

1 Cor. 4.1-21

A lesson on how the Corinthians are to think of Paul

How should the Corinthians think about those who serve them
Arrogance of the Corinthians puts Paul and Apollos in a jam
It also dishonours the apostles
Paul is a founding father, and should be mimicked in life

The argument flow:

[a] It is not the time yet to be judging matters.

1. How are the Corinthians to regard Paul and the other apostles? They are servants of Christ and stewards of mysteries. In the case of stewardship faithfulness is the most important matters.

2. It does not matter to Paul what others think of him, indeed, he does not even judge himself. In his conscience, he is not aware of anything against himself - but even then, it is the Lord who examines him.

3. So the Corinthians should not indulge in this examining and passing judgment on men before the day of the Lord - it is too early for that! Everything will come to light when Jesus comes and every secret heart-motive will be laid bare - and then each man's praise will come from Jesus.

[b] What we have is that we have received; leads no place for arrogance.

4. The figures of planting and watering [3.6] have been applied by Paul with the contrast of himself and Apollos in mind; and with the purpose that the Corinthians do not become arrogant on behalf of one against the other. [In other words it is a burden to Apollos and Paul - to have people saying things in respect of them which they themselves would not regard as things that should be advanced on their behalf. So they are acting arrogantly, towards Christ who really is the Judge, and towards Apollos and Paul who do not need this.]

5. To boast about something which the Corinthians had received is silly. It is the glory of the Giver that is decisive here.

6. In a strongly worded way, Paul paints the Corinthians as already superior, reigning as kings without the apostles. Indeed, he wishes they did so that the apostles might reign with them. That is, he appeals to the oneness that the church has as a basis for thinking the best of each other.

7. The apostles then are seen as the last of all - the poorest regarded of the Christian flock. For their experience is that they are seen as condemned men, as a spectacle to the world and the angelic ones. Contrary to the Corinthian's superior view of themselves the apostles are seen to be :

[a] fools while the Corinthians are seen as prudent and wise.

[b] weak; the Corinthians strong

[c] without honour; the Corinthians distinguished

The situation of the apostles is one of hunger and thirst, poorly clothed, roughly treated and homeless and toiling with their own hands. While even now they are treated as the scum of the earth, paradoxically, in this setting of poverty the life of God that they have a share of leads them to

[a] bless when reviled

[b] endure when persecuted

[c] conciliate when slandered

[c] Paul, through the gospel, is the father of the Corinthian assembly, he is their founding apostle.

8. On the grounds that he sees the Corinthians as his children, Paul is admonishing the Corinthians, not shaming them. While they will have, over their Christian life, many tutors [Is this a veiled reference to Apollos?] they have only one founding father - himself. And if they know him as their father - through the gospel - then they should treat him as a father and copy his way of life. Timothy, as a true son of Paul's in this way, will acquaint them with his ways.

9. Further, if they know him as a father, then they will treat him as one who can come to them and discipline them; and that is not a matter of words, but with power. What would they, as his children like, would they like to see him come with a rod and be stern, or to come with love and a spirit of gentleness. His implication is that both ways of coming are appropriate for a father who is revered and honoured.

How to think of an apostle and servants of God.

Arrogance.

Dishonouring of the apostles

Fathers should be copied in life and revered for who they are.

The argument flow:

[a] The discipline of the man living incestuously.

1. Presumably from the report that Chloe's people brought him [1 Cor. 1.11] or someone else, Paul is aware of a man among the church there who is living with his father's wife. Something which Paul is aware that the heathen Gentiles would not do.
2. Paul sees the arrogance - that they are puffed up - of the Corinthians is seen here; they ought to be mourning about such behaviour and the deed should have been removed from among them. [He is dealing with the "deed" - that is, the removal from among the assembly of such behaviour.]
3. Paul has already judged the person involved - he has delivered him to Satan so that his flesh may be destroyed and so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

The discipline of the church is concerning the deed among them. The man himself - who it would seem is intractable about the matter - is not repentant, which would keep him from the evil one. So the apostle, even though he is not there in Corinth, exercising discipline on behalf of Christ's honour here, has handed him over to the evil one to do his worst, so that the correction of the results of such a life would lead him to despair and so to repentance by that route.

[b] Discipline, and a disciplined life, for the sake of Christ's sacrifice.

4. The Corinthians are to know that slackness over this immorality will have the effect of working its way, like yeast in a lump of warm dough, through the whole of the local church.

Paul invokes the feast of unleavened bread which accompanied the Passover at the time of the Exodus. He wants the church there to be cleansed out of the former leaven of their ungodly life - by which he means malice and wickedness - that they may be a new lump of dough without any yeast at work among them.

He makes clear that the Corinthian church has been liberated by Christ as their own Passover Lamb - he means through Christ's sacrificial death. In this way, their Christian life is a celebration of keeping that Passover, by living in sincerity and truth.

[c] The former letter explained.

5. Paul had sent a letter before this one he is writing from Ephesus. In it he had advised them to have nothing to do with immoral people in the assembly's life. This was presumably the way the discipline was to be administered. When they found a brother in the church who was immoral, covetous, an idolator, a swindler or drunkard; they were to withdraw from them and not eat with them - they were to deny them table fellowship.

6. They had taken Paul to mean to withdraw from all, including those outside the fellowship. He points out that the judging of outsiders is the Lord's final matter and his business. But within the church there is a need to discern and correct clearly what was wrong. They were to attend to that and remove the wicked man from among themselves - not by excommunicating him, but by withdrawal from shared life with him. This is what he meant in 1 Cor 5.2 by "removing".

The principle of removal of the wicked from their common life is drawn from Deuteronomy 13.5, [dealing with idolaters], 17.7-12 [stoning idolaters]; 21.21 [the rebellious son who is a waster and drunkard].

It is based on the understanding that the whole covenant community lives before the Lord and to tolerate such activity as He would find displeasing contravenes their own desire to please the Lord as a total community. Discipline arises out of honour for Christ. It has nothing to do with hounding someone or exercising control over them for our own desires.

**Salvation through
judgment - the
disciplining of the
man living incestu-
ously.**

**Dealing with the
deed**

**Godly living cel-
ebrates the Passover
who is Christ.**

**Withdrawal from the
man who is living in a
way that dishonours
Christ**

1 Cor. 6.1-11

Resolution of internal conflicts using state courts

Two connected matters that turn on the wrong use of law
The "saints" and the "unrighteous"
These are "last days"
The defeat of going to public courts
Poor standards of life among the Corinthians

The flow of the argument:

Paul now follows on from 1 Cor 5.9-13, where Paul corrected the impression that his former letter had made. In that matter he had made the point that the church is a judge of its own life. It has the mind of Christ [1 Cor 2.16] and can sort out its own affairs while it leaves the judgment of those of the world, outside the church, to God.

In this chapter the apostle speaks to the assembly at Corinth concerning the reverse matter where they are attempting to:

[1] Resolve their conflicts internally within the church's life and wisdom by going before the secular authorities [6.1-11]

[2] Use the lawfulness of activities as the criterion for engaging in them [6.12-20]

These two areas are connected. The resolving of their differences had led them to resort to the public law courts. This drew them into submitting to secular judgments; a denial of the relationship they have with the world. They needed to live based on the fact of their destiny in Christ, and that meant that they must know they are heading to judge angels and the world.

The whole area of legality proves not to be the basis for personal conduct either. They needed to consider what was the effect of a sin in relation to the body of Christ, both viewed as a congregation and also as an effect upon their own bodies. What is common to both of these issues is the knowledge of who they are as the body of Christ and as Christian people. Their relation is changed to the world and also to sin.

They need to consider the effect of sin as a contradiction of their destiny and as a defiling influence upon the body of Christ.

1. The issue turns on the difference in Paul's mind between the "saints" and the "unrighteous" [1 Cor 6.1]; between the "believers" and the "unbelievers" [1 Cor 6.6].

2. In the eschatological setting of the last days in which we live since Jesus' incarnation [Heb 1.1-4] there is need for the Christians to take seriously that they are going to judge the world and angels. If this is the case, that they will be judging on such a wide scale, are they not competent to deal with a small case of local matters amongst themselves.

3. And if the church had no confidence in the eldership that those appointed to judge matters of the assembly, then that was a shame among the Corinthians.

4. When Christian brothers go to secular courts to resolve their matters between themselves that is already a defeat - for is a reversal of the very situation that Christ had established by his coming to us. Why not rather be defrauded by a brother than have the defeat of going to a public court?

5. But the fact is that the life of the Corinthians does have such a poor quality that it is true - they do defraud each other - there are matters between them.

6. Then they must have forgotten that the life-style of the unbelieving world is characterised by those who are unrighteous - and that means fornicators, idolators, adulterers, effeminate and homosexuals, thieves, coveters, drunkards, revilers and swindlers; these are those who do not inherit the kingdom of God.

7. The sad thing is, the Corinthians formerly lived like this - and now had been washed and sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and in the Spirit of our God.

Two connected matters concerning the use of law.

The "saints" and the "unrighteous"

The "last days" setting of things as they stand now

The defeat in life that is involved in going public

The poor standards among the saints

Corinthians are living just as they once did before they were washed.

In the previous section we saw that there were two related matters that turned on the understanding of law in the local assembly.

1. What is lawful... [6.12]

Bodily existence requires us to not only consider what is lawful but, in carrying out our freedoms that the law allows, we must be informed about the results of bodily actions. Some bodily functions will cease; the body is to be resurrected [6.12-14]

While some bodily functions will cease at the resurrection, the body itself is destined for a new life. The discussion of fornication as a sin that compromises the bodily union with Christ is begun in this section.

2. Things are lawful but ...[6.12]

[1] We are introduced to two parallel sentences, the first clause of both is the expression "All things are lawful to me/forme...". Then each has a strong contrast, a strong adversative, represented by a "but".

It must be said that the law does prohibit some things, and that these are still incumbent upon Christians to keep and honour. We are not lawless in that way. But what is opened to us here is that whether or not a matter is lawful or not is not the place for any Christian to start his thinking about an action.

Our attention is being directed to another set of issues. What must be under consideration is not only whether a matter is lawful but also "what is the result of doing it". We need to be asking, "If I do this action, what in fact, will I have done; and what is the effect of doing it?"

[2] This leads us to the two comparisons made.

[a] ...but not all things are advantageous, Not all things bring a benefit, or are profitable or useful. This is true even if things are lawful. This addresses the outcome of an action with respect to the person doing it. What will it mean for him? Are there different bodily outcomes to different situations and actions? These are the questions we are being led towards.

[b] ...but I will not allow myself to be brought under authority by anything. I.e. By the doing of something even lawful, it may be an action through which I may lose the very freedom that I have to act. We are free only for that which does not rob us of our freedom.

And are there differing results according to the nature of the bodily act?

3. There are bodily parts and functions that are done away [6.13a]

Foods are for the stomach, and stomach is for the foods but God will do away with both the stomach and the foods. At the resurrection of the body there takes place a change within its constitution. Such parts as a stomach and food are not necessary post resurrection.

The person could lose their freedom as a person by being overcome by gluttony; this would be to come under the authority of a bodily function that is not permanent. And so something of eternal nature, the person [and their body included], who is to be raised would be wedded [come under the authority] to the gluttony which had overcome them.

Treasure in heaven. This same idea is contained in the Lord's teaching concerning the treasure in heaven and the treasure on the earth [Matthew 6.19-21; Luke 12.33-34]. The Lord's principle is that where your treasure is so there is your heart also. So, if your heart [which is of eternal value and is your person] was allied to something as a treasure which was not lasting, [it could rust away], or could be taken from you by others [thieves who break through and steal], then your person of eternal life and value could go down with the treasure you have allied yourself to. This is wonderfully treated by MacDonald, [1867], page 118 ff

**"Lawfulness" not the
final matter for those
who are free as sons
of God**

**Not all things are
advantageous**

**Do I lose my free-
dom in doing this?
Will it master me?**

**The destiny of the
body is resurrection.**

4. The body as a whole [6.13b]

But the body as a whole is to be raised, and is expressive of our whole person. It is this truth which now leads us into a consideration of the results of fornication as being absolutely unlike other sins which are done “outside the body” ie external to its integrity and wholeness.

In another place, we notice Paul’s idea of how “a man is a body”, and it also can be said that “a man has a body” in reference to Romans 6-8 where what is under discussion is the understanding of sin as a power being still resident within our mortal bodies, as well as Paul’s understanding of the “flesh” and “Spirit” tension within the bodily life of the Christian.

Here we learn that the body, as the whole person, is not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. The first part of the sentence states that fornication is a matter of your whole person engaging in a bodily union in such a way as your person is compromised. The second part of the sentence makes clear that the Lord wants our body, He has an interest in it, He desires that it should be separated to his service [Romans 12.1-2].

5. Fornication compromises Christ’s Lordship [6.13b]

Paul is carrying on a discussion of the practical outcomes of fornication for a Christian. He is insisting that the lordship of Christ over our bodies is totally compromised in the act of fornication. So that he can say that the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord. These two ideas are mutually exclusive; they are at odds. The reason has to do with the nature of fornication and what it entails. He develops this later.

**Fornication is such
 a sin as to lose your
 freedom.**

6. Body is destined for resurrection [6.14]

The body is to be raised by the power of God who raised Jesus. The destiny of the body of those who are caught up in the shared life of Jesus is resurrection. As we learn from 1 Corinthians 6.13 that there are bodily functions which will be left behind in the resurrection of the body. But the body itself is as honoured as the person.

**Body destined for
 resurrection**

7. Your bodies are members of Christ [6.15]

The relationship of union of Christ with us is expressed as a union where our bodies [plural] are members of Christ. That is, they are his executive operators, our bodies carry out the requirements and commands of the Lord. This is a form of Lordship which was clear in the ancient world. The person of a slave would be bought at auction. And it was understood that you were buying the body of that person to carry out your own requirements and ideas – he is the executive arm of your own will.

However, the freedom of the Christians was that they are in union with their lord, sharing the same life. They are member of his body and are not free to enter another union by way of their body.

**Bodies are members
 of Christ**

8. Fornication is a bodily union; union with Christ is one spirit [6.16-17]

The act of fornication makes a bodily union, such that it violates the union already operating over our bodies as members of Christ. To take a member of Christ and join bodily join [which in this case is to join their person] to a harlot is to engage in a fleshly union of bodies; for, the one joining himself to a harlot is “one body with her” [6.16].

However, to make clear that the union with Christ is not that of a simple bodily coupling together, Paul shows that the union operating is that of being “one spirit” with the Lord. A fornicating coupling brings about a oneness of physical relationship which contradicts the Lord’s claim over the body; creating a disparity between the body and the spirit which is united to the Lord.

**Fornication a bodily
 union**

**Free only for that
which does not rob us
of our freedom**

9. Fornication is not simply an external sin, it has bodily and personal consequences [6.18]

Sin as an act or deed carried out by the decision of the individual and carried through by their body as their executive arm does not, of itself, harm the body. Further, the culpability of the sin is addressed to the person, not to their body. But the fornicating man cannot disassociate himself from his act; since it is an act that embroils his whole self into the joining. He cannot say to himself, "My body is fornicating but I am not!" Such a distinction here is not applicable.

Further, it is dishonouring to his body. It places his body in a place of tension between two lords, because of two unequal unions. He sins against his own body.

Personal mastery lost

10. Your [plural] body is a temple of the Holy Spirit

Addressing the whole gathered body congregated at Corinth, Paul makes clear that their body is the inner sanctuary of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit they have from God. This addresses their whole congregation since the body of Christ is a collected people.

He reminds them that they, as a group [household], are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, the place where He has taken up residence and is present. As a result, they can never think of themselves as just being their own, they are sanctified [and bodily holy] as the residence of the Holy Spirit. They must keep this body undefiled as befits the one who dwells there.

He reminds them that they are bought with a price. That is, they have a Lord who exercises Lordship over them – so they must glorify God in their body. There are to be no unsanctified bodily unions.

**The inner sanctuary
of the Spirit**

1 Cor. 7.1-16

Men and women: single and married

Matters about which they had written to Paul
Married people
Unmarried and widows
Mixed marriages

This material opens the replies of Paul to a list of matters about which the Corinthians had written to him, seeking his advice and answers. As we work through the list, we see that it included reference to:

- Relations between men and women [Chapter 7.1-24]
- Unmarried virgin women and widows [7.25]
- About eating meat formerly sacrificed to idols [8]

Matters about which they had written to Paul

Paul addresses issues here of marriage - and as Calvin noted here, "the question is not as to the reasons for which marriage was instituted, but as to the persons for whom it is necessary."

[a] To the married:

1. Under the impact of the "last days" it is good for a man not to touch a woman but because of immoralities each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

Paul to the married

Here the apostle recognises that there is an eschatological pressure upon us as we attend to the Lord and his immanent coming.

But he is also aware of the tensions and pressures that exist in the men and women of the fellowship and that there are those for whom it is necessary - even in these last days - that they should marry. Certainly it is preferable to them falling into immorality as he has discussed in the previous chapter.

2. There is, for married persons, the obligation to fulfill their conjugal rights of the covenant of one another. In this situation they each have an authority over the other's body.

They should not deprive each other of bodily union; they could for an agreed time so as to devote themselves to prayer, but they should come together after that so that they are not tempted to a lack of self-control.

[The implication in this matter of not having marital sex is that Paul sees it as an opportunity for the enemy - and the issue is that it could lead to lack of self-control. Such a lack of control he recognises could arise in the proximity of marriage and bodily life together. It is the lack of self-control that Paul is concerned about; that would be a serious matter for the Christian man or woman.]

Paul concedes this, he does not command it. He rather wishes they were like him - single - but not all have this gift; and it is a gift of the Lord!

[b] To the unmarried and widows:

3. The married and the widows should remain as Paul. But if they do not have self-control as single people, then they should marry. Again, the issue is a matter of holding to self-control, which is a matter of Christian freedom - as was the issue in the matter of fornication.

Unmarried and widows

4. **To the married** Paul recounts what he understands to be the Lord's instructions [Matthew 5.32, 19.3-9; Mk 10.2-12; Luke 16.18:

- [a] the marriage bond cannot be dissolved at the will of the parties
- [b] it can be annulled, not rightfully, but effectually by:
 - [i] adultery; because it is a breach of the covenant
 - [ii] wilful desertion; as 1 Cor 7.11

Marriage and divorce

If the woman does desert, then she should either

- [a] be reconciled to her husband or
- [b] remain unmarried

5. **To the Christians who are in a mixed marriage** with an unbelieving partner:

[a] The marriages may continue because the unbelieving partner is sanctified in the believing party. ἀγιάζω - means [1] to cleave, [2] to render morally pure [3] to consecrate or regard as sacred. This is the use in Acts 10.15, 1 Tim 4.5; Rom 11.16; Matt 23.17,19].

Mixed marriages

[b] Should the unbelieving partner wish to go, then the Christian partner should allow that.

1 Cor. 7.17-24
**Where God calls a
person is a place to
remain**

*The call of God does not imply a change of circumstance
Slavery a possible place to stay
The call of God eclipses all other social ambitions
Call of God is not class sensitive
Today
Philemon and Onesimus*

It is vital to distinguish between a wicked life-style which must be repented of and left behind in response to the holiness of the gospel's call to live for God and the social situation of persons, which is the matter under discussion here.

**The gospel does not
require a response
of change of circum-
stance**

The argument flow:

1. While discussing these various states of life, whether married, single, living in a mixed marriage or what ever it is, Paul has an understanding that the call of God requires that there should not necessarily demand a change of circumstance. And it is not just simply a person's marital status - it would apply to circumcision, slavery or other social statuses that are possible to the person in this life.

**Slavery is a possible
place to stay**

2. His principle appears to be that as the call of God comes to us, it is of itself, the up-
permost thing of the person's life. It is such a radical matter that it eclipses all ambitions of upward social mobility. In the case of slavery, Paul indicates that it is quite possible to stay a slave to another human being - for one is, after all the Lord's bond slave and His "freeman". However, if an opportunity came for freedom then it should be taken. ¹

**Call of God is not
'class' sensitive**

3. What this section asserts is that Christians are not of a particular social class or set of circumstances. These matters control the civil and social life of everyone else but they don't do so for the Christian. And it is that the call of God can come into any human circumstance and the Christian life is perfectly able to accommodate that setting.

4. As to "condition" - the place, social status and situation of life that pertained to you when you were found and called by God - it is better to stay there and live the life of God within you at that place. Otherwise the corollary of this would be that the Christian life can only be lived in certain places and states that allow it certain freedoms to practice such a life. This is not so; and the importance of preaching the gospel is that it goes to all persons, regardless of status, and if called, they can live it there, right where they are.

**Call of God eclipses
all other ambitions.**

Today:

Quite a different set of circumstances has arisen in the major modern democracies which have, to some degree, been founded and governed under the influence of the Judeo-Christian basic values.

Here, the striving to render people to be in a place of egalitarian and equal status, seems to create a middle-class style of Christianity which now governs the Christian church and its life - so that it presumes that such 'freedoms' to be able to be practised.

It therefore creates the phenomenon that to be called by God through the gospel preaching results in the drive to be educated, socially upwardly mobile. Sadly, this is conveyed to the mission field as a cultural overlay and taints the radical eschatological stance of this apostolic situation that Paul inculcates in his Corinthian people. This is a confusing overlay which often is read across this passage of Paul's.

Philemon

¹ In another place and much later, - in his letter to Philemon - Paul approaches the matter of slavery from the reverse side of the perspective of the master. He makes clear to a Christian brother, that his treatment of his runaway slave would now change because the master sees the slave as a 'brother' in the Lord. In this way, the very common life that they share within the body of Christ has a power to undermine - because it takes precedence - the social status and network of slavery within the community. This is a change which arises out of the new life that Philemon and Onesimus share in Christ.

1 Cor. 7.25-40

Virgins, men and women; and widows in 'last days'

No command of the Lord but a trustworthy opinion.

Controlling idea of 1 Cor 7.17-24

Marriage has obligations and concentration on each other

Last days perspective: need for undivided interests

Father's deciding on their daughters freedom to marry

Widows will be happier if they don't remarry

The argument flow

1. He stresses that he has no command of the Lord but by God's mercy his opinion can be found trustworthy.

2. Using the control passage of 1 Cor. 7.17-24 that we have just discussed, Paul now turns to give his opinion of the situation for men to remain as they are. If married, not to seek release from their marriage, if single, not to seek a wife.

3. There is nothing wrong with marrying; Paul is at pains to recognise that marriage is a matter of God's own invention for us. But he stresses that it is costly and brings "tribulation in the flesh" [7.5b?]; Paul's motivation for his opinion is to spare them the trouble; what he later typifies as being 'free from concern' [v.32a].

4. Paul's main drive is taken from the 'last days' in which the church lives. Since the time has been forshortened and the world is passing away, then there is a tension which enters every sphere of domestic, emotional reaction and transaction of life.

5. The issues of concern have to do with the focus of the individual: the married person has obligations - quite rightly - to attend to their spouse, the single person can attend devotedly to the Lord without distraction.

6. For fathers, it is no sin to give your daughter to marry; and for another father to not, then he will do well.

7. For widows, once their husband dies, they are in a place to be married again, but only to a brother in the Lord, and if they remain single, then Paul reckons that is a place in which she will be happier.

A trustworthy opinion

Marriage is a God-given state of life with obligations

Last days perspective

Divided interests

Fathers giving their daughters in marriage or refraining to do so.

Widows - better to remain unmarried.

1 Cor. 8.1-13
**Caring for each
other's conscience**

*Meat sacrificed to idols as it is prepared for sale.
Knowledge held with freedom to act; need for love as well
Idols are nothing - there is only one God
A weak conscience; unable to act on knowledge
A sullied conscience when acts are done contrary to its witness
A wounded conscience, as encouraged to act when it is not free*

In the ancient world, there were many fertility cults, local shrines and poltheism abounded. Often, in the market place of a local city, town, or village, the only meat that was available was that which the local butchering had dedicated to the local god. It may have had a mark put on it, or designated in some other way.

It is also true that the stalls where food was served was the temple of a local idol, such as we see today in many restuarants.

Christians, who had turned from this idolatry, often were confronted with the food avialble as reminding them of their old allegiencies; they had to grow into a mature Christian freedom; what should they do while their conscience was finding this freedom? This was the background to the Corinthian question put to Paul.

The argument flow:

[a] The knowledge of what is true, and of our freedom to practice it, makes us arrogant whereas love builds up.

1. Paul makes clear in verse 1-6 that there is to be no doubt that knowledge must always be held knowing that we don't know everything. The emphasis of the Christian life does not fall on what we know but on Who knows us - we must walk in the assurance that God knows us, and each Christian, personally. The implication of this is that God knows each person's journey andf growth in liberty of conscience.

2. About idols: Paul says these things are known:

[a] there is no such thing as an idol in God's reality - they arise through the imaginations of men and women.

[b] there is only one God.

[c] in the polytheistic world of idolatrous practices there may be many gods that are "called" a gods

[d] for us - the Jews and Christians in the Church - there is only One GOD, the Father who is the Origin of our life and one Lord, Jesus Christ who is the agent of God's creation and we exist through Him.

[b] The conscientous freedom to practice this knowledge is not found in all - people are on a journey of exercising what they know freely.

3. The man of weak conscience does not "have this knowledge" in such a way that he can practice it in freedom of conscience. Being accustomed to eating meat as sacrificed to the idol, he finds that he still does so - out of habit of his old life. Paul says that when they do that their conscience is weak, and when they eat, the conscience is not clean, but dirtied, sullied, or defiled.

4. The eating of food is not what commends us to God: so whether we abstain or not it does not effect our relation with God. This principle clarifies that the eating is not a decisive matter which in any way controls the relation with God. We have seen this laid down in 1 Corinthians 6.13a.

5. But relationally speaking, brother to brother, cold it be that the freedom to eat it in the one person, can stumble the other. Because they will follow your example as you freely eat, and when they do, they are accused in their conscience.

6. This 'weak' brother is ruined - in that he went against his conscience - his conscience is said to be 'wounded' when it is weak, through the power of the example of the strong Christian. This means that relationally, the strong one has sinned against Christ, because he has wounded his brother when his conscience was weak.

7. Paul reckons then, that if food is the issue that stumbles his brother, he will not eat it out of concern for his brother's weak conscience in the matter.

Meat sacrificed to idols in its preparation

Knowledge is one thing - needs to be expressed in love

Idols are not anything but imaginations of men and women.

Only one God - the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

A sullied conscience arises when a person acts contrary to his conscience.

Food is not a decisive issue in regard to God.

A conscience may be wounded by encouraging a man, through our example, to act when he should, internally not do so.

1 Cor. 9.1-26

The rights of the apostolic office; Paul's own way in the matter.

*The challenge to Paul's apostleship
The rights of the apostolic office
Why Paul does not choose to exercise those rights*

Following on from the discussion of the need to care for each other's conscience, Paul now ranges into a matter of his own freedom as he exercises his apostolic office.

Paul's apostleship challenged by those others who visit the Corinthians

The argument flow:

1. Paul's apostleship has been challenged by people who are outside the Corinthian assembly; this seems a fair inference as he appeals to them as the one group of people who are the seal - because the fruit - of his apostleship in that place.

2. Paul's examiners seem to imply that he has not acted as an apostle should, insofar that he had not asserted the rights that an apostle might do. He certainly agrees that the teaching of the Old Testament, and the Lord, was that the apostles of Christ might make their living from the gospel. He amasses the teaching:

The rights of the apostolic office Paul does not deny

[a] they have a right to eat and drink

[b] to be accompanied by a believing wife

[c] to have their expenses met, appealing to the Torah concerning the ox and applying that, by extension, to humans.

[d] to have material things given to him in exchange for the spiritual

[e] to recognise that others share this right over them.

[f] as the Lord taught.

3. But he has done none of these things, not because he has not the right to do so, but so as to make the gospel free to them and because he has a stewardship entrusted to him and he has a reward, it is knowing he has brought the gospel to them without charge.

Why he does not take those rights and provisions.

4. Paul identifies with all sorts of men and women, and he does this for the sake of the gospel that he may be a partaker of it.

5. He is conscious that he runs the race to receive the prize but not for a perishable wreath at the end. He won't do what he does for monetary gain. He disciplines his body and pursues his goal that after preaching to others, he might not be disqualified.

1 Cor. 10.1-22
**Keeping exclusively to
the Lord's table - the
Lord's jealousy**

*Israelites experience salvation through judgment
The cause of Idolatry
Eating in table fellowship with demons - the jealousy of God
The Lord's Supper*

Following on from the possibility of being disqualified from the race, Paul now opens the door to the issue of idolatry which he thinks the Corinthians are in danger of falling over. Their leniency in this matter threatens to offend the Lord over the issue of idolatry.

The argument flow:

1. Using the Exodus parallels of the Hebrews experiencing a salvation through judgment by going through water to salvation, and eating of manna and drinking from the rock. This immersion in the sea and the eating and drinking finds its parallel for the Corinthians in the Gospel sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. He makes clear that what the Hebrews fed on, in those ancient days, was really Christ, just as the people of God – the church of God - do today [1 Corinthians 10.1-5]. The warning for the Corinthians was that these ancient ones, who were blessed in covenant experience, later fell in the wilderness.

Salvation through judgment

2. What caused them to do so was that they became idolatrous, indulged in immorality and were destroyed by serpents [Numbers 21.5-6]. They also grumbled at the Lord in the wilderness and were also destroyed following the rebellion that Korah provoked [Numbers 16.41,49]. Paul warns the Corinthians about the common matter of temptation and that God enables us to endure through it.

Cause of idolatry

3. Paul exhorts them that they must shun the worship of idols. Showing that the Lord's supper is a participation in the body and blood of the Lord. He says that the people of Israel, in eating the sacrifices were partners at the altar. He does not mean that the food offered is anything, nor that the idols to which it is offered are either; but he does make clear that behind the pagan sacrificial meals is an offering to demons [Deut 32.17]. It would be impossible for the Christians to consider they could fellowship in a meal with the demons while they also eat at the Lord's table. This would provoke the Lord to jealousy [1 Corinthians 10.14-22]. And if they did that, they must surely take into account that He is stronger than they are - He is dangerous to them, as He was to Israel in the wilderness!

Participation by eating arouses the Lord to jealousy.

1 Cor . 10.23-11.1
Eating with thankful-
ness; yet without
giving offence

Eating with out asking about it
Refraining out of care for a brother
Copying Paul

We saw in 1 Cor 8, that Paul had dealt with the issue of the weaker brother's conscience and the need to take care of him in the matter of eating. Here is the reciprocal side of that - where it is possible to be manipulated by the scrupulous person.

The argument flow

1. Lest he was misunderstood in speaking out against flagrant eating at the table of the demons, Paul needs to make clear that they have a freedom to eat, in conscience, anything sold in the meat market, on the basis that God created all things. However, they need to heed what he said in 1 Cor 8 about caring for the conscience of the weaker brother.
2. In eating with unbelievers, they should just eat with thankfulness to the Lord, without asking any questions about the food itself. But they should refrain if someone, with a weaker conscience on the matter, informs you of the meat offered to idols.
3. Paul makes clear that this is to not let the other man's conscience judge your conscience - your freedom is not subject to his scruples. But the principle here is that Paul will not give offence to another human person whether they be Jews, Greeks or the household of God.
4. He wants the Corinthians to mimic him in this matter.

Eating anything with-
out asking about it

Refraining out of
care - not out of
judgment by others

The Corinthians are
to copy Paul in this
matter

1 Cor. 11.2-16
**As obedient angels
& redeemed humans
worship together**

*Mixed worship:redeemed humans & unredeemed obedient angels
"is the head of"
head covering a public statement
Relational glory - sustained creation order
When angels and humans worship together*

The argument flow:

1. Confident that the Corinthians will follow in the traditional way Paul arranges things in the churches he plants, he sets out his understanding of men and women who pray and prophesy before God and the angels.

**Praying and
prophesying in the
church as shared
with angels**

2. He establishes a principle of what he means by "is the head of" by using three relational settings in which this applies:

- [a] Christ is the head of every man
- [b] the man is the head of a woman
- [c] God is the head of Christ.

"is the head of"

That is, there is something which is common to the relational way of interacting here that is expressed between Christ and men, men and women and God and Christ.

3. Concentrating on the relation between man and a woman, Paul draws attention as to how this relational order between them is expressed in the act of praying or prophesying, that is, speaking to God or speaking to others for God.

He says for a man to have something on [ie covering] his own head when he prays or prophesies would disgrace his head. Meaning his own head or Christ?

4. Concentrating on the woman, he says for a woman to have her head uncovered while praying or prophesying would disgrace her head. Meaning her own head or the man? Paul states what the disgrace would be parallel to having her head shaved, which was the public shaming of a woman caught in sexual sin where she has already dishonoured her husband.

**Head covering is
a public, physical
way of declaring her
gender**

Paul now states a parallel in the setting of praying and prophesying - if she does not wear her covering as she prays and prophesies, then it is as shameful to be shaved and vice versa.

5. Turning to the man he gives the reason for the head not being covered, it is because he is the glory of God as made in his image, but the woman is the glory of the man. He draws this from a creation order, on the basis that she had her origin from him and was made to serve the man.

**"is the head of" = to
be glorified by some
one else**

This now tells us that this whole matter has to do with registering in a public way, who is the glory of whom. So that we could now say that verse 3, which set the relations would mean that for Christ to *be the head* of every man is to say that every man is the glory of Christ; for the man to be the head of the woman means that she is his glory.

6. This matter of creational order, as the man being the head of woman and she being his glory needs to be expressed by the covering of her head because of the angels.

The open access of both men and women to speak to and for God is a manifestation of intimacy which is accessible to both - regardless of gender. In the church of the redeemed there is no distinction here as to sonship - male nor female is the rule and that is a practical issue where both do and practice the same things without distinction or difference.

**The issue of crea-
tion order being
maintained before
unchanged angels**

In the order of creation, where the obedient angels also participate in the worship of God along with the men and women of the church, it is vital, because of their presence and engagement in this worship to distinguish the created orders of men and women. Because the angels themselves are subject to one another and are the glory of those angels under whose authority they live and obey.

7. The appropriateness of the covering of the woman's head as she prays and prophesies recognises that this mixed human and angelic worship is creaturely and the redemption is for men and women who were lost and have been purchased for God [Rev.5] - but the good angels, who as creatures have known no change in that matter, attend with the standing instructions of creation intact.

**Mixed human and
angelic worship**

Paul continues with the theme of the Corinthian worship as they assemble together. Having made clear his reasons for the need for distinguishing gender in the assembly as it prays and prophesies, he now turns to the Lord's Supper.

The argument flow:

1. He returns to the factions [divisions] which exist among them, having dealt with them as a matter of first order in his letter [1 Cor.1-4]. He has heard that there are factions, and his reason for believing it is that there would never have been a preference for Paul, Apollos, Peter etc in the first place if that were not so.

Their divisions are evident

2. Factions have implications for their eating of the Lord's Supper. They manifest themselves in looking after 'number one' - ie the factions destroy the ability to care for each other so as to prefer each other and wait for one another at the supper. If they are ravenous and need to drink they should do that at home - the Lord's Supper is not for satisfying their needs but to express their worship in eating at the Lord's table.

Lord's Supper is not for the satisfying of food and drink

Further, there were those who had not enough to bring to the Supper, and those who had plenty; the differences, under the impact of the factions, was emphasised. This shamed some and elevated others.

Participation was unequal

3. Paul now recites what he received of the Lord about that Last Supper. He will recite it to go on to show that the meaning of it is precious, and that they, by their divisive and self-serving behaviour, are violating that meaning.

The Lord's actions and words at the Last Supper

[a] on the night He was betrayed the Lord Jesus **took** bread

[b] when he had **given thanks**

[c] He **broke** it

[d] He **said**, referring to the bread, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

[e] He **took** the cup after the supper

[f] He **said**, referring to the cup, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Paul adds, As often as you eat the bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. So the act of eating and drinking is a proclamation of the death of Christ which should go on until his return.

Paul's understanding of it as a proclamation

4. To eat and drink in an unworthy manner, he has already said what this is [verse 20-21,33-34]. And to do this is to be guilty of the body and blood = to handle it in a way that belies the meaning of what they are doing as instructed by the Lord.

They must judge [examine and pronounce a verdict on] themselves for, in their failure to judge the body [= the assembly's collected life together] they have opened themselves to the judgment of the Lord. He has caused sickness among them and a few deaths as a result.

5. Paul insists that if they had judged themselves about his matter they would not have been judged. However, they are to see this as a discipline of the Lord so that they would not be condemned with the world.

God has disciplined them about this.

6. Paul wants them to eat at home, so that they will not come to the supper to get a meal for their stomach. This will incur judgment.

Paul now picks up a new matter on the list of the Corinthians. He calls them “spirituals” by which he means the things given by/of the Holy Spirit as they show themselves in the congregation.

Speaking by the Spirit

The argument flow:

1. The Corinthians had come out of idolatry. They had experienced the occult. So they would know, and Paul reminds them, that to speak by the Spirit of God would never mean that someone would curse Jesus. Indeed, no one could say Jesus is Lord except as the Holy Spirit enabled them.

2. Their previous occult experience would have taught them that ‘many manifestations = many spirits at work’. It is not so here. There are varieties of gifts given by the Spirit, they will see varieties of service shown by the same Lord, and they will see varieties of effects [workings] of the same God. All the spirituals are given to individuals, so that, through the operation of that ‘spiritual’ something is worked for the common good; they benefit the community there in Corinth.

Varieties of expression - One Spirit

3. To individuals, just as He wishes, the holy Spirit has given and works all these things for the common good;

[a] knowledge gifts and ministries: words that speak wisdom, words that bring forth knowledge, knowledge about the distinguishing of spirits. This last may mean the awareness of the presence of evil spirits, or it may mean the perception of the spirits of men and women. The first is most likely.

[b] word ministries and gifts: prophecy, tongues and their interpretation.

[c] effects/workings as gifts and services to the body: miracles, healing, faith.

Gifts of knowledge, words, and works.

Maintaining his theme of the body of Christ as it manifests locally, Paul now wants to indicate that these 'spirituals' are given into the assembly in a way that, for them to know how they shall operate them, they must know something about the body of Christ.

**A unity of the body
expressed as a unity
of members.**

The argument flow:

1. The unity of the body is a unity of many members. So all the members would think of themselves as one body. This is how it is for Christ; He is many members but one Christ. This unity is echoed by the fact that we have all been baptised into one body by the Spirit. Whether we were different as Jews are from Greeks, as slaves are from freemen, we were all made to 'drink' of the one Spirit - an image of reception of the Spirit by each.

Mutually dependent

2. The body is not one member, but many. They need each other, and they do different functions that benefit the whole. They cannot think of themselves as being independent of one another - they are mutually dependent.

Even weaker members, or unseemly members, turn out to be crucial to the life of the body. So, because there is no division in the body, they must all care for one another. They suffer together and are glorified together. They are Christ's body and individually members of it.

3. In the church God has appointed:

- [1] apostles
- [2] prophets
- [3] teachers
- [4] miracles
- [5] gifts of healings, helps, administrations, kinds of tongues.

But they all do not have all the same gifts, they are variously dispersed among the body.

**God's appointment
in the church**

4. The Corinthians should desire the greater gifts and yet there is still a more excellent way to understand.