glory. Without the resurrection from the dead, he would be the most pitiable, as he endures bitter sufferings, enters through a difficult road that ends in the grave without return; and at the same time, he is subject here to persecutions, and chooses to deprive himself of pleasures; on account of that he is enjoying the deposit of heavenly ones.

❖ Saying so, Paul does not mean to say that hope in Christ is pitiable, but that Christ prepares another life for those hoping for Him; As this present life is prone to sin; but there is an exalted life kept as a reward for us¹.

(St. Ambrose)

❖ It is obvious that we have hope in Christ, both in this life and that to come. Christ does not deny His ministers, but grants them grace here; And in the future, they will be received in eternal glory.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ In case the body is not risen, the soul remain uncrowned without that beatitude in heaven; and consequently, we would enjoy nothing at all; and our reward would then only be in the present ... He so says to confirm the resurrection of the body, and to exhort them to care for the eternal life; and not to assume that everything will come to an end with the end of this world ... Here is an obvious testimony that his talk does not concern the resurrection from sin, but that of the body; the resurrection from this world to the one to come².

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ Hence, hope in Christ would not be, just for the sake of the present life, where evil could prevail more than goodness; where those who practice evil would be happier; and those who practice a kind of life full of transgressions, are richer³.

(Maximus, Bishop of Turin)

¹ *ON His Brother Satyrus, 2: 124.*

² *In 1 Cor., Hom 39: 4.*

³ *Maximus of Turin: Sermons 96: 1.*

3- THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IS A GUARANTEE FOR OUR RESURRECTION:

Having shown the results of unbelieving in the resurrection of the Lord Christ, and consequently in not being resurrected ourselves from the dead; And having said that it would corrupt the preaching, destroy the gospel, refer to the apostles as false witnesses, close the doors of hope in heaven, and turn the Christian life into bitter affliction; the apostle strongly declares it is rather an un-doubtable fact; that needs no proof; that would open before us the doors of hope; and that would turn our life into an unutterable glorious joy, crying out with the spirit of strength.

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (20)

As the firstfruits confirm the existence of the harvest; and as the resurrection of Christ confirms the realization of our resurrection, it would be fitting to call the resurrection of Christ the firstfruits of our resurrection.; As, according to the Jewish rite, the Passover should come first, to be followed by the great Sabbath; then on the next day the firstfruits should be offered; So is our Christ, our crucified Passover; His crucifixion s to be followed by the Sabbath, then the firstfruits should be offered on Sunday, the first day of the week, on which the Firstfruit is risen from the dead.

The firstfruit has the privilege of preceding all, surpassing all, of being consecrated to God, and by it all the crop is sanctified. Time wise the Lord Christ was not the first to be risen from the dead; as he was preceded by the dead man who was risen when his body got in contact with Elisha’s bones; by the little girl, the daughter of Jajrus; by the young man the only son of the widow; and by Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, who were all risen from the dead by a command of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet all of those were risen for a certain time then eventually died again; whereas the Savior is risen through His own authority, as an exalted Firstfruit who would die no more. He is the first ripe head of grain, held by the priest, to proclaim that it is consecrated for God, by which the whole crop would be sanctified.

- ❖ So says Paul in response to the false teachers who claim that Christ was never born, and consequently was never crucified. The resurrection from the dead is a proof that Christ was a man, and consequently, by His righteousness is worthy of being risen from the dead.
(Ambrosiaster)
- ❖ He tasted death for the sake of all; although by nature, He, Himself was the Life and resurrection. He surrounded His body with death, then by His mighty power, He treaded upon death to become the Firstfruit among the dead, and the Firstfruit of those who have fallen asleep.

If the resurrection from the dead happens through man; and the Man we Know is the Word begotten by God; Through Him the power of death has been destroyed¹.

❖ The deity of the Word, being God, did not suffer, but, according to His ordinance, the sufferings came on His body as Man. For, how could He be the Firstfruit of all creation, through whom the principalities, the hosts, the thrones, and the rulers, all gather together; And in what way would He be the Firstfruit among the dead, and the Firstfruit of those who have fallen asleep, unless He is the Word, being God, who created His body to be born and to suffer²?

(St. Cyril the Great)

4- THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IS A DIVINE TREATMENT FOR OUR FALL:

“For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead”

(21)

By man here, he means Adam, through whose disobedience death entered into the world, or dwelt upon human nature. It was therefore a Commitment, that dealing with that issue has to be in the same way; namely, through a Man, capable of abolishing that disobedience, of renewing the human nature, and of bringing it forth to resurrection or eternity. Therefore by man, corruption came to the world; and a Man healed that corruption.

Resurrection came through another Man, the incarnate divine Word, by whose authority, He grants the resurrection to the dead

In Adam, death was not instantly realized, as all his seed were not yet born, but dwelt upon the human nature, and came to have authority over all humanity to come. Now, in Jesus Christ, humanity gained by faith, an authority, that death would not prevail on it, but would become just a way for those abiding in Him to cross over to the glorious resurrection.

By the fall of Adam, the spiritual death dwelt as well upon human nature; and by the resurrection of Christ, the first, the spiritual

Resurrection would dwell upon those who believe in Him, who unite with Him, and who bear His righteousness; so that our resurrection would be realized because of our union with Him; for no favor on our part.

Christ became one of us, carried our manhood; so that, as by one man we have fallen under death; by one man the resurrection became ours. As our first firstfruit brought the curse of death on us, the Second brought to us the glory of resurrection.

❖ By the sacrifice of His body, He put an end to the law that was against us, and set a new beginning for life, by the hope in the resurrection He grants us. As it was by one man,

¹ Letter 17: 11.

² Letter 50: 14.

death reigned over men; By the Word of God who became man, the perdition of death and the resurrection of life were realized¹

(Pope Athanasius the Apostolic)

- ❖ If the Lord's journey in the body did not happen, the Savior would not have paid the price by His death; and He would not have destroyed the authority of death by his power. ... If the body that submitted to death was different from that which the Lord has taken, Death would not have stopped practicing its work; the suffering of the incarnate God would not have had any benefit; And we, who died in Adam would not be able to live in Christ².

(St. Basil the Great)

- ❖ We know Him as the Firstfruit of those who have fallen asleep, of the dead; And without any further discussion, as the firstfruit has the same features, and the same nature of the rest of the fruits; ... that is why, as the firstfruit of death was in Adam; the firstfruit of the resurrection is in Christ³.

(St. Ambrose)

- ❖ For the sake of every man, He tasted death in His body; He who could have endured death without losing being Himself Life. That is why, although it is said that He suffered in His body, yet He did not receive the suffering in the nature of His Godhead, but in His body prone to suffering⁴.

(St. Cyril the Great)

- ❖ The human nature that came down, is committed, itself, to acquire the conquest, as by that way its disgrace would be taken away⁵.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (22)

Death came by Adam, and eternity is realized by Christ. As all by Adam, submitted by nature to death; By grace, all will have the resurrection by Jesus Christ.

- ❖ If Adam is a symbol of Christ; the sleep of Adam is a symbol of the death of Christ; And the wound in the side of Christ would be a symbol of the church, the true mother of everyone⁶.

(The scholar Tertullian)

¹ *On the Incarnation, 10.*

² *Letters, 261, to the Citizens of Sozopolis.*

³ *On His Brother Satyrus, 2: 91.*

⁴ *Letter 55: 34.*

⁵ *On 1 Cor., Hom. 39: 5.*

⁶ *On the Soul 43: 10.*

❖ As no man enters into death except through Adam, No one enters into life except through Christ. This is the significance of the repetition of the word “*all*”; As all humans belong to Adam through their first birth, that of the body; So it is for all humans who belong to Christ, they will come to the second birth, the spiritual. That is why he says “*all*” in both situations; for as all those who die, die only in Adam; so are all those who live, will only live in Christ¹.

❖ We generally say that all enter into a house through one door; not that all human race will enter that house; but on account that no one can enter into it except through that door. According to the same meaning, as in Adam all die, all who live will live in Christ; ... As there is no other name under heaven, beside the One and only Intercessor between God and men, the Man Jesus Christ, by whom we may be saved².

❖ That does not mean that all who die in Adam will become members of Christ; as the majority will be punished in eternity by a second death.

The apostle uses the term “*all*” in both phrases; as no one would die in a natural body except in Adam; and so will no one become alive again in a spiritual body except in Christ³.

❖ Man actually brought death upon himself; whereas the Son of Man, by His death and resurrection, brought life to man⁴.

(St. Augustne)

❖ To be correct, not all men die; For Enoch and Elijah, for example, did not die; and there will be others living on the day of the second coming of the Savior.

(Severian, Bishop of Gebalah)

❖ Adam died because he sinned; And Christ died, who is without sin, to overcome the death that came because of sin. All will equally rise up in Christ, the righteous, as well as the wicked; Yet the unbelievers will be delivered to punishment. Despite appearing as though risen from death; yet they will receive their bodies to endure an eternal punishment because of their denial⁵.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ Notice how he confirms: “one” and “one”; namely, Adam and Christ; one for judgment, and One for justification ... It is obvious that he is talking about the resurrection of the righteous, when there will be the eternal life; and not about the resurrection of the wicked,

¹ *To Jerome 167: 21.*

² *Against Julian 24.*

³ *City of God 13: 23.*

⁴ *To Honoratus 140: 9.*

⁵ *CSEL 81: 171.*

when there will be the eternal death. Those who will live are in contrast to those who will go down to hell¹.

- ❖ As he who is born by the first one will die; He who is born by Christ will live; on condition that he should be clothed in the wedding garment; and be invited to stay, and not to be driven out².
- ❖ By this way we would be renewed concerning what Adam has lost; namely in the spirit of our minds; But concerning the body sowed as a natural body, it will rise up as a spiritual body. When we are renewed, we shall enjoy a better status, never enjoyed since Adam³.

(St. Augustine)

“But each one in his own order: Christ the Firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming” (23)

The apostle refers to three orders: the first for Christ who is risen by His own authority as the Firstfruit of the dead; Then those who are Christ’s will be risen to get eternity and the eternal reward at His ultimate coming on the day of judgment; And finally, the end will be realized with the declaration of the defeat of the devil and his hosts.

At first, the lord Christ is risen, the Firstfruit of those who have fallen asleep; to be followed by all humanity on the day of judgment. But it so seems that the believers will rise up together like one holy bride, separated from the wicked; So, the wicked will also rise up, to look from afar at the glory of the righteous and their joy in their encounter with the Lord; of which they will be denied, and will get an eternal punishment. That is why the parables said by Christ concerning the resurrection, always began with the reward of the righteous, then followed by the punishment of the wicked.

In the resurrection, all will be risen in a moment, in the blink of an eye; Yet each one in his own order, will get his reward. But the devil and those who accepted the sonhood to him, will be the last of all.

The Hebrew word translated as (order), came like what takes place in the military system. It is as though the apostle is looking at the resurrection procession, as a military procession of those who enjoyed the conquest over the enemy, advancing to enter the capital, to be received by the songs and cheers of the people. The procession will be led by the Lord Christ, who conquered the devil and his kingdom, followed by His victorious hosts, each one in his order, according to his practical faith, and his enjoyment of conquests.

Being the Firstfruit of those who have fallen asleep, He opened the door of hope before the dead to rise up. The dead came to be like the Jewish crop, to be counted as an

¹ *TO Hilarius 157.*

² *Sermons on New Testament Lessons, 40: 7.*

³ *The Literal Meaning of Genesis (ACW0, 6: 27: 37.*

offering by God, accepted and blessed through the offering of the firstfruits. The whole church became sure, through her Head, risen from the dead, that she will also enjoy the resurrection together with Him. *“For He will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep”* (1 Thessalonian 4: 14). So His resurrection would become a deposit for our resurrection, if we believe in Him, and unite with Him.

- ❖ Although all were put together in one faith, and were cleansed by one baptism, yet the process of maturation in faith is not the same for all, but everyone according to his own order¹.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ Although the fruit of the divine mercy is the same for all, yet the order of worthiness is different².

(St. Ambrose)

- ❖ It is not that, because all will be risen from the dead, that you think all will enjoy the same privileges. As in punishment, not all will suffer the same, but the difference will be great; The difference will be much more between the sinners and the righteous, as they are separated from one another³.

- ❖ My beloved; Look at how some unreasonably and deniably say: Why have we been granted the freedom of will?! ... How, in all things we referred to, could we liken God, unless we are not granted the freedom of will? I will judge angels, So will you by Him who is the Firstfruit (53). I will sit on the royal throne, So will you in Him the Firstfruit. It was said: *“He raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus”* (Ephesians 2: 6). By Him, the Firstfruit, we shall be honored by the cherubim and the Seraphim, together with all the heavenly hosts, the principalities, the thrones, and the rulers. So, do not ever belittle the value of your body that will enjoy such great honors, before which all the hosts will tremble⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ *In Genesis, Hom. 2.*

² *On His Brother Satyrus 2: 92.*

³ *In 1 Cor., Hom. 39: 5.*

⁴ *In 1 Tim., Hom. 15.*

5- THE RESURRECTION AND CHALLENGING THE DEATH:

“Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power” (24)

The resurrection proclaimed His kingdom with its authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28: 18). His came to have a name above every name; every knee will worship Him; and every tongue will confess that He is the Lord (Philippians 2: 9-11). The One risen from the dead will hold the reign of the kingdom, till He has put an end to the opponent hosts, and submit His enemies under His feet (25); and the last enemy that will be destroyed is death (26).

Some may wonder: Was the divine Word not a Lord, a King, and One of authority, even before His incarnation? To answer is that by His incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, He set us kings and of authority. By the resurrection He reigned, and made us, the members of His body, kings; and destroyed the enemy under His feet. He granted us the spirit of conquest, and put an end to death, for in Him we gain the resurrection. By His resurrection He proclaimed His reign as the Lord over both the living and the dead (Romans 14: 9); and brings His people safe to His glory, and destroys their enemy under their feet; then comes the end (24).

The apostle probably looked at the Roman system, in which the rulers and governors, at the end of their terms, deliver their authority into the hands of the emperor. In a similar way, all authority will be taken away from the principalities of this wicked world, together with the forces of darkness, and the spiritual hosts of evil, Their kingdom will come to an end, for the perfection of the heavenly kingdom of God to be proclaimed. Yet that does not mean that the end will come after the resurrection, but, with the resurrection, and at the same instant, the end of the world will be realized.

The word “*end*” means putting an end to something, or the realization of its goal. The “end” here refers to the realization of the perfection of the work of salvation, when the believers come to enjoy glory, and when every believer get attached to God as children, friends, and members in the glorified body of Christ. The “*end*” here also means the end of human life on earth, and the end of the kingdoms of this world.

The word “Father” is sometimes used to refer to the First Person of the Holy Trinity, and some other time to the Holy Godhead as being God who embraces all, the Almighty who takes care of all.

❖ When Christ delivers the kingdom to God the Father; the living creatures, who were before part of the kingdom of Christ, will also be delivered together with all the kingdom

to the reign of the father; Being a part of all, they will gain God; Who will be all in all in them as well¹.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ Concerning us, the end of everything we do, to which we hasten, is the life desired in the world to come².

(St. Basil the Great)

- ❖ What rule and power will Christ destroy? Is it that of the angels or of the believers? Certainly not! ... It is that of the devils, about whom the Scripture says that our strife is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness in this age (Ephesians 6: 12)³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ The spiritual hosts of evil got the titles of principalities and rulers, on account of that they rule and have authority over diverse nations, and have influence over other spirits and demons. The gospels wrote about the existence of 'legions' (see Mark 5: 20). They would not be called principalities and rulers, unless there are those on whom they practice their rule. The Pharisees, blaspheming the Lord Christ said: "*He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons*" (Luke 11: 15); And the demons were called: "*The rulers of the darkness of the world*" (Ephesians 6: 12); and one of them was called "*the ruler of this world*" (John 14: 30); And talking about how the authority of those principalities and powers will come to an end when all will submit to the Lord Christ, the blessed Paul says: "*When He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power*" (1 Corinthians 1: 24)⁴.

(Father Cerinus)

"For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet" (25)

The Lord Christ reigns on His glorious church, His body in heaven, and His reign will be forever (Revelation 11: 15); "*Reigns on the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end*" (Luke 1: 33); "*His dominion is an everlasting dominion*" *Daniel 7: 14; Micah 4: 7).

By saying: "***He must reign***", he refers to the continuation of His reign, which the Scripture said it should be realized.

The Psalmist looked forward to see that joyful day, in which the only-begotten Son will sit together with His victorious holy church on the right hand of Glory; when all the

¹ *De Principiis 1: 8.*

² *On Ps. 48, Hom. 19.*

³ *On 1 Cor., Hom. 39: 6.*

⁴ *Cassian: Conferences 8: 14.*

hosts of darkness will dissolve, and fall under His feet (Psalm 110: 1). He is One with the Father, but what happens on that day to His church, His holy body, is counted as His own. While the world collapses, and the devil and his hosts fall, the Lord Christ, the King of kings will reign, and will set out of His people, kings and priests to His God and Father (Revelation 1: 6).

❖ Shall God reign only “*till He has put all enemies under His feet*”, then reigns no more?! Of course not. It means that, then, He will start to reign with the full meaning of the word¹.
(St. Jerome)

❖ It is a misunderstanding of the word “till”, that it does not only refer to what will happen until then, but to what will also happen afterward. As an example, saying: “I am with you till the end of time” does not mean that after that He will be no more with us²!
(St. Gregory the Nezenzian)

❖ To say that, once He puts His enemies under His feet, He will reign no more, is foolish and an evil thing to say. As if He is a King before defeating His enemies, Would it not be more befitting for Him to be as such after He submit them altogether³?!
(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

❖ He will reign forever. Anyway, concerning the war under His leadership against the devil; It is obvious that it will continue until He puts His enemies under His feet; After that, there would be no war, when we enjoy full peace⁴.

❖ “*Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool*” (Psalm 110: 1); Sitting on the right side does not contradict with making enemies His footstool. Or according to the apostle: “*For He must reign till He put all enemies under His feet*” (1 Corinthians 15: 25). As even when they are put under His feet, he will not cease to reign; but He will reign forever, and they will stay perpetually under His feet⁵.

(St. Augustine)

“*The last enemy that will be destroyed is death*” (26)

The Lord Christ defeated death by His death on the cross, to realize its vanity completely by the resurrection of the believers and their enjoyment of the eternal kingdom.

The other enemies will become vain before the end, with the destruction of the animosity of the human heart against God by the preaching of the gospel; and the breaking

¹ *Against Helvidius* 6.

² *Theological Orations* 30, *On the Sin*, 4.

³ *Catechetical Lectures* 15: 29.

⁴ *Question* 69: 8.

⁵ *Sermon on the Mount* 1: 11: 30.

and taking away of the scepter of the devil. Then God will spiritually reign everywhere, and all will submit to Him, when the kingdom of sin and its tyranny will come to an end.

By His resurrection He presented to us the resurrection from the dead, to become secure, with no more fear of any enemy, nor of death.

- ❖ The destruction of the last enemy may be understood, not that the matter created by God would perish, but that the adversary and controversial will that does not come from God, but on its own, will come to an end and be no more. Anyway, that will not happen all of a sudden, but gradually and in stages through several limitless generations. Reform and correction will be realized slowly and in different ways in different individuals¹.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ We are in the time being doing well by warring against death; but it will be different when this enemy will be no more, when death, the last enemy will come to an end.

- ❖ The new life now begins by faith, continues by hope, and reaches its end when death is swallowed by conquest; with the final perdition of this enemy; when we change and become like angels.

Now we prevail on fear with faith; but prevalence will be realized by love through vision².

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ How could death be “*the last*” after the devil and all the other things? The counsel of the devil came first, followed by our disobedience, and then came death. Theoretically, death is no more now; but practically that will actually be realized later on! That is why death was put the last of all, as in it victory over the rest will be pronounced; and it would be easy for the unbeliever to accept it, with the destruction of the devil who brought the death up, and when his work is no more³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

6- OUR ETERNAL SITUATION:

“For: ‘God has put all things in subjection under his feet’, but when He says: ‘all things are put in subjection,’ it is plain that this does not include the One who put all things in subjection under Him” (27)

As an Intercessor before God the Father, He who sat together with His Father on His throne, will puts all things in subjection under Him (Revelation 3: 12). He sat to practice His

¹ *De Principiis* 3: 6: 5.

² *Letter to Janarius*. 55.

³ *In 1 Cor., Hom.* 39: 6, 8.

royal divine intercession, as a reward for delivering Himself an atonement for man by the sacrifice of the cross (Philippians 2: 6-12).

By His ascension to heaven He became Head of all things to the account of His church, He got the authority to rule and to protect the church against all her enemies; and ultimately, He will realize the complete salvation for those believing in Him, when they partake of His glory.

Saying “*all things*”, that includes death as well (Ephesians 1: 22; Philippians 3: 21; Hebrew 2: 8; 1 Peter 3: 22). And saying: “*put all things in subjection under His feet*”, he confirms that there is no other way.

God has put all things in subjection under His feet through His promise to Him, and His divine plan “*to give Him authority in heaven and on earth*” (Matthew 28: 18; John 17: 2; Ephesians 1: 20-22). As is also testified in Psalm 8: 6 concerning man, who was given by God the authority over all things; which would not be realized except by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Why does he say: “*This does not include the One who put all things in subjection under Him?*”. It is to avoid the possibility of raising some foolish objections by some, who may misunderstand the expression “*all things*” to include God the Father! The same with the Gentiles who believed that Jupiter (Zeus) has put his father away from his throne and from heaven! And to avoid the misunderstanding that Paul exaggerates in his talk about the authority of the Son, to make Him greater than God the Father! If the Son has incarnated, and, being the Son of Man, submitted to the Father; After the resurrection and the consummation of His intercession work, it is obvious that the equality of the Father and the Son will appear as it was before the incarnation.

- ❖ The Lord Christ Himself will teach those capable of receiving Him, the feature of wisdom; That after their initial training in His holy virtues, He will reign together with them, until the time comes to submit them to God the Father, together with all things. When they are able to receive God, He will become to them all in all¹.
- ❖ By such a fact, Christ would teach us the idea of authority².

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ He considers your submission as His own ... He calls Himself naked if any of you is naked ... a prisoner if any is in prison ... He bore our weaknesses, and the burden of our maladies.... And as one of our weaknesses is the lack of submission, He carried it as well.

¹ *De Principiis* 3: 6: 9.

² *De Principiis* 3: 5: 6.

... Even the calamities that dwell upon us, the Lord counts them as His own; ... He put our sufferings upon Himself; because of His fellowship with us¹.

(St. Basil)

- ❖ The first stage in the mystery is that all things submit to Him; Then He Himself will submit to whom all things will submit. The way we submit our souls to the glory of His body who reigns; the Lord Himself in the same mystery, submits Himself in the glory of His body, to whom all things submit. We submit to the glory of His body, so as to acquire the glory that He possesses in the body, to become like His body².

(St. Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers)

- ❖ (In response to the followers of Arius and Onomias).

The apostle does not talk about Christ in His Godhead, but in His manhood; as all the discussion concerns the resurrection of the body. In His manhood, He submits, together with all humanity to the Godhead³.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

- ❖ Paul writes to the Greeks who received faith; who previously used to worship 'Zeus', and who believed that he rebelled against his father, and confiscated his kingdom. He feared that they probably imagined the same, concerning the relationship between Christ and His Father.

(Oecumenius)

God the all in all:

“Now when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subjected to the One who put all things in subjection under Him, so that God may be all in all” (28)

a- Submission of the Son as the Head of the church:

What does it mean that the Son will be subjected to the Father, who will be all in all? The incarnate Word of God, the One with His Father, and equal to Him in the same essence, became Man, to be an Intercessor between God and men. Now, after the role of intercession came to an end, He no longer intercedes for anyone, and is no longer subjected to the Father as Man. Being the Head of the church, the submission of the Son here is not the same as that of the creation; but is the submission of the One with His Father, and equal to Him in the same essence. The Son who took the role of the Intercessor, presented Himself a sacrifice of love on behalf of humanity, and became the Head of the church, proclaims His submission to the Father as a mutual honor between themselves. The Son honors the Father; and the Father

¹ *An apology to the Caesareans, Letter 8.*

² *Trinity 11: 36.*

³ *Comm. On 1 Cor. 271-72.*

honors the Son; “*And all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father*” (John 5: 22-23; Hebrew 1: 6).

The submission of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity to the First Person, is not being less than Him; but having consented to incarnate, to die, and to be risen as the Head and the Firstfruit of those who have fallen asleep; He submits to the Father in the name of the church as a whole, and to her account. That does not imply a separation of the Godhead from the manhood; as, with the complete splendor of the Godhead on the manhood, the Son submits.

❖ Why does Paul talk about the submission of the Son to the Father, after ending his talk about the submission of all things to Christ?

The apostle talks in a certain way, when he talks about the Godhead alone; And in another way, when he talks about the divine ordinance. As an example, having put the text concerning the incarnation of our Lord, Paul no more fears to talk about his many humble works; as this would not be unbefitting of the incarnate Christ; even if it becomes obvious that it could not apply to God.

In the present text, about which of the two things does he talk?

Having referred to the death and the resurrection of Christ, both of which do not apply to God the Father, it is obvious that he means the divine ordinance of incarnation in which the Son submits to the Father by His own will. But you should notice how he added a correction, saying that He who submitted all things to Him, has exempted Himself of this “all”; meaning that he reminds us that Christ the Word is the true God¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ By this, He has consummated the work entrusted to Him, that God would be All in All².

(The scholar Origen)

❖ He wishes for you to understand the vision of His form (as incarnated), the form in which all creation together conform to that form by which the Son of God – the Man, submits to God. By that form, the Son Himself submits to Him to whom all things submit; for God to become All in All³.

(St. Augustine)

b-The submission does not subtract anything from the Son:

❖ The Son loses nothing by giving all things; and loses nothing when the Father receives the reign; and the Father loses nothing by giving what is His to the Son⁴.

¹ *On 1 Cor., Hom. 39: 7.*

² *In Leviticus 7: 6.*

³ *The Trinity 1: 12: 28.*

⁴ *The Holy Spirit 1: 3: 49.*

(St. Ambrose)

- ❖ The submission of the Son to the Father is not like our own submission to the Son; As our submission is a dependence on Him, and not a union of equals.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ Just as when the Son submits all things to the Father, So does the Father to the Son: One by His work, and the Other through His pleasure¹.

(St. Gregory the Nezenzian)

c-That was said for our sake:

As long as we are still in the world, we have not reached perfection as we should. It is said that even the saints do not perfectly comprehend that God is All in All. In other words, this is not perfectly realized in them as long as they are still in the body in this world; only to be realized with the dwelling of the resurrection, when everyone of them feels that, for him God is All in All.

Here, he does not say that “the Father becomes All in All”; As, once the believers enjoy the eternal reward, they will no longer see every divine Person as having His own work. The Father put the ordinance of salvation; The Son delivered His life as a sacrifice of love for our salvation; And the Holy Spirit granted us the fellowship to enjoy the union with God, and to bear the icon of the incarnate Word ... Now, that all those divine works are realized, we shall only see God as “The Holy Trinity”.

- ❖ **He is submitting to the Father; Not that He needs to submit before the father**, but for my own sake; ... Having not consummated that work of His yet, that is why it is said that He is not yet submitted; “*for we are the body of Christ and His members*” (1 Corinthians 12: 27)².
- ❖ Those heretics do not understand that the submission of Christ to the Father, proclaims the blessing of our perfection; and shows the coronation of the glory of the work bestowed on Him³.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ God will be All in All in each man in a certain way, by which everything that the reason feels, understands, or think, will be God’s. When he get purified from every cloud of evil, the mind will no longer feel anything other than God, or beside God. The mind will think

¹ *Theological Orations, 4 On the Son 30: 5.*

² *In Leviticus 7: 4.*

³ *De Principiis 3: 5: 7.*

of God, see God, and acquire God; for God will become the way of all his movements and measures; And by that God will become All in All¹.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ God will become All in All, when we no longer be, like we are today, bearing a multitude of motives and emotions, beside only some or nothing of those of God in us; But, we wholly become like God, giving all space to God, and to Him alone. This is the maturation to which we hasten to reach².

(St. Gregory the Nezenzian)

- ❖ God will become everything in all; **that wisdom is no longer only in Solomon; the meekness of the spirit only in David; the zeal only in Elijah and Phinehas; the faith only in Abraham; the perfect love only in Peter; the zeal of preaching only in the chosen vessel Paul; and two or three virtues in others** ... But God will wholly be in all. All the saints will be glorified by a chorus of virtues; And God will become everything in all³.

(St. Jerome)

- ❖ The people of God will eternally dwell in this house together with, and in their God; And God will dwell together with, and in His people; God will fill His people, and His people will be filled by Him; until God becomes All in All; God Himself will become their reward, the way He was their strength in the battle⁴.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ “*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*”. That is the kingdom of God, where no other will prevails over that of God, neither in heaven nor on earth; when God becomes the Guide of all to the end; He who lives, works, possesses, and is everything; when, according to the apostle, He becomes all in all⁵.

(Father Peter Christologos)

- ❖ God is the Grantor of virtue, and Himself will be its reward; As there is nothing equal nor greater than God’s promise to give Himself. What does He mean by saying through the prophet: “*I will be your God, and you shall be My people*” (Leviticus 26: 12), but to become your satisfaction; to become everything of what man desires in an honorable way: his life, health, strength, riches, glory, honor, peace, and everything?

¹ *De Principiis* 3: 6: 3.

² *Theological Orations*, 4 *On the Son* 30: 7.

³ *Against the Pelagians*, 18.

⁴ *Coty of God* 17: 12.

⁵ *Fr. Peter Chrysologus: Selected Sermons (Frs. Of the Church)*, 67.

This is the sound interpretation of the saying of the apostle that God will be all in all (28); He will be the ultimate sum of our desires; seen without limit, loved without limit, and praised without boredom. As such flow of love and ministry, will be the eternal life itself, presented to all¹.

❖ He will restore to you your body, complete with even the full count of your hair; will set you with the angels forever, where you will no more need His chastising hand, but will possess His exalted happiness; God Himself will become our Shepherd; **God Himself will become our Cup, Our Glory, our Riches. What more do you need? He alone will become everything to you**²

❖ In heaven, we shall not have the experience of need; by that we shall be happy, we shall be satisfied by God. For us, God will be everything we see here as of great value³.

(St. Augustine)

❖ When the apostle says that God will become “*all in all*”, it so seem to me that this uttering confirms the idea we have reached; that **that God will be instead of all things**, “all in all”. While our present life bears diverse activities and forms; And the things to which we are bound, are as diverse, like time, air, location, food, drink, sun rays, and the rest of life necessities, which, although many, yet nothing of them are for God ... Whereas the blessed life for which we hope, does not need any of those things; as the divine Being will be for us, All, and instead of all, presenting Himself to satisfy all our needs. From the Holy Book it is obvious that God will be, to him who deserves: the dwelling, the clothing, the Food, the drink, the light, the riches, the authority; He will be “all in all”. It so seems to me that the Holy Book teaches us here that evil will utterly be no more. For as God will be in all things, it is obvious that evil will be no longer connected to any of them. For if someone assumes the presence of evil, how could God be “all in all”⁴?

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

❖ We are committed not to retreat from our strife because of serious despair, For “*The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force*” (Matthew 11: 12). No virtue could be had without strife, and no mind could be controlled without deep grief of the heart; For “*Man is born for trouble*” (Job 5: 7); And, to reach “*to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*” (Ephesians 4: 13), we are committed to be all the time in great strife, with limitless care. No one can reach to the fullness of that measure, except him who takes that measure into consideration before hand, trains himself

¹ *Coty of God 20: 30.*

² *Sermon on New Testament Lessons, 5: 4.*

³ *Easter Sermons 255: 8.*

⁴ *On the Soul and the Resurrection.*

on it from now, tastes it in this world, becomes for him the sign of membership in Christ; posses while still in this body, a deposit of that complete union with the body of Christ; has a yearning and thirst for only one thing; making, not only his works, but also his thoughts concentrated on one thing: on keeping now and forever the deposit of the blessed life to come, that of the saints; namely, for God to become “*all in all*” (1 Corinthians 15: 28)¹.

(Father Serinus)

- ❖ Wishing to demonstrate to us this (spiritual retreat), the Lord intended to give us an example ... Being the untouchable Source of holiness, who needs no outside help, nor that of the solitude (retreat); for the perfection of His purity could never be influenced by people around, nor become polluted by mixing with men; For He is the One to sanctify and purify the defiled things; Yet we see Him go into seclusion on the mountain, alone to pray. His seclusion teaches us that, if we desire approaching God with love coming from a heart pure of defilement, **we are committed to separate ourselves from any disturbance of the multitudes until our souls are trained, while still in the body, on tasting the happiness promised to the saints:** namely, that God becomes “*all in all*” (1 Corinthians 15: 28)².
- ❖ We could not see Christ Himself has already achieved the “all in all”, according to the apostle (28), until we discover Christ a bit by bit in all; For about Him it is written: “*But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from of God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption*” (1 Corinthians 1: 30). Consequently in Him we find the wisdom, another time the righteousness, another the sanctification, another the compassion, another the meekness, and another the humility or longsuffering. Christ, now (proclaimed in His saints), is divided, member by member, among the saintly fathers; But, once all come to the unity of faith and virtue, He would become “*a perfect man*” *Ephesians 4: 13), consummating His one body by the features and attributes of all His members. **The time will come when God becomes “all in all” – as we have already mentioned – by the virtues; but He still is not “all in all”, on account that they are still not in the measure of their perfection**³.

(St. John Cassian)

The Holy Trinity is all in all:

By saying that “God is all in all”, he proclaims that the Holy Trinity is all in all; For it is said that “*Christ is all and in all*” (Colossians 3: 11; Zechariah 14: 9). Several scholars

¹ Cassian: Conferences 7: 6.

² Cassian: Conferences 10: 6.

³ Institutions 5: 4.

believe that the expression that “*God becomes all in all*”, does not refer to the Father alone, but to the Godhead of the Holy Trinity, without reference to any one Person.

7- THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST AND THE NEW MOTIVES:

“Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead? (29)

As the apostle Paul did not explain for us what he means by “baptism for the dead”, some believe that this phrase is the most difficult of what came in the New Testament. The fathers of the church and the Interpreters of the Holy Book up to this very day attempt to present an interpretation for it, among which are the following:

(1) Baptism is the crucifixion, death, and burial of the Lord Christ (Romans 6: 3-5). We, who died by sin, die together with Him the death that grants the resurrected life; we are buried together with Him by baptism for death; where we are sown together with him in the likeness of His death to enjoy His resurrection. That is why some believe that, **by the dead here, he means the Person of the Lord Christ** who died, and in His name we are baptized. For, if He is not risen, what would be the value of baptism, if the One in whose name we are baptized is still dead and is not risen? Some interpret the phrase: “*they are baptized for the dead*” that it is a baptism in Christ and a burial with Him by being plunged in water like dead. But many reject this interpretation, on account that the word “dead” here is in the plural sense, means more than one dead. And that the word “baptized” came to mean particular persons, and not all Christians in general.

(2) The word “**baptized**” **refers to the martyrs**; For if they are not risen, why did they endure the sufferings of martyrdom, which is the baptism by blood for the sake of faith? Those depend upon, that the Lord Christ called it a baptism of blood. But how were those martyred; or how were they baptized for the dead?

(3) Some believe that there has been a custom among the Corinthians, **that someone become baptized in the name of a Catechumen who received faith, but died before being baptized**; on account that some believers used to postpone their baptism until just before they die, for fear of committing sins after being baptized; Yet, because some of them happen to die before being baptized, one of their living relatives become baptized on their behalf (according to **the scholar Tertullian and St. Ambrose**). Yet there is no historical proof that that custom was there in the days of the apostle Paul. On another aspect, even if it was, how could the apostle use that custom which does not harmonize with the word of God, as a proof of the resurrection, without a reference to its futility?!

He talks about those who practice baptism in the absent sense, as a group other than that to whom he talks; most probably a group of heretics who used to practice baptism on behalf of the dead, a custom not known before the appearance of Mercion.

❖ Some believe that some at that time used to be baptized for the sake of the dead, for fear that certain of those not baptized, would not rise at all, or rise to be judged¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ The followers of Mercion used to baptize the living to the account of the dead unbelievers, not aware that baptism only concerns the person who gets it.

(St. Dedymus the blind)

❖ Sin brought forth death over the world; and we get baptized in the hope that our dead bodies will be risen in the resurrection. So if there is no resurrection, our baptism would be meaningless; and our bodies would remain dead as they are now².

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ You will probably laugh, yet I shall refer to it in an attempt to wipe away that nonsense! When a Catechumen happens to die, those heretics used to hide one of the living under his bed; then they approach the dead body and ask him if he would like to be baptized; and as they get no response, and the one under the bed says that he is ready to get baptized on his behalf, they do it as though they are acting on a stage³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour?” (30)

In the previous phrase he talked in the absent tense, while here, he talks about himself, those who are with him, and probably those to whom he wrote his epistle, saying “*We*”

The apostle says that it would be foolish for a Christian to be subject to the danger of dying, particularly if he is an apostle, if there is no resurrection from the dead. We may say that this verse interprets the last one; As what would be our motive to receive the daily death, happily, and by our own free will; and why should we submit ourselves to so numerous risks and sufferings every day, and even every hour, if the dead are not risen? We should consider the cost; we would not accept death by our own free will, if there is no resurrection!

❖ If the soul is not eternal, and if the body is not risen from the dead, there would be no point in going through risks for the sake of faith.

(St. Dedymus the blind)

“I die every day! That is as certain brothers and sisters as my boasting of you – a boast that I make in Christ Jesus our Lord”(31)

¹ CSEL 81: 175.

² On 1 Cor., Hom. 40: 2.

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 40:1.

“*As my boasting*” is a sort of vow to confirm something by a strong zeal, on account of that it touches his life and feelings; which some interpret as: ‘I proclaim my boasting or my rejoice in You in Christ Jesus’.

Some believe that the Corinthians used to boast that they managed to humiliate Paul and to tread over him with their feet every day like dead; which the apostle counts as a disgrace in Christ to be accepted with joy. While some others believe that the apostle boasts what he has in Christ Jesus who died for his sake, and is risen for his justification; that he no longer fear sufferings nor death; and is ready to die every day. He probably means to boast every day for the sake of his eternal salvation.

by saying: “*I die every day, ...as my boasting of you*”, he probably means that for the sake of their enjoyment of joy, he would exult to die every day; the same way he says that by teaching them, he would, himself, be taught; namely, by teaching them, his knowledge would become perfect.

❖ Look again at how he strives to evaluate the teaching through his labor, and rather through the labor of the other apostles as well; which is something not of little value, that the teachers are full of strong conviction; showing that, not only by words but also by deeds. ... By his boasting he refers to their progress. ... And lest it might be thought that he refers to his risks in a sorrowful way, he as though says: ‘Far from it that I grieve, but I boast when I refer to it for your sake; I would even find pleasure in dying for your sake and for your benefit’.

To die every day would be by being prepared and always ready to die¹!

❖ Paul rejoices in his sufferings, for he sees the amazing results they bring forth in people like the Christians in Corinth².

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ Here, Paul puts the broad lines for both the enormity of the problems he confronts, and for the greatness of God’s care for him³.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

“If in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, What advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise?, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die’” (32)

“*If in the manner of men*”, Some believe that the apostle means to say: ‘If I speak as a man, or like men’, or: ‘If I fought beasts like some of those who do, in a way just enough to stay alive’, or ‘If I speak like a man who confronts men as voracious as beasts’.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 40: 3.

² On 1 Cor., Hom. 40: 3.

³ Comm.. On 1 Cor., 275.

To confirm that the apostle does not mean it in the literal sense, but only symbolically, some present the following argument:

a- When he talked later on, about the difficulties he encountered (2 Corinthians 11: 24), he did not refer to being made to wrestle against beasts.

b- Historically, St. Luke, in his Book of Acts, did not refer to that.

c- Having been spared of being scourged on account of his Roman citizenship; he would never be thrown to beasts.

d- **Scholar Tertullian and St. John Chrysostom**, and others rejected the literal interpretation of this verse.

Therefore, some believe that the beasts here refer to some men as violent and cruel as beasts; like for example Demetrius the silversmith and his co-workers; although the apostle most probably wrote this epistle before that episode. ... Herclotes the Ephesian called his fellow citizens voracious beasts, 400 years before the time of the apostle Paul. So did Epimenides about the Cretians. ... The apostle was still in Ephesus when he wrote this epistle, where his life was subject to daily risk.

On another aspect, some others believe **that his talk was too obvious to believe that he meant it literally**; based on the following argument:

a- St. Luke the Evangelist did not refer to all the dangers confronted by the apostle Paul. And the apostle himself, parading those dangers said: “in many deaths”; which may indicate that one of them could be being thrown to the beasts.

b- Enciphorus tells us that the apostle Paul has actually **been subject to such a confrontation with beasts in arenas**; which turned back on approaching him.

c- This could be an event that actually happened in Ephesus; Yet the apostle did not refer to it when presenting a list of his sufferings, on account that it ended up in gaining the honor that the beasts were reluctant to approach him.

The apostle quoted the phrase: “*Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die*” from the Septuagint version of the prophet Isaiah 22: 13, which the prophet used when Jerusalem was put under siege by Senecherib and the army of the Assyrians. Having lost every hope in being saved, the people in Jerusalem surrendered to death, found it futile to labor or to strive, and no benefit in fighting back, nor in praying to God; And instead of repenting, fasting, weeping, or feeling humiliated, they held banquets, with the slogan: ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die’; That is what would happen to those who lose their hope in the eternal salvation; who do not anticipate the heavenly glory, nor the happiness in the life to come.

“*Tomorrow we die*”; namely, as long as the belief in resurrection is not true any more. death will soon chase us, with no return of life. And if there is no resurrection from the dead, it would be better for man, instead of suffering for the sake of faith, to eat and drink before he dies (Isaiah 22: 13). Intending to respond to those who doubt the resurrection, the

apostle probably quoted what one of them said: ‘If we are going to die like animals, and will not rise again, let us then behave like them!’.

Those who denied the resurrection were most probably, originally ‘Sadducees’ who say that there is no resurrection, and no angels or spirit (Acts 23: 8). As though man in his wholeness is just a body having nothing worth to remain after death.

❖ This word, he surely uttered with some scoffing; he quoted from Isaiah, the prophet with the sweet voice, who was addressing certain corrupt sensual people, with the same words: *“In that day the Lord God of hosts called to weeping and mourning, to baldness and putting on sackcloth; but instead there was joy and festivity, killing oxen and slaughtering sheep, eating meat and drinking wine. ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die’. The Lord of hosts has revealed Himself in my ears: Surely this iniquity will not be forgiven you until you die, says the Lord God of hosts”* (Isaiah 22: 13-14 LXX) ... If those who so said were denied forgiveness, that would be much more in the era of grace¹.

❖ *“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die”* (32). Tell me now what would be the end, but corruption²!

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ If all hope in the resurrection is lost, let us then eat and drink, and not deny ourselves the pleasures of the present things; as there would be nothing in the future! ... Some say that they seek the pleasures because death means nothing to them; showing that they live as carnal and not spiritual; that they practice, not the work of the soul, but that of the body; on the assumption that all the work of life will come to an end with the separation of the soul from the body³.

(St. Ambrose)

❖ Those who so say are dead, dead indeed, dead to God⁴!

(St. Clement of Alexandria)

“Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits’” (33)

The apostle ends his debate concerning faith in resurrection from the dead, by warning against the evil deceitful people with loosely life and no principles. He who desires to keep his innocence and goodness, is committed to be aware of the evil company. He who walks together with the wise will find wisdom; while he who keep company with the ignorant will perish (Proverb).

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom 40: 4.

² In Ephes., Hom. 12.

³ Letters to Priests 59.

⁴ Paesagogus 2: 11: 81.

Intimate friendship with those who deny the resurrection from the dead would corrupt the minds of believers and does harm to their behavior and life; Those who claim that the resurrection is a purely spiritual issue that has nothing to do with the body; and that the throne of sin is the body alone, which it will forsake as the soul comes out of the body; when the soul will live, and the body will perish.

❖ While you despise the gold, someone else may love it; While you reject the riches, he may earnestly seek it; While you love silence, and the private way of life, he may find pleasure in vain talk in public places, streets and with bad company ... Do not stay together with him under one roof. ... Do not depend on your past chastity to protect you against such bad influence; as you would not be holier than David, or wiser than Solomon ... If your clerical role commits you to visit a widow or a virgin, do not go there alone, take with you someone of good reputation; ... If a woman has something confidential to tell you, she has to be accompanied by a governess, a widow, a virgin, or a married friend; Do not sit with her alone, secretly, and with no witnesses¹.

(St. Jerome)

❖ Do not you see that “*Evil company corrupts good habits?*” In it, you cannot utter the words of the gospel, but would hear those of the idols. By it you would lose the Truth, that Christ is God².

(St. Augustine)

❖ He so said to rebuke them for they lacked the understanding; Yet, to draw them to repentance, he tried to find for them some excuse by casting the blame on bad company from their past³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame” (34)

Accusing them of gluttony, lack of understanding, slothfulness, and vanity, the apostle tried to cast the blame for all that on their bad company of evil friends; seeking their separation from them, and their return by repentance to their past blessed life. And to keep them from falling into despair or resorting to stubbornness, he says: “*I speak this to your shame*” (34).

“*Awake*”, and the literal translation is “*Awake you drunkards*” from your carnal slump in which you cast yourselves through the bad influence of those who deny the

¹ Letter 32.

² Sermons on New Testament Lessons.

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 40: 4.

resurrection from the dead (See Joel 1: 5); Life is no more than a passing moment; but heaven anticipates to grant us blessings with no limits.

“do not sin”; For, having denied the resurrection, they cast themselves into the pleasures of carnal covetousness. The apostle asks them not to disregard God, their souls, and their eternity.

“to your shame”; Namely he exhorts the Christian Corinthians, who boast their knowledge, to keep away from those who deny the resurrection, as they bring them shame.

Again he warns them; as it would be a shame and disgrace for Christians not to know God; For he who denies the resurrection from the dead, who eats, drinks, does not care for the life to come, and does not watch for the sake of his own salvation, would be counted as though he does not know God Himself. The corrupt life is a kind of practical atheism, and a disregard of the existence of God, his care, and his eternal reward for the righteous, and His punishment of the wicked.

The lack of understanding is like darkness that would keep the soul from beholding the light of God; There is nothing worse for the soul than to stay in the darkness without the knowledge of God. Here, the apostle probably talks about those who were once enlightened, and practiced the new holy life; but the bad company of the wicked has corrupted their vision. He draws their attention that it is disgraceful to leave the way of light and do down to the depths of the darkness in ignorance.

❖ It seems as though Paul is talking to some drunkards and people out of their minds; because only those would practice such a drastic sudden change of behavior; telling them that those who deny the resurrection from the dead, have no knowledge of God¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

8- THE RISEN BODY:

Here, he moves to the second part of His essay on the resurrection from the dead; to talk about the nature of the risen body. He starts by responding to some objections to the resurrection, as:

❖ **How are the dead raised up?**

❖ **And with what body do they come?**

Two aspects of the same question. By what power, or how could the resurrection be realized? As it is according to them something impossible. And the second aspect is, if we suppose this to be possible, Will the body be risen with the same form and members?! The first aspect is the objection of the atheists who deny the power of God to realize the

¹ On 1 Cor., Hom 40: 4.

resurrection. And the second aspect is a kind of question out of curiosity from those who doubt.

“How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?” (35)

In a kind of reproach, the apostle presents the questions of those who doubt the resurrection, saying: It is not right to doubt what God proclaims, for the mere inability of the mind to imagine the possibility of their realization. Instead of asking “*why?*” man should have faith in the power of God to realize it; the way the prophet Ezekiel did when he was asked about the possibility that dry bones can again live! His answer was: “*O Lord God, You know*” (Ezekiel 37: 3).

❖ Some may wonder how would bodies that have deteriorated become whole again? And the members that were scattered and destroyed, how could they be restored? Yet no one would wonder how the delicate seeds that deteriorate under the burden of wet soil, could suddenly burst into growth and become green! They would not wonder how those deteriorated seeds, hidden and buried in the soil, get a kind of life-giving warmth, as though by a caring mother toward her little ones, protecting them by some kinds of covers against the freezing cold and the sizzling sun rays; to grow gradually into a shoot carrying heads of grains¹.

(St. Ambrose)

❖ Why does Paul present such an evidence instead of simply referring to the power of God, the way he did in many other situations? Here, dealing with unbelievers, he had to present to them mental proofs of what he says².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies” (36)

Concerning the first aspect, the apostle answers by saying that the resurrection lies in the possibility of the Almighty God who perpetually works by His divine power in our daily life, in what liken the resurrection. The same way the grain of wheat deteriorates, and seems as though has completely perished, before it returns to present fruits of the same kind; It so happens with our own body. It is as though he says: Why do you foolishly deny the power of God, the Grantor of resurrection, when we, on a daily basis, experience His amazing life-giving power to dead things?

The apostle here calls him who asks question concerning the resurrection, disregarding the power of God, and boasting the human philosophy. “**a foolish one**”.

The apostle answers the question “*How?*”, by a practical example well known to everyone; Namely, any protest against the possibility of resurrection is baseless through the

¹ *On His Brother Satyrus, 2: 55.*

² *On 1 Cor., Hom. 41: 2.*

practical actuality. The resurrection of Christ who died for our sake, did not take away from us the death of the body, that dwelt upon us through Adam; but presents us to him to enjoy a heavenly new life, that emerges from His life-giving death.

Saying: “*Foolish one!*”, he addresses the deceptive teachers or the false apostles who, depending upon their human wisdom, take an opposing position against God and men, to become truly foolish. And on another aspect, having counted God as incapable of raising the dead, they became foolish.

❖ In an attempt to solve a problem presented by the Gentiles against the resurrection, he deals with two difficulties: one concerning the way of resurrection; and the second concerning the kind of the risen bodies. He calls them “foolish ones” for they are ignorant of what happen with them on a daily basis, through things involving resurrection, and yet they doubt the ability of God. That is why he confirms, saying: “***What you sow***”(36), O you prone to death and perdition¹ ...

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ It so seems that we are committed to take those words in this meaning; and to assume that those whom God will find alive on earth, on His second coming, in such a narrow period of time, will die and gain eternity; when the same apostle says: “*In Christ, all shall be made alive*” (22); while, talking about the resurrection of the body, he says: “*What you sow is not made alive unless it dies*” (36). How then, could those whom Christ will find alive on earth, live in (no-death), unless they die? ... If we cannot talk as is befitting, concerning that the human bodies could not live unless, by their death, they return to earth, to realize what God uttered against the fallen early father of all mankind, saying: “*You are dust, and to dust you shall return*” (Genesis 3: 19); It would be befitting of us to know that those who will still be in the body on His second coming, would be exempted of the words mentioned by the apostle, and in the Book of Genesis; As by being lifted up on the clouds, they would certainly not be sown in the earth, having not experienced death at all; or they may die for a moment in the air².

(St. Augustine)

“And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain – perhaps wheat or some other grain” (37)

Man would not sow the heads of grain which he is going to reap, but a mere seed, out of which a whole plant of the same kind will come out, yet even better and greater. It is the same with us; We are sown a body, to be risen up in the same body, yet with more beauty and splendor; with a new spiritually glorious nature, greater than what was sown. Death would

¹ On 1 Cor., Hom. 41: 2.

² City of God 20: 20.

not be only a way of crossing over of the body, and its return; but a way to glorify the body, to share with the soul her eternal splendor.

❖ This essay of his is no more concerning the fact of resurrection, but its way: “**How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?**”; whether it will be of the same kind, or better, and more glorious? ... What does he say? “*You do not sow that body that shall be*”; namely the same whole head of wheat; the material is the same, but it will grow into a new, better, and more beautiful body¹.

❖ Somebody may say: But that is the work of nature! ... Now tell me: what nature?

In this case it is certainly God who makes all, and not nature, nor the earth, or the sun, or the rain; “*God gives it a body as He pleases*” (38). Therefore, it is unbecoming of us to ask or to be preoccupied with how and in what way that will be realized, when we know that all will be realized by the power and will of God².

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ If the seed dies, then gives other benefits to men, why would it be unreasonable that the human body will be risen by the power of God in an utterly equal being³?!

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ If you are sown like other things, why should you wonder that you will be risen like other things? ... You believe in what happen to the seed because you see it; but you do not believe in the resurrection because you do not see it. “*Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed*” (John 20: 29). Not all seasons are suitable for all seeds to grow; the wheat are sown in certain time, and grow in another; other times for the vines; and still others for the olives. Yet none of them grow by its own power, but by that of God⁴.

(St. Ambrose)

“But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body” (38)

“*God gives it a body as He pleases*”. What would please God more than for the body to enjoy the blessed heavenly life? It would be His pleasure to grant the body, that shared with the soul her strife in this world, to share her glory as well.

Every kind of seed produces a body of its own kind; We do not hear of a seed of wheat that produces barley; Nor a seed of apples that produces lemon.

¹ On 1 Cor., Hom. 41: 3.

² On 1 Cor., Hom. 41: 3.

³ On His Brother Satyrus, 2: 57.

⁴ On His Brother Satyrus, 2: 60.

“All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fish, and another of birds” (39)

It came a time when scientists claimed that what the apostle Paul say is wrong; for the bodies of man, the beasts, the fish, and the birds, are all the same, all formed of the cellular protoplasm, namely, the living matter of the cells. But now, scientists know that the cytoplasm and its nucleus differ in those four kinds of bodies¹.

The body of man, risen by God is a true body, with a special nature, yet spiritual and glorified; It is not an imaginary body as some believe.

- ❖ In the resurrection, a better body will be risen; with no flesh or blood as it is now, but an un-perishable living eternal being.

(Theodor, Bishop of El-Messisa)

“There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another” (40)

When he speaks here about the celestial and the terrestrial bodies, he does not mean the heaven and earth in the general sense; but by heaven he means the sun, the moon, and the rest of the celestial bodies; Whereas by the earth he means its regular material body.

Again he compares between our body of dust, like that of Adam, and that which we shall get, like the body of Christ risen from the dead.

There is no point of comparison between the glory of the body of dust, and that of the heavenly spiritual body; In heaven, the body will be glorified, splendid, and perfect. Here, even in this world, our body of dust enjoys the deposit of the inner glory and splendor; But on the day of the Lord, *“He will transform our lowly body, that it may be conformed to His glorious body, by the power that also enables Him to make all things subject to Himself”* (Philippians 3: 21). And as the Lord Christ promised us: *“The righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father”* (Matthew 13: 43).

Speaking here about the celestial bodies, he probably does not mean the sun, the moon, and the stars, but he probably means the angels and the heavenly hosts. Although they are spirits, yet, compared to the Spirit of God, they are counted as having bodies. And as we partake with them of the heavenly life, our bodies will be spiritual; yet still different from those of the heavenly creatures. By the heavenly bodies, he also probably means the body of Christ and those of the saints, risen from the dead; While by the earthly bodies he probably means our bodies during this temporal life here on earth.

- ❖ Even among the earthly human bodies, the difference may not be little; as some are Greeks, others are Barbarians; And among the Barbarians, some are more violent than

¹ William S. Dea;: *Baker's Pictorial Ontroduction to the Bible*, 1967, P. 342.

others; some have exalted laws, and others have lowly ones, while still others are not governed by any laws¹.

(The scholar Origen)

❖ If God has created the sun, the moon, and the stars, What would be the problem for Him to create for us new bodies²?

(Pelagius)

¹ *De Principiis* 2: 9: 3.

² *Comm.. On 1 Cor.*

“There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for one star differs from another in glory” (41)

The resurrection grants the believer here, the power to destroy sin, and to break the sting of death, to live with the exulting spirit of conquest.

While the believer longs to know how his body will be in the resurrection; the unbeliever wonders with doubt, what will be the condition of the body risen from the dead! ... The apostle clarifies in a joyful language that our body, risen from the dead will have the following features:

- 1- Raised in incorruption (42)
- 2- Raised in glory (43)
- 3- Raised in power (43)
- 4- Raised a spiritual body (44)
- 5- Shall bear the image of the second Man – the Lord in heaven (45-50)

- ❖ Yes indeed, all will be raised in power and incorruption; Yet in that incorruptible glory, all will not enjoy the same honor and security¹.
- ❖ Although it is one resurrection, yet there will be huge differences in honor between one body and another².
- ❖ As there are differences among the earthly bodies, there are also differences among the heavenly bodies. Although the sun, the moon, and the stars are all in heaven, yet some have more glory than others.

We learn from this that, although all the righteous will be in the kingdom of God, yet not all will enjoy the same reward; The same way, although all sinners will be in hell, yet not all shall suffer the same punishment³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ **(Our spirits will only unite with God alone)**

It is the Holy Trinity alone who has the possibility to penetrate every mental nature; not only to embrace and to surround it, but even to enter into it ... As despite our conviction that we partake of certain of the spiritual natures of angels, archangels, and the other heavenly hosts; Yet we should not consider these heavenly creatures (incorporeal); as they actually have bodies, albeit much lighter than ours; according to the words of the apostle: *“there are celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies”* (40); and, *“It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body”* (44). It is obvious that there is nothing incorporeal except God, who alone can penetrate every spiritual and mental material; as He, alone, is perfect, exists in

¹ On 1 Cor., Hom. 41: 5.

² On 1 Cor., Hom. 41: 4.

³ On 1 Cor., Hom. 41: 4.

everything, sees the thoughts of men, their inner emotions, and all the hidden things of their spirits. About Him the apostle says: *“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account”* (Hebrew 4: 12, 13). And the blessed David says: *“He knows the secrets of the hearts”* (Psalm 44: 21); and, *“He considers all their works”* (Psalm 33: 15). And Solomon says: *“For You alone knows the hearts of the sons of men”* (2 Chronicles 6: 30)¹.

(Father Serinus)

- ❖ We believe in vast differences between the heirs of the kingdom of heaven, and the heirs of earth; between the wicked and those who are pure in heart, who shall see God (Matthew 5: 8). *“There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory”* (41); So it will be in the resurrection from the dead².

(Father Sherimon)

“So also is the resurrection of the dead; the body is sown in corruption; it is risen in incorruption” (42)

Burying the dead is like sowing the seed.

Some Rabbis believe that among the righteous, there will be nine levels of glory; while others believe that there are seven levels:

The first level: The righteous who keep the covenant with the Holy God; who control all the evil feelings.

The second level: Those who walk upright along the ways of God; find pleasure; and give God pleasure by so doing.

The third level: The perfect who walk along the ways of God, and never question His ordinances.

The fourth level: The saints; the most exalted on the earth; and the subject of pleasure of God.

The fifth level: The repentant, who break down the brass gates, and return to God.

The sixth level: The meek scholars, who do not challenge God.

The seventh level: The godly, who reach up to the summit above all the previous levels.

¹ Cassian: Conferences 7: 13.

² Cassian: Conferences 11: 12.

In the Rabbinic heritage, there are certain phrases that are similar to those said by the apostle; as for example that the souls of the righteous in the world to come shall shine like the suns, the moons, and the stars; and like the minaret in the temple of God.

“Sown in corruption” (42); namely, the body will be subject to deterioration.

“It is raised in incorruption”; As a glorious body that will no more be subject to corruption, deterioration, or death.

- ❖ As the rational soul is not good or bad in itself, but is capable of being as such; So is the body, it is not destructible or indestructible by nature, but acquires these features with time.

(St. Dedymus the blind)

- ❖ Although the saints are spiritual in mind, yet they are still carnal in the corruptible body, which remains a burden on the soul. They will become spiritual in the body, as well, when their carnal body is sown and raised again as a spiritual body.

They are still prisoners in the stronghold of sin, as long as they submit to the seductions of the lusts they do not approve.

As such, I understood this issue, as it happened with Hilary, Gregory, Ambrose, and others of the famous teachers of the church, who believed that the apostle, by words, has strongly fought the same battle against the carnal thoughts he did not approve¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ As when the spirit serves the body, it is truly called ‘carnal’; So it is when the body serves the spirit, it is truly called spiritual. That does not mean that it would transform into a spirit as some wrongly interpret the words *“is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption”* (42); But, because it submits to the spirit in an amazing readiness for perfect obedience, and because it responds in everything to the will that entered eternity, it will get rid of all slothfulness, corruption, and laziness. The body will, not only become better than it used to be now in its best health condition, but will even exalt above the bodies of our early parents who sinned².

- ❖ In a certain way, virginity will shine there; and in another way, the chastity of marriage will shine; and in a third way, the holy widowhood will shine as well. All will shine in different ways, yet all will be there³.

(St. Augustine)

“It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power” (43)

¹ *Against Julian* 70.

² *City of God* 13: 20.

³ *Sermons on New Testament Lessons*, 82: 3.

“It is sown in dishonor”. Because of sin, the body, its energies, senses, and feelings, have been deprived of every glory, has become in dishonor, and its destiny was death. Yet it will be raised in glory, will enjoy eternity, and will be eternally liberated from the bondage of death.

“It is sown in weakness”. Having been prone to illness; Then *“is raised in power”*, no more prone to exhaustion, illness, old age, deterioration, and death.

The word *“sown”* came as a joyful term instead of **(buried)**.

What does he mean by the word *“power”* here? He certainly does not mean power like that of God nor of His angels; It is not the muscular strength; but it is a power to consummate what seems impossible to achieve now. Power here is also contradictory to weakness to which the body is prone in this world. It is as though the power means non-submission of the body to illness, weakness, and bodily needs of food, drink, and sleep; ...death, corruption, or deterioration, will never dwell on it.

“It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body” (44)

“It is sown a natural body”, formed of muscles, bones, nerves, arteries, and veins, etc. and with the same system functions; like those of the digestive, respiratory, vascular, nervous system, and so on.

“It is raised a spiritual body”, perfect, and in no need of outer help, like food, drink, air, etc.; does not submit to death; has a spiritual existence, and spiritual provisions.

In the Jewish heritage in the time of the apostle, there were similar expressions, as for example: In ‘Sohar Chadash’ it came: [So it will be in the resurrection from the dead; except for the old defilement]. ... According to Rabbi Bechai: [When the righteous are raised, their bodies will be pure and innocent, obedient to the motives of the soul; and there will be no controversy, nor any evil illness]. ... According to Rabbi Pinchas: [The Holy blessing God will make the bodies of the righteous beautiful like that of Adam when he first entered into paradise]. ... And according to Rabbi Levi: [Once the soul is in heaven, it will be clothed in heavenly light; and when it returns to the body, having its same role, the body will shine with the splendor of the firmament; Then humans will enjoy the knowledge of what is perfect].

The **‘carnal body’** is sometimes translated as **‘natural body’**, namely the body by which the animal practices the activities of its life, like eating, drinking, breathing, etc. has senses, and needs rest and sleep. The **‘spiritual body’**, on the other hand, does not mean ‘a spirit’, as the spirit has no body.

❖ Is our present body, not as spiritual as it should be? It is indeed spiritual, yet it will become more spiritual; As now, the rich grace of the Holy Spirit would most probably forsake it, once it commits serious sins. But after the resurrection, the Spirit will perpetually dwell in the body of the righteous, together with the soul, and the conquest

will be his eternal ally. By that you will believe that God is able to transform these corruptible bodies into incorruptible, and more exalted than the seen bodies¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ When the body which is formed by physical relationship between male and female, is sown, it will be weak and frail, on account of that it is the body of a soul that partakes of its features. But once it is raised by the power of God, it will appear as a spiritual body that bears non-perdition, power, and honor.

(St. Dedymus the blind)

- ❖ This body will be raised, yet not in its present weakness. The same body will be raised, yet after its transformation and taking away its corruption, according to the will of God who raises us; like the iron that becomes fire when it unites with fire.

This body will therefore be raised; but it will not remain in its present condition, but will become an eternal body, in no need of the provisions of life as it is now; but will become spiritual; ... What an amazing issue that we ask God to reveal to us².

(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

- ❖ The body is sown in corruption, as, in the grave, it is wrapped in strips of linen, in which it gets corrupt and consumed by maggots; but it will be raised up in glory, and every trace of weakness will disappear³.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ Although we shall still be in bodies, yet we shall live by the spirit; namely, although we shall keep the material of the body, yet without suffering its weaknesses⁴.
- ❖ As when the spirit serves the body, it would not be wrong to call it ‘carnal’; So it is when the body serves the spirit, it could be truly called ‘spiritual’; not that it is transformed into a spirit, as is wrongly assumed by those who misinterpret the text saying: “*It is sown a natural body, and is raised a spiritual body*”; But on account of that the body will submit in complete, amazing, and flexible obedience to the spirit; receiving its own non-corruptible law of eternity, and driving away from it any feeling of exhaustion, every shadow of suffering, and every sign of lowliness. This spiritual body, will not only be better than any other body on earth in perfect health, but will even be superior to those of Adam and Eve before falling into sin¹.

(St. Augustine)

¹ *On 1 Cor., Hom. 41: 5.*

² *Catechetical Lectures, 18.*

³ *CSEL 81: 181.*

⁴ *City of God 13: 22.*

¹ *City of God 13: 20.*

- ❖ As far as the nature of our body is concerned, It is befitting of us to understand that there is no body we know, in lowliness, corruption, and weakness; and another different body that we shall use later on, in non-corruption, power, and glory. But it is rather the same body, from which its present weakness is taken away, and is transformed to a spiritual glorious body. The ultimate result will be that what has been a vessel of weakness, the same will be purified, and will turn into a vessel of honor, and a dwelling place of blessings¹.
- ❖ The spiritual body is fitting for the dwelling, not only of the saints and perfect souls; but of all the creation that get rid of the bondage of corruption.²

(The scholar Origen)

9- WE SHALL BEAR THE IMAGE OF THE HEAVENLY MAN:

“And so it is written: ‘The first man Adam became a living being’. The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit” (45)

Here, the apostle Paul refers to what is written in the Book of Genesis 2: 7, that Adam became a living being. Whereas, concerning the second Adam, who became a life-giving Spirit; some Jews, say that the Spirit of the Messiah, is *“the Spirit of God that was hovering over the waters”* (Genesis 1: 2) to give life; They were perpetually referring to the Messiah, that He gives life to those dwelling in the dust. In the gospel, according to John, it came: *“In Him was life”* (John 1: 4). God set Adam as a living being; yet, because he was in need of life from outside, God granted him a wife, he called ‘Eve’, namely, (life) to bring forth life, and to be the mother of every living being; but, instead, she brought forth death. The second Adam, on the other hand, the life-giving incarnate Word, confirms to us: *“I am the life and the resurrection and the life”*. (John 11: 25).

The fruit of our connection to our early father, the first Adam, was that we bore a carnal body; whereas our connection to our new father, the second Adam, is that we have become a spiritual body; as He grants us the eternal heavenly life.

- ❖ The apostle says these things to teach us that the signs and promises of the present life and the life to come have dwelt on us now. He mentions the good things that were hoped for, referring to them as have already begun; because their roots and source have been proclaimed. Being so, there is no need for doubt that the fruits will appear in due time¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ *De Principiis* 3: 6: 3.

² *De Principiis* 3: 6: 4.

¹ *On 1 Cor., Hom. 41: 6.*

❖ The saintly apostle looks at two men as the source of mankind; namely, Adam and Christ; Who although both are men, yet they are different in worthiness; although alike in their body members, yet they are truly different in their beginning.

The first man – Adam – according to the text became a living being; whereas the second Man became a life-giving Spirit.

The first man was followed by the second, from whom he got his soul to live; whereas the second Man formed Himself; as He alone does not wait for another to give Him life, but He gives it to all men.

The first man was created out of very cheap dust; whereas the second man came from the precious womb of a virgin.

In case of the first man, dust was transformed into a body; whereas for the second man, the body itself ascended to God.

I can say more than that: The later man is Adam, whose image He first created; that is why (Christ) took on Himself the same role like the first one, and, caring for him, he took up his name to keep him from perdition, and created him in His image.

The first Adam has a beginning, while the second Adam has neither a beginning nor an end. The second Adam is in truth the First; He says: *“I am the First and the Last”* (Revelation 1: 11); He is surely limitless.

According to the text: *“However, The spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual”* (46). Surely, although the earth comes before the fruit; yet it is not as valuable. The earth produces sighs and labors; whereas the fruit gives existence and life. Glorifying such a fruit, the prophet says: *“The Lord has sworn in truth to David, He will not urn from it: ‘I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body’* (Psalm 132: 11).

The text goes on to say: *“The first man was of the earth, made of dust, the second man is the Lord from heaven”* (47). Where are they, who claim that the conception of the virgin, and giving birth to her son, are like what happen to any other woman?! As far as other women are concerned, it is from the earth; while for the holy virgin it is from heaven.

One came by a divine power, while the other came through human weakness. One happened through a body submitted to lusts; while the other, through the tranquility of the divine Spirit, and the peace of the human body.

The womb of the holy virgin was completely relaxed during the heavenly visit. The Creator of the body clothed Himself with a garment from the body of man, in order to turn Him, who was not only granted the earth, but will be granted heaven as well, and could become a heavenly man².

(Peter Christologus)

² Fr. Peter Chrysologus: *Selected Sermons (Frs. Of the Church)*, 117.

“However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual”

(46)

The ‘carnal’ or ‘natural’ is first, being the body in which Adam was created to live on earth. Whereas the ‘spiritual’ is the same body, after it is glorified, to clothe the soul in the resurrection, and to live in heaven as a being ‘spiritual-like’

- ❖ From the early parents of mankind, ‘Cain’ was the firstfruit, who belonged to the city of men; followed by ‘Abel’, who belonged to city of God. Now, according to the phrase said by the apostle: ***“The spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual”***; Every man is first born from Adam, evil and carnal; then becomes good and spiritual, once he is grafted in Christ by the renewal; which will be the case for the whole mankind¹.
- ❖ The spiritual body is understood as a body submitted to the spirit to be suitable for its heavenly dwelling. Every earthly weakness, corruption, and change, will turn into heavenly purity².

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ According to God’s plan, what is least shall pass away, and we shall expect what is better; which is also expressed by the apostle Paul. That is why the farmer does not feel sad when he sees the seeds deteriorate³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“The first man is of the earth, made of dust; the second man is the Lord from heaven” (47)

Some believe that this text originally came as: “The first man is of the earth, made of dust; the second man is heavenly (from the Lord)”; as it was said by Eve when she gave birth to Cain: *“I have brought forth a man with the help of the Lord”* (Genesis 4: 1). However, in many versions, as well as in the writings of the early fathers of the church, the word “Lord” was not mentioned.

The Jews used the expressions: ‘**the bigger Adam**’, and the ‘**the smaller Adam**’; namely the heavenly and the earthly; or Adam before the resurrection, and Adam after the resurrection.

“Of the earth” does not imply just walking on earth which is dust, but bearing a mortal earthly nature.

- ❖ The first difference was between the present life and the one to come; while this difference is between the life before and after the proclamation of the grace⁴.

¹ *City of God 15: 1.*

² *Faith ad The Creed 6: 13.*

³ *On 1 Cor., Hom. 41: 6.*

⁴ *On 1 Cor., Hom. 42: 1.*

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ The heavenly Lord became earthly, to turn the earthly into heavenly. The eternal became mortal through taking on Himself the form of a servant and not through a change of His nature as Lord; in order to turn the mortal into eternal, through their enjoyment of the grace of the Lord, and their non-preoccupation with the disobedience of the servant¹.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ The first man came from earth, and the second from heaven. By saying “*the man*”, he refers to his birth from the Virgin, who did according to the nature of her race, in her pregnancy and giving birth to man. And when he confirms that the second man is from heaven, he testifies that His origin is through the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Virgin. Namely, while He is a man, He is, at the same time, heavenly; while His birth is by the Virgin, the pregnancy was by the Holy Spirit².

(St. Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers)

“As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are heavenly” (48)

As was Adam who was conformed from dust, so also his descendants are submitted to weakness, deterioration, and death. And as is the Heavenly, so also those who unite with Him, will partake of His heavenly glory.

- ❖ In case you stay in how you came from the earth, you will ultimately turn into it; you have to change; You are committed to become heavenly³.

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ Adam was conformed from dust by God’s hands; And Christ was conformed in the womb of a virgin by God’s Spirit⁴.

(Maximus, Bishop of Turin)

- ❖ What then? Did not that Man also die? Yes indeed He died; but was not harmed by that; He rather put an end to death⁵.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ I wish we listen to what follows: “*As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are heavenly*” (48). ...

¹ Letter to Consentius, 205.

² Trinity, 10.

³ In Genesis, Hom. 9.

⁴ Maximus of Turin: Sermons, 50: 2.

⁵ On 1 Cor., Ho. 42: 2.

How could those who were not born heavenly, become heavenly? It would not be through remaining in the way they were born, but by becoming according to the new birth.

Brethren, that is the reason why the heavenly Spirit, through a secret order to His Light, gave fertility to the womb of the virgin mother. He intended, for those who are from an inherited origin of dust, and so became pitiable earthly humans, to become heavenly beings. He intended to bring them forth to the image of their Creator. Therefore, I wish that we, who are already born again, and have been conformed in the image of our Creator, bring into effect what the apostle said.

Even though we bear the likeness of the earthly, let us also bear that of the heavenly.

Let us understand that all that was necessary. Being conformed from the earth, we are unable to produce heavenly fruits; Being born out of lust, we cannot avoid lust; Being born out of the strong seductions of the body, and having to carry the burden of its seductions, we counted this world as our home, and became captives of its evils. But being born again in the image of our Lord (as we already mentioned) who was conceived by the Virgin, we would live by the spirit, bear humility, perfection, and innocence, learn sanctification, train on virtue; to be worthy of being adopted by God as His children.

Let us then bear the image of our Creator in fullness; ... Let that be a reproduction, not of the unique majesty, but of the innocence, simplicity, meekness, perseverance, humility, mercy, and peace, designated to Him to become one with us.

I wish the disturbing iniquities become vain; the seductions of the serious sins be defeated, and the eye, the source of all evil is put under control.

I wish all the fog of mental issues scatter out of our senses.

I wish all the weaknesses of the worldly covetousness are driven out of our minds.

I wish we receive the poverty of Christ, who stores for us eternal riches in heaven.

I wish we keep fully the sanctification of the soul and the body, to carry the image of our Creator, cherish it within us, not through its volume, but through its way of work.

The apostle confirms what we say by saying: “***I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God***” (50). Look how he preaches the resurrection of the body! There, the spirit posses the body, and not the other way round; as is clear from the words that follow: “***nor does corruption inherit incorruption***” (50).

Here you see that it is not the body itself that will perish, but the element of corruption; not the man, but his faults; not the person, but his sins; That he who lives in God, and is risen by Him, would rejoice by reaching the salvation from his sins¹.

(Father Peter Christologus)

“And as we have borne the likeness of the man of dust, we shall also bear the likeness of the heavenly Man” (49)

¹ Fr. Peter Chrysologus: *Selected Sermons (Frs. Of the Church)*, 117.

In the resurrection, the body will be clothed by glory, to become like the body of the Lord Christ risen from the dead; by which it can go through the earthly hurdles, pass through the air, and shines with splendor reflected on it from that of the Lord Christ. As children of Adam, borne in his likeness, and submit to what he was submitted, Now, as we unite with the heavenly, we would equally enjoy His likeness.

By saying “*we shall bear ...*”, he makes it clear that the likeness of the heavenly Man is like a garment we put on and hide in. Our body is there, yet it bears a new nature, shining with great splendor.

- ❖ Now, listening to all these things, you should be purified of every earthly burden by the word of God; that the image of the heavenly would shine in you¹.
- ❖ In case one bears the likeness of the earthly according to the outer man, he would move by the earthly lusts and the temporal love. Whereas the lust and love of him who bears the likeness of the heavenly in his inner man, are heavenly. The soul moves by the heavenly love and the heavenly longing, when, seeing clearly the beauty and perfection of the Word of God, it falls into the depths of His love, and receives the Word Himself as an Arrow who wounds it with love².

(The scholar Origen)

- ❖ This means that, as we bear the corrupt body of Adam from dust; we shall, in the future, also bear the incorrupt body like that of the risen Christ³.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ Paul means: As we have borne the likeness of the earthly, namely, the evil works; let us also bear that of the heavenly – the exalted heavenly way of life. If we are speaking about nature, we would not be in need of an advice or exhortation; it is obvious that he talks here about our way of life⁴.
- ❖ To bear an image is not something that concerns nature, but is according to our own choice and behavior⁵.

(St. John Chrysostom)

- ❖ Do not ask God why He created you that way! Do not be mire, but be a son of God through the mercy of Him who grants the believers in His name, the power to be the

¹ *In Genesis, Hom. 13: 4.*

² *Comm.. On Song of Songs, Prol. 2.. (ACW).*

³ *Csel 81: 182-83.*

⁴ *On 1 Cor., Hom. 42: 2.*

⁵ *On 1 Cor., Hom. 42: 2.*

children of God; although this is not yet given as such to those who intend to know the divinities before believing in them¹.

(St. Augustine)

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption” (50)

“Flesh and blood” is a Jewish expression that refers to man in his present state; as with his fall, he cannot inherit the kingdom of God; his nature does not conform to that place; By his present weakness he would not be able to endure the exaltation of the splendor of the heavenly glory. That is why he has to die, and to have the nature of his body changed to one worthy of existing in that glory.

By the *“flesh and blood”* he means, not the body itself, but what is mortal and corrupt in it, and all traces of sin; our corrupt body cannot enjoy the divine kingdom in its present condition.

❖ By the body here, Paul means the evil intentional works. The body, in itself, is not an obstacle; but, because of our wickedness, it cannot inherit the kingdom of God².

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ I wish we do not despise the body in any way; but only reject its works. We should not despise the body which will reign in heaven together with Christ. Saying that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, does not refer to the body as such, but to its works³.

(St. Jerome)

❖ Then, there will be some kind of harmony between the body and the spirit; the spirit gives life to the ministering body, not expecting anything in return; There would then be no struggle within us.

As there will be no enemies from outside to endure, there will also be no enemies from inside⁴.

(St. Augustine)

❖ By the *“flesh”* here the apostle means the evil works that man does; according to the words: *“You are not in the flesh, but in the spirit”* (Romans 8: 8-9) ... Now, if he is talking about the body in terms of corruption, it is not corruption, but prone to corruption; That is

¹ Questions 68: 3.

² On 1 Cor., Hom. 42: 2.

³ On Psalm 143, hom. 34.

⁴ Enchiridion 23: 9.

why he consummates his talk about him, not calling him ‘corruption’, but ‘*corruptible*’, saying: “*when this corruptible has put on incorruption*” (54)¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

10 - THE LAST TRUMPET:

“*Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed*” (51)

Here, the apostle reveals a mystery unknown to the Jews before; which is that not all humanity will die, but all will change.

❖ “*We shall not all sleep*”. Now, as there would be no resurrection unless preceded by death; And as we understand from this phrase that ‘sleeping’ is nothing but death, How then could all of us sleep or be risen, if many will be found on the second coming of Christ, in the body, having not slept nor risen?! If we believe that there will be saints found living at the coming of the Lord, and will ascend to encounter Him; And if we also believe that, while ascending they will be changed from death to non-death; We shall find no difficulty to understand the words of the apostle. As to saying: “*What you sow is not made alive unless it dies*” (36), or saying: “we shall not all be risen”, and “we shall not all sleep”; Even the saints will live to non-death after they first die.

In short, and accordingly, they will not be exempted from the resurrection preceded by death. Why would it seem unreasonable to us that a group of bodies are to be sown in air, and to be changed from corruption to non-corruption, when we believe in the testimony of the same apostle that resurrection will be realized in the blink of an eye; and that the dust of the bodies of those persons found alive, will turn into an incomprehensible exaltation².

(St. Augustine)

❖ He who does not change in this world will not be able to enjoy the experience of change in the other world³.

❖ Shining and glittering in the resurrection, the saints will be like the angels of God. They will be purified and will become in splendor to be able to behold the greatness of God by the eyes of the heart; for they cannot stir at the divine light unless they change to the better⁴.

(Cassidorus)

❖ He means that we, as well, (who will die) will become immortal, for those (who will be alive at the second coming of the Lord) are mortal as well. Therefore, do not be afraid of

¹ On 1 Cor., hom. 42: 3.

² City of God 20: 20.

³ Cassidorus: Explanation of the Psalms, 20.

⁴ Cassidorus: Explanation of the Psalms, 3.

dying as though you would not be risen, because even those whose bodies will not die, will have to change to incorruption ... Saying: “We, he is not talking about himself, but about those who will be found alive at that time.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (52)

“In a moment; and “in the twinkling of an eye”, namely, in an indivisible period of time, the resurrection will be realized in a divine way, that needs no time to consummate.... Rabbi ‘Akiba’ says the Holy God will blow the trumpet to produce an extended sound that will be heard all over the earth. At the first blow, the earth will shake; In the second the dust will separate from each other; At the third, the bones will gather together; At the fourth, the body organs will get warm; At the fifth, the skulls will get covered with skin; At the sixth, the souls will unite with their bodies; And at the seventh, life will get into all, to stand properly clothed, to appear before the divine throne for judgment.

Blowing the trumpet on the day of the coming of the Lord is a Scripture teaching that came in Zechariah 9: 14; Matthew 24: 31; John 25: 5; 1 Thessalonian 4: 16).

What does he mean by the last trumpet?

There are several trumpets; The Book of Revelation tells us about the seven trumpets that are blown along the generations until the coming of the Lord Christ to realize the plan of God. In the Old Testament, the law was presented with the blowing of a trumpet (Exodus 19: 19). And the trumpets were blown for the priests and the people to get prepared to celebrate the major feasts, especially at the beginning of the seventh month that refers to the end of the world and the consummation of time; at the tenth day – the feast of atonement; at the fifteenth day – the feast of the tabernacles, to celebrate the spiritual salvation from Egypt (Psalm 50: 1-7; Zechariah 14: 18-19). Lazarus was raised from the dead with a great voice (John 11: 43). So, there will be the last trumpet at the ultimate coming of the Lord for judgment (Matthew 24: 31; 1 Thessalonian 4: 16).

❖ At the blowing of the last trumpet, the earth and all its inhabitants will be in terror; but you will rejoice. The world will grieve and sigh, for the Lord is coming to judge them. The tribes of the earth will strike their chests; the mighty kings will tremble in their nakedness; Jupiter and all his descendents will be on fire; Plato, together with his disciples will appear foolish; and Aristotle’s proofs will become vain. You may be poor and modest, yet you will be glorified and will laugh, saying: ‘Behold, the Crucified, my God! Behold, my Judge¹!’.

(St. Jerome)

¹ Letters, 14: 11.

- ❖ By saying “*trumpet*”, he intends for us to understand that the episode will become intensely clear, and with a designated sign; In another location he calls it the voice of an archangel, and the trumpet of God (1 Thessalonian 4: 15)¹.
- ❖ It is equally easy for God to raise from the dead those who recently died, as well as those who died since a long time².

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ In his first epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul proclaims that time will suddenly come to an end, and things will change to a contrary way, saying: “*Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet*” (51-52).

He teaches us that the change will take place in a moment, indivisible, and inextensible; ‘**the twinkling of an eye**’.

There will be no more chance for anyone in that last moment of time to get by death that change of resurrection... Those who are alive will change to become like those who had the change through the resurrection, namely the change to incorruption. There will be no more body weight to bring them down to earth, but they will be lifted up on the clouds to encounter the Lord in air; to be perpetually together with Him³.

- ❖ Concerning the description of the wonders of the events of resurrection by the apostle; How could any man easily deal with such an issue? ... How, with a scream, or by the blowing of a trumpet, in the twinkling of an eye, could all the dead change, to eternal beings⁴?!

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

“*For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*” (53)

Whether man dies or not, what is important is that he changes to be qualified to inherit the kingdom of God.

- ❖ I shall see my brother ‘Caesarius’, not in captivity, buried, sad, or in need of someone to commiserate with him; but I shall see him in splendor, glory, and exaltation⁵.

(St. Gregory, the Nezenzian)

- ❖ He who was able to create you from naught, Will he not be able to raise you up, when you were already existing¹?!

¹ Letter 34.

² *Six Questions Answered for Pagans.*

³ *On the Making Man*, 22: 3.

⁴ *On the Soul and the Resurrection.*

⁵ *Funeral Sermon: On His Brother Caesarius*, 21.

❖ O death! ... Behold, you are stricken! You are wounded! You have fallen to the ground! ... He who created me has been wounded, died for my sake; and by His death He conquered you! ”*O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?*” (55).

❖ We, as well, will be renewed in the body when this corruptible will put on incorruption, to become a spiritual body. Adam did not change to such a body, which he was supposed to have, if he was not qualified for death², because of sin, even by his natural body. Finally, Paul did not say “the body will be dead because of sin”, but said: “*the body died because of sin*”³.

(St. Augustine)

❖ The two genders: the males and the females will remain as they are created. All bodies of males and females who will be in the kingdom of God will be glorious; yet their glory will differ according to their good deeds⁴.

(Fulgentius)

❖ Our minds will be liberated from the sufferings of the earth; From Him we shall receive the gift of light; and by a way unknown to us, we shall unite with Him; our understanding will be in a blessed happiness, and we shall enjoy His splendid light⁵.

(The so-called Dionysus)

❖ The body will endure, yet, when eternity and incorruptibility dwell on it, being put to death and corruptibility will become vain⁶.

❖ Anyway, “*this corruptible*” (the body), “*must put on incorruption*” (53). Whereas the soul, on the other hand, will never have corruption ... Now, if we are to depart to the other world while having corruption, this corruptible will become without corruption, nor an end. It will burn, yet not consumed to perdition; struck with worms, yet not corrupted; It will be like that of the blessed ‘Job’, who endured a long time with “*his flesh caked with worms and dust*” (Job 7: 5 LXX)⁷.

❖ Lest, when someone hears that “*Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*”, (50), he may assume that our bodies will not be raised, he added: “*Nor does corruption inherit incorruption*”, and, “*This mortal must put on immortality*”. Now, the body is corrupt and mortal; Yet it will indeed remain; its corruption and mortality will be no more,

¹ *Sermons for the Feast of Ascension* 26: 4: 6.

² *Sermons on New Testament Lessons*, 78: 10.

³ *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* (ACW), 6: 24: 35, 36.

⁴ *Fulgentius: To Peter on the Faith*, 237.

⁵ *Pseudo-Dionysus: The Divine Names*, 1: 4.

⁶ *On 1 Cor.*, Hom. 42: 3.

⁷ *In Ephes.*, Hom. 24.

and on it, incorruption and immortality will dwell. Now, do not ever ask again how you are going to live a life with no end! You have already heard how your body will turn into incorruption¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ If we ask a good Christian, married and with children, whether he wishes to have physical relationship with his wife in the kingdom of God; Despite his love for his wife in the present life, he will not hesitate one moment to refuse to have physical relationship with her in heaven; For he only cares for that life in which the corruptible puts on incorruption, **and the mortal puts on immortality** (53, 54).

But if we ask the same man whether he wishes to have his wife with him there after resurrection, where she would have that angelic change, promised by God for the saints, He will surely answer in the positive, as powerfully as he rejected the first suggestion.

What a good Christian likes in his woman, is her being a divine creature, for whom he wishes to have the renewal and change, not caring for any lustful relationship². In the same way, man loves his enemy, for whom he desires to have the same success he would himself have; namely, to reach the kingdom of God.

That also apply to fatherhood, motherhood, and the rest of human blood relationships. As much as we reject the physical relationships in them, we love everything that would bring them forth to the kingdom of God. As there, we do not call anyone 'father', for we shall all say "Our Father!"; and will not call anyone 'mother', but we shall all call the heavenly Jerusalem "our mother"; and we shall not call a certain person 'brother', but each one of us will call the other "my brother".

Truly, there will be **matrimony** on our part! As we shall all become as one wife to Him who saved us from the defilement of this world by shedding His precious blood. Therefore, as disciple of Christ, as much as we reject all those mortal relationships concerning our relatives; we should rather love their persons, and wish for them an eternal life³.

(St. Augustine)

“So when the corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘death is swallowed up in victory’” (54)

¹ On 1 Cor., Hom. 42: 3.

² نفهم من أقوال أغسطينوس أن على الزوجين أن يحبا بعضهما البعض ويهتم كل منهما بالحياة الروحية للأخر فلا يكون علاقتهما ببعض مجرد اتصال جسدي، سوف ينتهي ويزول بزوال العالم... وذلك كتنظرتنا إلى الطعام، فهو ليس بالشيء المحرم أو النجس ومع ذلك فينبغي ألا يكون هدفاً لنا، لأنه طعام فاسد لا يبقى إلى الأبد.

فالزواج سرّ مقدس له كرامته وقدسيته أن مؤسسه رب المجد نفسه. ويقول عنه أغسطينوس نفسه "إن قداسة الشر، لها في زيجتنا (المسيحية) قوة أكثر من قوة ثمرة الأولاد في الدم (في الزيجة 18: 21، 24: 32).

³ Sermon on the Mount 1: 15: 41.

The sword of death will no more have authority over humanity, but will be forever destroyed before eternity. Here he introduces death as a fierce being that swallows humanity in all its generations... But through the resurrection of the body and the collapse of the kingdom of death, death itself will be swallowed and destroyed by eternity; Then God will reign, and death will be no more.

By saying: “*then shall be brought to pass*”, he confirms that up to the day of resurrection, the sting of death is not completely destroyed; our body in the world will still be under its deadly sword; but after that, the sting and the authority of death will be no more.

The Lord Christ will swallow death and will destroy it to non-existence.

- ❖ Namely, death will be completely destroyed, no part of it will remain or hope to remain; as the incorruption destroys corruption¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” (55)

The apostle personifies death and Hades; providing death with a sting; and Hades with a kingdom that always had complete victory and conquest over men and beasts; and from them, not any single one could escape.

In the ancient inscriptions, death was portrayed as a skeleton bearing a crown on its head, and holding a spear in its hand by which he kills everyone. The Jews, on the other hand, used to portray the angel of death carrying a sword from which deadly drops of blood flow in the mouths of all men.

The word ‘grave’ or ‘tomb’, was often used instead of the word ‘Hades’, being the place where souls separate from human bodies.

- ❖ In case you think of those who died through wounds and blood shed; or think of how the weakness of the life-giving power keeps them from enjoying grace? Just have a look at Him, whose hands were pierced with nails, and His side was stabbed with a spear; Put your fingers on the scars of the nails, and your hand in the hole in His side ... If He is risen, we can then do well by uttering the praise of conquest, said by the apostle, concerning the dead².

(St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa)

- ❖ When the body is in harmony with the mind, and when death is swallowed up in victory (54); There will be no more struggle by the carnal covetousness. And when the struggle on earth will pass away, the war of the heart will be no more; and the saying: “*The flesh lusts*

¹ On 1 Cor., Hom. 42: 4.

² On the Making of Man, 35.

against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish” (Galatians 5: 17)¹, will come to an end.

- ❖ Man, by nature, fears death and the deterioration of the body; Yet it is amazing that he who is clothed by faith in the cross, will despise even what is fearsome by nature; And for the sake of Christ, he is not afraid of death².

(Pope St. Athanasius)

- ❖ Yet, as long as I am still here, the corruptible body will pass under the soul. So let us say what is said after that: “*Who redeems your life from destruction (corruption)?*” (Psalm 103: 4). What would remain after salvation from corruption? ... When this corruptible puts on incorruption; and this mortal puts on immortality; ... When the written Scripture: “*O death, where is your sting?*” passes away. ... Yes indeed, where is the sting of death? “*The sting of death is sin*”; these are the words of the apostle and not mine. You search for it, but it is nowhere to be found. Then it will be said: “*O death, where is your sting?*” Sin will no more be there to shock you, to fight against you, nor inflame your conscience³.

- ❖ Where is death? Search for it in Christ, It will be no where to be found; Death is now dead! O God! O Life! O Killer of death!

Let us then be with a good heart, that death dies in us as well.

What happened to our Head will also happen to His members; Death will die in us as well. But when? At the end of the world, at the resurrection from the dead, in which we believe, and which we never doubt⁴.

- ❖ Then, we shall, not only disobey any seductions of the sin; but this kind of seductions that we are commanded to disobey, will never be there in the first place⁵.
- ❖ For the sake of the activities, necessary for this life, do not despise health, until this mortal puts on mortality. That is the true and complete health that does not come to an end, which is not revived by corrupt pleasures, when it fails through the worldly weakness, but would become well established by a heavenly power, and be youthful through eternal incorruption⁶.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ Incorruption swallows corruption, and leaves nothing of the past life behind⁷.

¹ *Sermons on New Testament Lessons, 6: 8.*

² *On Incarnation 28.*

³ *Sermons on New Testament Lessons, 6: 8.*

⁴ *Sermons for the Easter Season 233: 4.*

⁵ *Letter to Asellicus 196.*

⁶ *Letter to Proda 130.*

⁷ *On 1 Cor., Hom. 42: 2.*

- ❖ Do you see the exaltation of his soul? How he, as a man presents a sacrifice in the hope of conquest? When Paul got the inspiration to see the things to come as though it already happened, he jumped up with joy, trampling upon death as though fallen under his feet, and utters the cries of conquest on the head of death, with power and exultation: “*O death, where is your sting; O grave, where is your victory?*” Death is no more; Christ, not only took away his weapon, He conquered it and destroyed it, to utter extinction¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law” (56)

If it was not for the sin, there would be no death. Man’s disobedience separated him from God, the source of life; and let him submit to the authority and the law of death.

Without the law, we would not discern sin (Romans 3: 20; 4: 15; 5: 13). When the law, gave us the chance to reveal what we bear inside us of rebellion and opposition against the will of God, sin lived in us.

Sin is the mother of death; as “*through one man, sin entered into the world, and death through sin*” (Romans 5: 12).

- ❖ Baptism destroys the sting of death. You descend into its water weighed down with your sins; but the call of grace grants your souls this seal, that you will no more be led by it to get swallowed by the horrible serpent. You descend into it dead in sin, and ascend alive with righteousness².

(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

- ❖ Forbidding by the law, would always increase the sinful desire, as long as the love and joy in holiness are weak and not able to overcome the tendency toward sin. That is why, without the divine grace, it would be impossible for man to love and rejoice in holiness³.
- ❖ When the law forbids a certain thing, we sin in a more serious way than if we are not forbidden by it. Any way, once grace dwells, it consummates the law more easily and more readily, than if the law itself presses us to do it. We are no longer slaves to the law through the letter, but we came to be friends through love, and slaves to righteousness, which, itself was the source of what the law proclaimed⁴.

(St. Augustine)

- ❖ As without the law, sin was weak. Although it was practiced without the law, yet its judgment was not complete. And although evil has got a place, yet it was not so obviously referred to; Hence the law caused a substantial change. It first made us recognize sin in a

¹ On 1 Cor., Hom. 42: 4.

² Catechetical Lecture on Baptism 3: 11-12.

³ City of God 13: 5.

⁴ Question 44.

better way, and presented the punishment for it ... Yes, but to reveal that the law, in itself, does not give strength to sin, Christ consummated all the law, while being without sin¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”

(57)

The life of victory grants the believer a life of thanksgiving to God; as though the resurrection of the Lord prepares man to present a sacrifice of thanksgiving, well received by God.

Victory would never be realized by ourselves alone; but it is a gift of our Lord Jesus Christ to us.

❖ Christ did not gain victory for His own sake, but for our benefit. Having become a Man, yet He remained as God and conquered the devil. He, who has never sinned acquired victory for our sake, we, who were bound in death because of sin. The death of Christ conquered the devil, who was committed to deliver all those who died because of sin².

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ Lest we do what pleases us in a non-legitimate way; and lest, in this battle, we suffer many troubles and risks, hoping for sure victory by our own power, or referring it when it happens to our own power, and not to the grace of Him, the apostle says: ***“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”***³.

(St. Augustine)

❖ He, Himself, has set the victory; Yet He granted us to share it to get the crowns; not as a debt, but for the sake of mercy alone⁴.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (58)

As faith, by the resurrection of Christ, grants us victory over sin, we present a sacrifice of thanksgiving, not only with uttered words, but also by a fruitful life in the Lord. As thanksgiving is a life of fellowship, serious and fruitful by the Spirit of God. By this, the apostle Paul consummates his talk about the resurrection from the dead, by a call to walk by the new risen life, as a deposit for the enjoyment of the eternal life.

¹ On 1 Cor., Hom. 42: 4.

² CSEL 81: 186-87.

³ City of God 22: 23.

⁴ On 1 Cor., Hom. 42: 4.

❖ +If victory is a divine gift, By saying “*Be steadfast*”, he confirms the believer’s confidence in himself that he is capable by grace to become steadfast and immovable in his faith, and no one, whatever is his position or abilities, can let him fall down. It is befitting of us, therefore, not only to strive in the Lord, but to do it in abundance even to the flow. Man’s strife after his expulsion from paradise is a punishment for his disobedience; yet this strife (supported by grace) is also the foundation of the rewards to come¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

¹ On 1 Cor., Hom. 42: 5.

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 15

MY BODY MOANS WITHIN ME WHEN SHALL I TAKE OFF THE CORRUPTION TO PUT ON THE INCORRUPTION?

- ❖ my God! You created me to live together with You in Your heavens.
Your pleasure was to let me share Your glory.
But with my foolishness, and with my human experience, heaven for me became a fantasy.
And the resurrection of my body became an impossibility.
- ❖ For my sake, You became Man, and shared with me even the grave.
You resurrected and encountered many, to give peace to my soul.
Your resurrection has risen my mind from the death of doubts.
Your resurrection has granted my body the hope to be risen together with You.
Your resurrection has inflamed my heart, longing to the day of Your coming.
- ❖ You are risen, O the Firstfruit of those who have fallen asleep, for all to be risen together with You.
You have presented Yourself a seed cast on earth;
To turn into a life-giving head of grain.
Let me be sown in the dust, to be risen in heaven.
I have been sown with the first Adam;
And here I am, risen with You, O the second Adam.
I am sown a carnal body, and is risen with You a spiritual body.
- ❖ Thanks be to You for the gift of resurrection.
Instead of corruption, You grant me incorruption.
Instead of death, You grant me eternity.
And instead of weakness, You grant me an eternal glory.
- ❖ Your resurrection inflamed my heart with the fire of love.
Your resurrection gave me the spirit of power, and not of failure.
By You, I challenge death, and will not fear it.
By You I trample upon Hades, It will have no authority over me.
By You I confront the sufferings of time with joy.
I find in persecution a fellowship of Your life-giving passions.
- ❖ I wish You hasten to bring the resurrection along.
To make me see what you have prepared for humanity before the foundation of the world.
To see Your believers as splendid glittering stars.
To see for each of them his own designated glory.

It will be Your amazing wedding day.
My wedding day,
In which I enjoy a heavenly procession that gathers the heavenly congregation.

DIVISION 6

**COLLECTION FOR THE POOR IN
JERUSALEM**

AND RECEIVING TIMOTHY

(Chapter 16)

CHAPTER 16

COLLECTION FOR THE POOR IN JERUSALEM

Having dealt with the behavioral, dogmatic, and social problems in the church of Corinth, openly, and firmly, mixed with wisdom and love, the apostle Paul ended his epistle, proclaiming the feelings of his love for them. He began it with words of love and encouragement, and ended it with holy emotions, so that the epistle would realize its goal.

Because this chapter came to end an epistle that dealt with many diverse problems, with the feelings of true practical love in the Lord, He exhorts them to give to those persecuted in Jerusalem, who became poor for the sake of Christ (1-4); proclaims his wish and longing to visit them (5-9); his intention to send Timothy to them; and tells them about Apollo's wish to come to them. Finally he seeks from them to greet one another with a holy kiss, and to receive his love for them in Christ. These all are works of love exchanged between those who labor in the vineyard and the congregation they minister; and in between each of these categories among themselves; by which the blessing of the Lord would dwell; all controversies would dissolve; and the church of Christ would grow in Him.

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1- THE COLLECTION FOR THE SAINTS:

He counsels them to collect for the brothers of the Lord, as he previously did with the churches of Galatia; being not less than them. He demanded that each one of them should lay something aside all along the week, to present to the Lord on the first day of the week a practical praise and thanksgiving to Him who has granted us the risen life through His resurrection from the dead.

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also” (1)

Because of their preoccupation with controversies and dissensions, they have not collected for the poor of Jerusalem, the believers of Judea whose possessions were confiscated because of their faith; hence he called them “*saints*”.

It is obvious from the text that he has already drawn their attention to this issue; that is why he tells them here the way to do it. Saying “*I have given the orders*”, does not mean that he issues a committing command, as that would turn the collection into some kind of tax; but he let it be an optional contribution, given with joy in all churches (Romans 15: 26-27; 2 Corinthians 9: 2). The apostle never claimed to have the authority to give a command to make a collection of alms.

“On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come” (2)

In this apostolic order, we notice the following:

(1) It is to be practiced on the first day of the week, namely, **on the Christian Sabbath**, in which the church celebrates the resurrection of the Lord at the dawn of Sunday. Here, the apostle refers to the custom of the early church of practicing the worship on Sundays. Our celebration of the resurrection of the Lord is realized by our fellowship with Him, to enjoy the new life filled with love.

(2) The collection is done on the first day of the week, **for each of them to give as much as God gave him of blessings** all along the week; Hence he says: “*as he may prosper*”, namely, (according to his income); offering a personal sacrifice of thanksgiving to God.

(3) The giving is not confined to the working men, but **is to be practiced by the housewives, and includes even the children, servants, and slaves**. To give is to present the heart with love to God through the least of His brothers (see Matthew 25: 45), and sharing with the suffering and needy souls.

(4) He did not demand from every member to pledge to give a certain sum; but rather to **present the heart before the money**.

(5) **He calls the poor** “saints”, to remind the givers that their alms are for the brothers of the Lord, or for the Lord through His brothers.

(6) He did not ask them to do this for just one week, but “***On the first day of (every) week***”; as the giving is a continuous virtue with no end.

(7) By saying: “***as he may prosper***”; he means to say that each of them, should either lay something aside through the week, storing it somewhere, until the first day of the next week, then to take it to the church; Or he may do a mental collection in his mind, then consummate it practically when he goes to the church for worship.

Why did the worship change to a new Sabbath – the first day of the week?

The resurrection of the Lord Christ became the new Sabbath in which we find our comfort to enjoy the risen life. The way the exodus of the children of Israel out of the bondage of Pharaoh, has changed the beginning of the year for the Jews from autumn to spring; We, as well, are liberated from the bondage of the devil by the resurrection of the Lord, that gave us a new beginning every day and every week! The Jews used to celebrate the

major annual feasts on the first day of the week: The feast of the weeks (the Pentecost or fifty days) (Leviticus 23: 11; 15-16; 36); the feast of the tabernacles; and the feast of the Passover.

- ❖ Designating the first day is enough in itself to encourage them to give; as the day of the lord is the day in which we gained all the blessings we have get now; It is the source and the beginning of our new life in Christ; and it is, as well, “*the day of comfort*”, in which our souls find comfort from all troubles, to open up to show compassion. Besides, the communion in the Holy sacraments on that very day, comes out as an Alm as though from the storehouse of the great zeal in us¹.
- ❖ “*On the first day of the week*”, namely, on the day of the Lord, “*Let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper*”. On that day, the collective work becomes huge, and the zeal in the eternal things great. On that day, “*Let each one of you*”; not this or that person, but “*each one of you*”, whether rich or poor, woman or man, slave or free, “*Let him lay aside, storing up*”².

(St. John Chrysostom)

Trusting and irresponsibility:

Here, the apostle presents to us a practical lesson of discerning between trusting in God’ and the irresponsibility; as well as the orderly practice of ministry as is befitting, yet without anxiety. According to **St. Augustne**, the apostle Paul **thinks about the morrow, but would never worry about it or get disturbed by it**. He used to plan ahead to fulfill the needs of the poor with spiritual wisdom and without fear.

- ❖ We should be particulate in understanding the phrase “*Sufficient for the day is its own trouble*“ (John 6: 34), lest we would judge some minister for breaking the commandment, just for doing his effort to fulfill these necessities, so that he and those he subsist would not be in need.

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, whom the angels minister, chose to have a treasury to be used for fulfilling His needs, for which Judas who betrayed Him was responsible (John 12: 6).

The apostle thinks about the morrow, yet with no worry, saying: “*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must also do. On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there may be no collection when I come. And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me. Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia ...*” (1 Corinthians 16: 1 – 8).

¹ In 2 Cor., Hom. 43: 2.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 43: 2.

In the Book of Acts it came that the apostles were making provisions for the expected famine; saying: *“In these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability determined to send relief to the brothers dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul”* (acts 11: 27-30).

When the apostle Paul sailed, the food given to him was enough for more than one day (Acts 28: 10) ¹.

(St. Augustine)

“That there may be no collection when I come” (2).

He would rather have no one get preoccupied with anything but the words of preaching, because of his tight schedule, and his desire to use every moment of his presence among them for their edification in the deep and true spiritual knowledge.

“And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem” (3).

The true spiritual leader knows how to honor and appreciate those he ministers. He did not command them to wait for his coming to chose by himself whom he will send with the gift; but he asks them with the daring of love to chose by themselves whom they approve; then he would provide them with letters of recommendation to be well received by the church in Jerusalem.

They bear their *“gift”*, or the abundance of their goodness; not the material gifts, but rather the hearts of the believers in Corinth, filled with love and generosity of giving.

❖ He did not say: I send them to bear your *“alms”*, but to bear your *“gift”*, showing that they are doing a great work, acquiring themselves (by love) ².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me” (4)

❖ Again, to provoke them to give with abundance; he says that if their collection is great enough, he is ready to change his plans and go to Jerusalem to deliver it Himself³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

2- A PROMISE FOR AN EXTENDED STAY IN CORINTH:

¹ Sermon on the Mount 2: 57.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 43: 4.

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 43: 4.

The way the apostle Paul sets a wise plan to collect for the persecuted poor in Jerusalem, to let them trust in the work of God in their hearts, and to strengthen the feeling of mutual love between the churches and among the believers; he also sets a plan for the work of ministry, justifying his desire to visit them, and explaining the goal of this visit.

“Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia (for I am passing through Macedonia)” (5)

Macedonia is not on the way from Ephesus to Corinth, but is at the far end of the Aegean Sea, far from his route; Yet he is committed to go there before coming to them, where he would spend the summer, then he would come in autumn to spend the winter with them in Corinth.

“But it may be that I will remain, or even spend the winter with you, that you may send me on my journey, wherever I go” (6)

Here the apostle reveals how he longs to spend a long time among those he ministered in Corinth, yet not at the expense of his commitments to other churches. On another aspect, he did not want to just pass through along his journeys; but he would rather first consummate his other commitments, to have the chance to stay a longer time among them, or even to spend the winter with them. He did not want his visit to be just an emotional encounter with those he previously ministered, but that of a father to provide his children with their needs.

❖ ***“that you may send me on my journey, wherever I go”***. That is a sign of love, and of a great and strong emotion, to let them know his plans, as friends, and to explain the reason for his delay, and where he stays¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

Some believe that the expression ***“that you may send me on my journey”*** is a hint that he expect them to take it upon themselves to provide him with the expenses of wherever he intends to go; to show his acceptance of their love and their fellowship of his international ministry.

“For I do not wish to see you now on the way, but I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permits” (7)

❖ Knowing that there will be a great task for him to do in Corinth, he did not wish to pass through them on his way to somewhere else, but to spend a longer time with them².

(Ambrosiaster)

“But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost; For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries” (8, 9)

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 43: 5.

² CSEL 81: 189.

He explains to them the necessity of staying a longer time in Ephesus, as God has opened a great and effective door for receiving the word; and on account of that the devil has provoked many adversaries. That is why it would not be fitting of him to close the door opened by God; nor to forsake the church in Ephesus to be corrupted by the adversaries.

While writing this, the apostle probably had in mind **the huge doors of the Roman Maximus**, that were opened for the racing competitive chariots to set forth. As the Lord was opening a door before Paul to set forth to wrestle against the opponents of the church in Ephesus, it would not be fitting of him to forsake the arena and go to visit Corinth, until he realizes the conquest in Jesus Christ.

❖ What does he mean by the “*great and effective door*” ? Because a multitude of people were ready to receive faith and to transform to Christianity; the devil fumed fire from his nostrils, seeing such a great number forsaking him. ... It is a great break and a huge chance for Paul, that he should grasp¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ Paul explained why he is heading to Ephesus, having found such a multitude of hearts thirsty for the grace of God, where he could store the mystery of Christ; And how, the more there are those who seek faith, the more are the adversaries who oppose them and fight the teachings of the Lord².

(Ambrosiaster)

When the children of God find an open door before them, they hasten to enter through it, lest it would close before they do. In the book of Hosea (2: 5), we see how God opened the door of hope before His people to enter like a joyful young bride ascending from the land of bondage. The Evangelist Luke tells us how God opened the door of faith before the Gentiles on the hands of Paul and Silas (Acts 14: 27). And the apostle Paul asked the Colossians to pray for him, “*that God would open to him and those working with him, a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ*” (Colossians 4: 3).

The presence of numerous adversaries might motivate Paul to stay longer in Ephesus. On one aspect, being committed as a minister of the Lord to share with the congregation their labors and anguish; And on another aspect, the presence of adversaries would be a proof of the presence of the Lord in the church; for the enemy always oppose the Truth. By the adversaries, he probably means, not just the false teachers, but the Jews and the pagans.

3- HIS CO-WORKERS:

¹ IN 2 Cor., Hom. 43: 5.

² CSEL 81: 189.

Here the apostle Paul speaks about his co-workers. He exhorts the Corinthians to receive well his disciple Timothy who does the work of the Lord, as he also does. Concerning **Apollos**, he strongly urged him to come to them, but he was quite unwilling to come at that time. **Then he exhorts those in Corinth** to bear the spirit of love, so as not to corrupt their energies by dissensions and taking sides.

“Now if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear, for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do” (10)

Timothy’s mission was not easy; he was not sent just to guide them; but, to deal with the problems of dissensions, corruption, theological errors, and family problems, he might have to rebuke, and to be firm with the opponents and those who were corrupting the church life. The apostle knew that there were among them, some very rich people who were proud of their temporal status; and some others who boasted their spiritual gifts. To confront such arrogant leaders was not easy on such a young man, for which he needed divine help, as well as the support of the congregation.

Yet, his young age was not an obstacle to his ministry, for he was doing **the work of God**, as Paul also did. He did not go there just to deliver an oral message from Paul, but to consummate the will of the Lord, and to do His work.

The Book of Acts 19: 21-22, tells us about the situation that prevailed at that time. Timothy left Ephesus before the apostle Paul send his epistle from there, and he expected to be in Corinth after its arrival, for he went first to Macedonia, with the intention to go to Corinth afterwards..

❖ Lest their mistreatment of Timothy would extend to the senior teacher, and by so doing they would become in a worse situation; Paul, attempting to control them from afar, says: ***“See that he may be with you without fear”***; meaning that no one of the aggressive kind should despise him ... ***“for he does the work of the Lord”***; for, despite his young age, he ministers to the Lord with honor and wisdom¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Therefore, let no one despise him, but send him on his journey in peace, that he may come to me, for I am waiting for him with the brethren” (11)

❖ The apostle did not say that as a kind of criticism for Timothy, as someone lacking self-confidence, but he so says for the sake of the Corinthians, for if they do otherwise they would be only harming themselves².

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 44: 1.

² In 2 Cor., Hom. 44: 1.

❖ “*Send him on his journey in peace*”, namely, not to treat him with adversity, animosity, or hatred, but to show toward him every due submission as a teacher¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“*For I am waiting for him with the brethren*” Some believe that he speaks here about those brethren he sent along to accompany Timothy to Corinth, like Erastus (Acts 19: 22); and Titus (2 Corinthians 12: 17-18) (whom the apostle asked to bring some Corinthians with him to Ephesus).

“*Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to come to you with the brethren, but he was quite unwilling to come at this time; however, he will come when he has a convenient time*” (12)

Having expressed his longing to visit them, the apostle is now telling them how he and the brethren in Ephesus strongly urged Apollos to come to them as well; ... They all cared for them.

The clarity of the goal of both the apostle Paul and St. Apollos, made them work together in harmony. Here he reveals the wisdom, faithfulness and wisdom of Apollos; as is fitting of those who work in the vineyard of the Lord, who should not doubt the intention of one another, nor cause any such doubt among the congregation.

By such behavior, the apostle Paul, confirming his love for Apollos, and showing that he has no fear of him going to Corinth; demands from those people who referred themselves to Apollos or to anyone else of the other apostles, to receive Apollos and to obey him. By such spirit, the apostle summarizes all what came in the whole epistle: that, **although the mutual love among the ministers is a simple commandment, yet it realizes everything as is befitting.**

Apollos probably did not want to go to Corinth, on account of that he did not intend to connect himself to that category who referred themselves to his name, out of admiration of his eloquence (1 Corinthians 1: 12; 3; 4).

St. Dedymus the blind believes that Apollos was a Bishop of Corinth, then forsook the church because of the dissension that dwelt upon it, and attached himself to Paul. Now he was reluctant to return with a message from Paul, until those dissensions were utterly dealt with, and love dwells again among them. This view was also adopted by Ambrosiaster².

❖ As it so seems that Apollos was older than Timothy and more cultured; and lest the Corinthians would probably be offended that he sent to them Timothy, of less experience; To appease this sensitive issue, and to avoid any probability of envy among the brethren, he calls Apollos “*our brother*”, and confirms that he strongly urged him to go to Corinth³.

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 44: 1.

² CSEL 81: 191.

³ IN 1 Cor., Hom. 44: 1.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be men of courage, be strong” (13)

The Greek word ‘Greegoreite’ means to watch and be alert; a military term used in connection with the camp guards and those who watch the movements of the enemies. The apostle exhorts them to be alert to the attempts of the evil enemy, to corrupt their faith through the false teachings; and to corrupt their life and their peace by the church and family problems.

He demand from them to watch, as though he sees them in a state of a deep sleep; As the hope for their salvation does not depend upon the names of those ministering to them, as much as it is upon their own strife and watching.

The believer, as a soldier of Christ, feels that he is fighting a continuous battle, as long as he is in the body, and in the world; that he is in a perpetual danger, because the enemies lie in wait to destroy him.

He asks them to watch in order to receive the grace of God; to practice the holy life in the Lord; to love one another; and to keep their unity in the sound faith.

“Stand fast in the faith”; namely, hold fast to the evangelic truth to enjoy salvation; so that the enemy would not be able to shake you. The expression in Greek came to mean holding fast to one’s rank, and to his position; For the enemy is exerting every effort to make the believer lose his new status in the Lord, and to draw him away from his position as a son of God.

“Be men of courage”; namely, do not be like indecisive children, shaken by the winds of false teachings, but strive like good soldiers. By the term ‘andrizeithe’ here, he exhorts them to take a brave and a mature stand.

“Be strong”; as God granted you the strength, not the weakness, and the energy to work. He talks to them here in a military-like language, as an army in a battle, committed to watch, to be alert, and to work seriously.

❖ They are committed to watch and hold fast, lest they would be attacked in their faith; and to strongly confess what they have learned; as that would be a sound and mature bond between the word and the work¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ Paul exhorts them to be brave and strong as wrestlers and soldiers of Christ; yet to do every thing with love for God and for one another.

(St. Dedymus the blind)

¹ CSEL 81: 191.

❖ He exhorts them not to put their hope for salvation in the persons of the teachers, but in themselves; Hence he tells them to “*watch*”, and to “*stand fast in faith*”; not in the wisdom from outside.

To “*watch*”, having been as though in a deep sleep.

To “*stand fast*”, having been swinging here and there.

To “*be men of courage*”, having practiced cowardice.

To “*let all that you do be done with love*” having been in dissension and controversies.

Whether one leads or is led; learn or teach, let all be done with love¹.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“*Let all that you do be done with love*” (14)

While asking them to hold fast in faith, in keeping the truth, and to behave as mature and strong men of courage, Lest, in their strife, they might lose their love for the brethren and for God, the apostle counsels them to do everything, with no exception, with love; As holding fast in faith, and defending it, would never imply using violence or practicing hatred; they should not lose love while defending the truth!

❖ Where there is dissension and controversies, there is no love².

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ If there was love, the Corinthians would not be puffed up; would not be divided into groups; and would not go to heathen courts of justice, or to any other court against one another.

If there was love in the church, that person of very evil reputation would not dare to take his father’s wife; the Corinthians would never despise the weak brethren; and would not boast their spiritual gifts³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

“*I urge you brethren – you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruit of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints*” (15)

The household of Stephanas had the honor of being the first to receive faith in Christ in Achaia; and for having dedicated their life to minister to the saints. He probably does not mean the ministry of preaching as much as that of providing them with their material needs.

❖ Paul called them the firstfruit of Achaia; either because they were the first to receive faith there, or because their piety was more than any others, or because they, on account of their

¹ In 1 Cor., Hom. 44: 2.

² CSEL 81: 192.

³ In 2 Cor., Hom. 44: 2.

great humility, refrained from getting ordained, preferring to dedicate their life to minister to the others (the poor).

(St. Dedymus, the Blind)

- ❖ The household of Stephanas were not only the first to receive faith, but they also became a shining role model for everyone. Being pioneers, they were committed to be a good example for those who follow them, in ministering to others¹.
- ❖ He does not only say “the first to receive faith”, but said: “*the firstfruit*”, referring to that, together with their faith, they demonstrated an extremely exalted kind of life. In everything, they proved worthy of being considered the firstfruits; as the firstfruits have to be better than the rest of fruits. This compliment was referred to them by the apostle Paul, not just for their genuine faith, but also because they showed great piety, virtue, and generosity in giving².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with us” (16)

The apostle demands from the congregation to submit to such people, who are true in their faith, their ministry, and their behavior; not with a kind of submission to leaders, but the submission of love, **of mutual work, and of listening to their counsel.**

“I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied” (17)

Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus believes that those three carried both the apostle’s epistle to Corinth, and the answer of the Corinthians.

“For they refreshed my spirit and yours; therefore acknowledge such men” (18)

Those men provided the apostle with an oral and detailed report of the conditions prevailing in the church of Corinth, and of the weaknesses and shortcomings that dwelt upon it. They presented such a true portrait that refreshed his spirit, by giving him the possibility of presenting the sound treatment to a situation, clear before his eyes; And refreshed the spirits of the congregation as well, on account of that they have faithfully accomplished their mission as peace makers, seeking the salvation of their brethren, and the edification of the church.

¹ In 2 Cor., Hom. 44: 3.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 44: 3.

❖ It is obvious that those men were the source of the information that told the apostle about the actual conditions that prevailed in the church of Corinth; for which he provokes the Corinthians to give them their due honor and reverence¹.

❖ It so seems that, because the Corinthians were furious against those men who provided the apostle with information about the dissensions and controversies that prevailed in the church there, that the apostle tried at the beginning, as well as at the end of the epistle to appease their anger.

He assured them that they have, not only refreshed his spirit, but the spirit of the Corinthians as well, having carried the whole city in their hearts².

(St. John Chrysostom)

❖ The spirit of a saint is refreshed through thinking of, and practicing the pious issues; as the spirit strives for the sake of what is good.

(St. Dedymus, the Blind)

4- THE CONCLUSION:

At the end of his epistle, the apostle expressed his love, and that of the brethren, for them; to teach them to love each other with the same love that God sowed in his heart, and in those of the other churches toward them.

“The churches of Asia greet you, Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house” (19)

It so seems that Aquila and Priscilla were at that time in Ephesus (Acts 18: 26).

❖ The apostle refers to two kinds of churches: the general, and the family churches. The first in which the congregation collectively worship, and the second held in private homes where households and friends meet, Every place where the priest celebrates the holy rites is called a church³.

(Ambrosiaster)

❖ It is befitting of us, not only to revere the collective seen church, where the whole congregation meet; but to acknowledge, as well, the private church within the heart of the children of God. At the same time, we are committed to long to the high-up church, that consummates all the saints⁴.

(A Syrian scholar)

“All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss” (20)

¹ In 2 Cor., Hom. 44: 3.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 44: 3.

³ CSEL 81: 193.

⁴ BOOK OF STEPS 1: 3.

Exhorting them to greet one another with a holy kiss, namely, with a good will, he actually warns them against polluting their relationships by deception, bigotry, or partisanship; but to embrace holy love for all. The holy kiss is a symbol of Christian love, namely the “*kiss of love*” (1 Peter 5: 14); especially during the fellowship in the divine Liturgy.

❖ The holy kiss is a sign of peace, that drives dissensions away¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

Having bound them together with love; Here the apostle commands them to put the seal on their union by the holy kiss, that unifies, and produces one body.

❖ Why does he make this addition “*a holy kiss*” here in particular? Noticing how they were disgracefully divided among themselves; saying “*I am of Paul*”, or “*I am of Apollos*”, or “*I am of Cephas*”, or “*I am of Christ*” (1: 12); ... How one is hungry, while the other drinks wine; ... How contentions, envy, and legal cases, prevail among them; He exhorts them to correct their relationships; then to seal their union by the “*kiss of love*”; that unifies and creates one body; and which is holy, only if it is without deception and hypocrisy².

(St. John Chrysostom)

“I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand” (21)

To take away any doubt that they are not counterfeit; the apostle; according to St. Dedymus, the Blind, confirms in every case, that even if he orally dictates the epistles, yet he signs them all by his own hand (See also 2 Thessalonians 3: 17; Galatians 6: 11). This phrase also bears a kind of warning against unwarranted doubts concerning the authenticity of his epistles, As a little bit of holy fear is sometimes useful for matters of faith.

“If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed (be anathema). Come, O Lord! (Maranatha)” (22)

By saying: “*anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ*”, he probably means those who say “*Jesus is accursed*” (1 Corinthians 12: 3), whether of the Jews who denied Him, or of those who, under the pretense of speaking with tongues, tried to look as though have entered into a condition of psychological hysteria.

Here, the apostle Paul reveals what is in the depths of his heart toward all with no exception; namely, “love in Jesus Christ”; how he faithfully wishes for all of them to enjoy life and union in Jesus Christ; and how he seeks their salvation and eternal glory.

❖ He, who does not keep God’s commandments, has no love for the Lord.

¹ Csel 81: 193.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 44: 4.

(St. Dedymus, the Blind)

- ❖ The apostle refers here to the Jews who came to be under curse, because they said that the Lord has not yet come¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ By this one word, Paul, not only puts fear in them all, but refers, as well, to the way to virtue, and to the source of iniquity. Meaning, in case of the presence of love for the Lord, **there would be no existence of any evil, but it would be driven away by love. But when this love is weak, sin will show its ugly face**².
- ❖ What is the meaning of ‘Maranatha’ (**The Lord comes**). And why does he use this particular expression? To confirm the divine teaching. And to puts together several proofs – as the the seeds of the resurrection. Otherwise, ‘you would stick to your present condition; you would stay in your sin’³.

(St. John Chrysostom)

He proclaims that, if anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed, and denied of belonging to the holy congregation.

Confirming that the Lord is coming; what would be the destiny of those who do not love Him?!

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” (23)

From the depths of his heart, the apostle asks for them the grace of Christ, that will support them to realize all their needs, and will grant them the possibility of spiritual work.

- ❖ It was the custom of the apostle Paul to ask for the grace of Christ to be with those to whom he writes⁴.

(Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus)

- ❖ Knowing for sure **that all the treasures of the riches of heaven are found in Christ**; that God is Himself Christ; and that all the glory and the perfection of the Godhead is in Him, namely in His body; he writes to all the churches: ***“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you”***. Here, when he prays for the grace of Christ alone, without adding the word “God”, he is utterly convinced that the grace of God is itself the grace of Christ, that includes all the grace of God⁵.

(St. John Cassian)

¹ CSEL 81: 194.

² In 1 Cor., Hom. 44: 4.

³ In 1 Cor., Hom. 44: 4.

⁴ PG 82: 374.

⁵ The Seven Book of John Cassian, 2: 5.

“My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen” (24)

In this epistle, having spoken very frankly about their faults and shortcomings, with straightforward firmness in dealing with their problems, Yet he shows that all that comes from his love for all without discrimination; that he loves them in Christ, and for the sake of Christ.

- ❖ As the Corinthians lacked love for one another, Paul presented to them this teaching to instruct them to love one another the same way he loves them; not a kind of emotional, physically motivated love, but love in Christ Jesus¹.

(Ambrosiaster)

- ❖ Lest they might think that he them, he added: “*in Christ Jesus*”; by which he confirms that nothing in his love is physical or human, but it is a spiritual and true kind of love².

(St. John Chrysostom)

Although at the end of the epistle it came that it is written in Philippi, yet some believe that it was written in Ephesus, then sent from Philippi; where there is a route from Ephesus to Corinth through Philippi.

¹ CSEL 81: 194.

² In 2 Cor., Hom. 44: 4.

AN INSPIRATION FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 16

LET ME WALK WITH LOVE ALL MY LIFE LONG

- ❖ You present yourself a gift to Your beloved.
To make out of them beings inflamed with love.
I stand in awe.
Your apostle flows with love at the beginning of his epistle to the divided Corinthians.
And ended it with love as well.
Imitating You, he is only preoccupied with love.
- ❖ He seeks their practical love for the poor of Jerusalem.
And proclaims to them his love and the love of his fellow ministers.
He confirms his longing to visit the Corinthians.
With love he asks them to receive his disciple Timothy.
And with love he asks them to greet one another with a holy kiss.
With love he seeks Your grace to fill their beings.
That they yearn for the day of Your coming.
Grant me, together with Your apostle,
To walk with love all my life long.

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