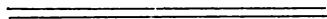


A SHORT SUMMARY.
OF THE
FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

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THE First Epistle to the Corinthians was written by the apostle Paul from Ephesus (1 Cor. xvi. 5-8). He had proposed to visit them from thence (2 Cor. i. 15, 16), but evidently had heard of their bad state, which caused him to change his mind, and write them a letter (2 Cor. i. 23). This letter was most likely sent by Titus (2 Cor. ii. 13), who brought back to Paul the news of their obedience, and comforted his spirit, which was cast down (2 Cor. vii. 5-7). The Second Epistle was written from Macedonia on the reception of the good news. The contents of it differ greatly from that of the Epistle to the Romans. It gives to us the picture of the internal condition of an Assembly of God of that time, and shows how sadly saints of God may depart from even decent morality if not walking according to the light. Thus it is most practically blessed to us who live in a day when many of the evils mentioned here are grown into enormous proportions, as giving the corrective power, apart from all question of

official rule, there being apparently no elders, or deacons, in the Church at Corinth.

Thus the cross of Christ, Christ Himself, and the Holy Ghost, are brought in as the correctives to human philosophy and wisdom in the first and second chapters. These three points are the great fundamental truths, on which corporate Christianity rests, with the word of God as its rule. The evils of disunion are taken up in the third chapter, and the presence of the Holy Ghost in the temple of God brought in as a corrective power. In the fourth chapter we find the saints puffed up for one servant of God against the other, self-satisfaction and pride manifest among them. The love of the family of God is alluded to to correct the evil. In the fifth chapter we find open sin amongst them, viz., fornication. In the sixth chapter they are going to law one against the other, before the world. The corrective power against fornication is exhibited at the end of the chapter. The seventh chapter is occupied with regulations about marriage and the various callings of life. The eighth chapter, about things offered to idols. The ninth chapter about Paul's apostleship, ending up with a warning to preachers, and to the professing saints in general (Chap. x. 1-15) from the example of Israel. All this part of the Epistle may take a wide range as to the house of God, showing at the

same time into what sins saints may fall. The Lord's table is then taken up, and put in the very centre of Christian worship, saints there expressing their membership of the body. In the eleventh chapter the true order of the creation is taken up, now Christ has come into it. This, with regulations about men and women praying and prophesying take up the first part; the Lord's Supper, as the Assembly meeting, the latter part. The truth of the Church of God as the Body of Christ follows, in the twelfth chapter, showing its action in the members, and by its special gifts. The bond of love which binds all together follows in the thirteenth chapter, and the correctives to confusion in the Assembly are treated of in the fourteenth chapter, but without introducing official rule. In the fifteenth chapter, the question of the resurrection of the dead is taken up, some having even denied it as God's truth. The sixteenth chapter closes the Epistle.

Thus the two aspects of the Assembly of God are brought out in this Epistle. First, as the house of God, which is rather exhibited in the former part of the Epistle (comp. chap. iii. with chap. x., beginning). Secondly, the Body of Christ (see chaps. x. 17, and xii.). The doctrine of the church in these two aspects, with the place the Lord's table holds in connection with it, in chaps. v., x., and xi., and, I may add

baptism in chaps. i. and x., and the doctrine of the resurrection and the coming of the Lord in chap. xv., make this Epistle a most important one for the saints in these last days. But now let us look at the Epistle a little more closely, and may the Lord give eyes to see and understanding hearts to understand.

CHAPTER I.

Paul was called to be an apostle by the will of God; he addresses them in connection with Sosthenes, a brother who had been converted amongst them, perhaps the chief ruler of the synagogue, who had accused Paul and others before Gallio. If so he was the second chief ruler of the synagogue converted (see Acts xviii. 8-17). The Assembly of God at Corinth is addressed. The Assembly of God, outwardly expressed at Corinth, may be viewed in two aspects: First, those who were sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, might compose it; secondly, those who in every place called upon the Name of Jesus Christ the Lord, both their Lord and ours. Thus the Epistle has both a wide and narrow aspect, and is especially adapted as addressed to those who in every place call on the Name of the Lord,—to the wants of the present day. The “sanctified in Christ Jesus” would have a peculiar reference to the state of things at Corinth. For if set apart for God’s

holy use, how was it there was so much evil amongst them? Thus they are called back to their primitive standing, and the usual salutation of grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, is given them. Before exposing their faults, he thanks God for the grace given them, and that in everything they were enriched by Jesus Christ, in all utterance and all knowledge, so that they came behind in no gift, waiting for the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, who would confirm them unto the end, that they might be blameless in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. He did not look *at them* as to his confidence about them; if he had, he would have had many misgivings; but *God was faithful*, to preserve them to that day, by whom they had been called unto the fellowship of His Son. Thus they were the Assembly of God; as to their real standing, sanctified in Christ Jesus; as to their profession with all others, they called on the Name of the Lord. As to gifts, they were in every thing enriched; and as to their hope, they were looking for the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus having given them their proper position and privileges, and having thanked God for what he could of them too, the apostle turns to them about the evils manifested amongst them. He besought them by the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ that they all might speak the same thing,

and that there might be no schism amongst them. The Name of the Lord Jesus Christ was supreme, and the corrective of all divisions, which must arise in proportion as that Name was forgotten. Thus saints rightly gathered are gathered to the Name of the Lord. He is absent in bodily presence, but as the Queen gathers her Parliament in her name, though absent sometimes herself, so it is with the Lord Jesus. He gathers the saints in His Name, and where two or three are gathered together in His Name, there He is in the midst. Matt. xviii. The house of Chloe had told him about them. Human pride and philosophy were creeping in, and men-leaders elevated to heads of schools of thought. Some said, "I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I of Cephas, and I of Christ." Was Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for them? Were they baptized in the name of Paul? He thanked God he had only baptized a few of them. Baptism then as now was a bone of contention, and men-leaders were using it for party-purposes, as they do now. Paul was not sent to baptize, like the other apostles (Matt. xxviii. 19), but to preach the gospel. He got his commission directly from heaven; and that gospel brought out in its fulness, as it is afterwards, is the true corrective power to all human wisdom and philosophy that was creeping in. We must remember that Corinth was one of the cities of

Greek civilization. Consequently a young Assembly, just separated from the world, was in great danger of this influence. The saints were copying the human wisdom of the Greeks, who had their Platos, and their Socrates', and Aristotles, as leaders of schools of philosophy. From ver. 18-29, the cross of Christ is pressed on the saints as God's judgment on all human wisdom and power, saving at the same time those that believed.

Christ Himself in the glory is then exhibited as the wisdom of God (ver. 30, 31), and the Spirit of God come down from heaven as the Revealer and Communicator of this wisdom to vessels of His choice in chap. ii., who wrote it down in Spirit-taught words. The world, as to its wisdom, had been tested all through the Old Testament times, and, by its wisdom, knew not God (ver. 21). Then it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. This was a stumbling-block to the Jews, who required a sign, and who were looking for the power of the kingdom, whilst it was foolishness to the Greeks, who sought after wisdom. Where was the power of the kingdom in a crucified man? Where was wisdom in Christ on the cross? Surely it was the weakness of God exhibited, yet stronger than men, and the foolishness of God, yet wiser than men, and we who are the called have

found in it the wisdom of God and the power of God. As to their calling, they were to know that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, were called; for God had chosen the foolish, weak, base, despised things of the world, to confound the wise, mighty, and those things which were something. The cross of Christ was thus the leveler and end of all human wisdom and power. Strong and wise flesh was a mere cypher in the light of it. Where are the boasted schools of thought, the most lofty plans of education, the highest seats of learning, in the light of the cross? They all come to an end before God there. Man may set them up afresh. He is setting up what God has judged. Now is the judgment of this world (John xii. 31). The cross proclaims boldly, There is no wisdom in the world? the princes of it have crucified the Lord of glory.

Where is wisdom, then? In a Man up in heaven—in the Person of the Son of God. Of God they were in Christ Jesus. Born of God, as to their nature, they were in Christ Jesus as to their position, given them by redemption, and so no longer in the flesh. Christ on God's side was made unto them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, so that if they would glory they should glory in the Lord. Thus the cross of Christ put an end to all glorying in the flesh. The revelation of Christ in the

glory proclaimed that all wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption were centred in His person, and consequently outside the earth. If they would glory, let them glory in the Lord.

CHAPTER II.

As for himself, when he came amongst them as heathens, he did not use the human wisdom of Greek philosophers in declaring to them the testimony of God. His theme was, as he described above, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. God had chosen weak vessels to confound the wise, and he was with them in weakness, and fear, and in much trembling. He thus gloried in the cross as putting an end to all power in his flesh; he rejected all enticing words of man's wisdom as his weapon, but he spoke in demonstration of the Spirit and in power, so that their faith might not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. The Spirit of God then was his energy, and he testified of Christ the wisdom of God.

Howbeit, he spoke indeed wisdom amongst them that were perfect (that is the saints), yet not the wisdom of the world, nor of the princes of this world which come to nought. But they spoke the wisdom of God in a mystery, hidden indeed, but which God ordained for the saints' glory before the world began. This mystery, this hidden wisdom, came into the world em-

bodied in a Person, but none of the princes of the world knew this, else they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Prophets might speak of these things (mentioned in ver. 7), but did not understand them, as the passage from Isaiah quoted shews : “ Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” How was it then revealed ? The Person in whom it was centred was taken up into the glory, but God had sent down the Holy Ghost as the Revealer, and no one could reveal such things but Himself. This was the present portion of saints, as contrasted with what went before, when the prophets wrote. It was the dispensation of the Holy Ghost, and we required His power as the Revealer, for even with regard to a man, what man outside knows the things of a man, but the spirit of man that is in him ? So of the things of God ; no one outside knew anything of them, but the Spirit of God. Now the apostles and saints had received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that they might *know* the things that are freely given to them of God. And if they had received them, they could not but speak of them, not in the words that man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. Now as to receiving

these things, the natural man does not do so, for they are foolishness with him, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned, but he that is spiritual discerneth all things, yet he himself is discerned of no man. For what natural man has ever known the mind of the Lord, that he might instruct Him? (Isa. xl. 13.) But we, who have received the Spirit of God, have the mind of Christ.

What want we then with any other wisdom? All natural wisdom, as represented by the princes of this world, crucified the Lord of glory. God has placed Him in the glory. He is our wisdom. The Spirit sent down is the *Revealer* of it (ver. 10). He alone knows the mind of God. He is the *Communicator* of it in vessels prepared by Him, and those vessels have *received* it, and have written it down in Spirit-taught words, by the Scriptures of the New Testament, having the mind of Christ. This is indeed a mystery, but now revealed and all ours in Christ. We have the mind of Christ. Oh, may the Lord give us understanding hearts, to take in this, that the cross shuts out all human power and wisdom, as well as everything else of man, and that in Christ revealed by the Spirit is centred all the wisdom of which God is the source. It is the wisdom of God. God is the source of it (ver. 7). Christ is the centre of it (chap. i. 30), and the Holy Ghost the

Revealer, communicating it in Spirit-taught words (chap. ii. 10-13). This is Christianity as opposed to human wisdom and schools of thought. Thus God's wisdom is to be found alone in Christ and the church. Human wisdom is outside both.

CHAPTER III.

The apostle now returns from his lofty subject to the low state of the Corinthians. The subject of the chapter is divisions (vers. 5-9) and their correction (vers. 10-23). He could not speak unto them as to spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. They were not *natural* men, for they were converted; still they were *carnal*, babes in Christ. We have three different men described in these verses: 1st, the natural man, understanding not the things of the Spirit of God; 2nd, the spiritual man, having the mind of Christ, realizing his union with Him; 3rd, the carnal man, who follows the leaders of sects and not Christ alone. Compare Rom. vii., Heb. v. The apostle had fed them with milk, and not with meat, for hitherto they were not able to bear it, neither yet were they able. Their divisions were a proof of this. Alas; for the divisions of Christendom! The very things men glory in prove their carnality. To say, I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, was carnal. Who were these men?

They were only servants by whom they believed. Paul had planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. What was a planter and a waterer beside the Lord of the garden? They should receive their reward according to their labour, but the truth was the saints on earth were God's husbandry (comp. John xv. 1-6). They were God's building. This is the mighty lever to draw back saints from their divisions. You don't belong to Calvinists, or Baptists, or Wesley, or this sect or that party, you belong to God. You are God's husbandry; you are God's building. Oh, if the saints would only listen to these words, they would drop all sectarianism at once, and come back to this, that they belonged to God.

What was Paul? The Lord had handed over to him the responsibility of being a wise master-builder of His building; so Paul had laid the foundation and another built upon it. Let every one take heed as to this, is the exhortation. As to the foundation, no man can lay any other than is laid, that is Christ Jesus. That foundation had been laid. The builders were to take care what they built upon it. Here the apostle brings out the doctrine of the house of God handed over to the responsibility of man, and tells it out to the Corinthians for their warning, and to correct their divisions. The real building would go on, but *Christ* was

the Builder of the latter (see Matt. xvi. 18; 1 Peter ii. 5, 6). This building was beyond the responsibility of man, and was growing up to be a holy temple in the Lord (see Eph. ii. 19-21). The gates of hades should not prevail against it. But here it is the house handed over to man's responsibility. *Man* was the builder. One might build on the foundation gold, silver, precious stones; another might build on it wood, hay, stubble: every man's work should be made manifest in the day of Christ, and every man's work tried by fire. The good workman's work would abide, and he should receive a reward on that day. The bad workman's work should be burned up, and he should suffer loss. Wood, hay, stubble, could not abide the fire. Yet he himself should be saved, yet so as by fire. It is not here a question of salvation, but of the saved one's getting reward or suffering loss. There might indeed be a defiler of the temple of God, but him God would destroy. He had never got on the foundation at all. The conclusion for the saints was this, that they corporately were the temple of God; and that the Spirit of God indwelt them.

They were the living walls of the temple, but the Holy Ghost was the Inhabitant of the house. 'Wondrous' truth, that the Assembly should be made so clean by the blood, that in-

side living walls composed of Christian men, the Holy Ghost could dwell. Such was the visible Assembly at Corinth, builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. Alas, what has it come to now! But the truth is, as it was ever, that the Holy Ghost is there. What has that Spirit to do with divisions? He is the Spirit of Unity and Love. Divisions must end amongst the saints if we come back to the acknowledgment of His presence and power in the house of God. Oh, that the gracious Lord might bring about this! All this division was the fruit of worldly wisdom, putting men-leaders at the head of schools of thought. All was vanity before the Lord. The truth was, by circling round men, and thus forming sects, they were confining themselves to two or three gifts, whilst all were theirs, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, for all belonged to God, and they were Christ's and Christ is God's. The great truths pressed are, first, that the saints belong to God, and not to men; second, that the Holy Ghost is present in the Assembly. He is the Spirit of Unity and Love—the very opposite to division. In 2 Cor. vi. 14-18, the presence of the *Holy Ghost* is brought in as the corrective power to worldliness; here (chap. iii.) to division; the two evils at work in the present day. There is on the one hand national Christianity, the religion

of the world; on the other hand, sectarian dissent, narrowing and dividing the membership of the body. The presence of the Holy Ghost in the house of God is the corrective power to each; and till the saints come back to the acknowledgment of the wondrous truth, division and worldliness must go on. But then everything contrary to it must be dropped. The saints then were brought back to the truth, that they were Christ's and God's, and that God the Holy Ghost was in the temple of God, the Spirit of unity and not of division. We see through all these chapters how sectarianism strikes at the root of the nature of the Assembly. It is human wisdom in contrast to God's wisdom which is centred in Christ. The cross is its judgment. The church as the temple or house of God is founded on these two things, and the Holy Ghost is its Builder, through the workmen, Inhabitant and Ruler.

CHAPTER IV.

But then, if this was the case, what was the real position of Paul and Apollos, and others like them? How were they to be accounted of? They were servants of Christ, stewards of the mysteries of God (comp. Matt. xxiv. 45-47; Luke xii. 42-44), They were labourers in the vineyard, builders in the building, but the husbandry was God's, and the temple was God's.

Moreover, if stewards, they must be found faithful. As to this, the judgment of the saints, or of man, was a small matter. This was man's day; they might judge of him as they liked. In a matter like this, he had not even confidence in his own judgment, but he so walked in the presence of the Lord, that the Lord's judgment of him every day was his greatest delight; and as to all the rest, the Lord was coming, who would bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and would make manifest the counsels of the heart, and in that day should every man have praise of God. Thus the apostle always walked in the light of the judgment seat of Christ, where all questions betwixt brethren would be settled (Rom. xiv. 10-12), where every workman would receive his reward or suffer loss (chap. iii. 14), and where everything would be manifested (2 Cor. v. 10). If the Lord judged him every day now, and he loved it, it would be no different then. What a blessing, and what confidence, thus to walk before the Lord! This is our pathway, though not all stewards. A saint is not a happy saint who does not walk in the full light of the judgment seat. That light must shine on him in mercy and love before he dies, for no unjudged flesh can stand there. Hence the saint, instead of glorifying Christ on his deathbed, is often brought to sad self-judgment, and sorrow, and struggles.

Paul had referred to Apollos and himself in all these things (chap. iii. 4, 5), for their sakes, that they might learn in them not to think of men above what was written, nor be puffed up for one against the other. This was the evil at Corinth. Ministry was beginning to assume a wrong place there. Instead of the thought that ministers were servants, some were wanting to make them lords. Hence a puffing up. But who made them to differ one from the other? What had any one, but what he received from God? They were glorying as if they had not received it. They were rejoicing in their privileges, in their gifts, reigning as kings, anticipating the kingdom which would not be set up actually till the Lord came, and he would to God that that time had come, that he might reign with them. Instead of its being the time for reigning, it was the time for suffering, for Christ was rejected, and God had set them the apostles last, appointed unto death, a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. To have Christ as wisdom, was to be a fool in the world; to have Him as our strength, was to be weak before the world. They were often even hungry, thirsty, naked, buffeted, having no certain dwelling-place. They laboured, working with their own hands, reviled, they blessed; persecuted, they suffered it; defamed they intreated: they were made as the

filth of the world, the offscouring of all things. Such was the blessed walk of the ministers of Christ of that day! This the Corinthians had forgotten. They took all the privileges as to position, without seeing that they were as a suffering rejected Christ in the world.

Yet all this sharp rebuke, which he was giving them, was all done in love. It was not to shame them, but as *his beloved sons* to warn them. They might have ten thousand instructors in Christ; it only puffed them up for one against the other. But he was a father, a far better thing; he had begotten them in the gospel. An instructor that does not walk in Paul's ways, and who does not fall in with the spirit of the gospel, or have fellowship with it, is a poor thing. It tends to puffing up. But real begetting in the gospel, and the calling to remembrance of it, begets love. He besought them to be followers of him. For this cause he had sent unto them his *son* Timothy, who would bring his ways to remembrance, as he taught in every Assembly. The love and affection of the family of God is thus brought in to correct their ways. Some were puffed up as if the apostle would not come to them, but he would come shortly, and he would test them. They might be full of utterance, but the kingdom of God was not in word, but in power. A man might be full of words, but is there the

unction of the Spirit? This was the test. Did they want him to come with a rod or in love?

CHAPTER V.

But there was something far worse—in the Assembly of God at Corinth—going on, than divisions and puffing up for one minister against another. There was fornication allowed among them, such fornication as was not named among the Gentiles, that a man should have his father's wife. And they were puffed up, and had not mourned that he that had done this deed might be taken away from among them. Sad evidence of the power of evil amongst the saints of God. But as for the apostle, though absent in body, but present in spirit, he had judged already as though present, concerning him that had done this deed, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when they were gathered together, and his spirit, with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. His being absent in body did not hinder his being present in spirit. One spirit united them, though in two places; the body was one; the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ as Head and Lord of the Assembly was one. Evil in one place affected the whole body. They were attaching the Holy Name of the Lord Jesus Christ to fornication,

by allowing this evil amongst them. He thus at once connects this Holy Name with the Assembly when they are gathered together, and thus getting the conscience of the Assembly in connection with that Name, he forces them to judge the evil. What was the power? The power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who ruled outside the Assembly of God? Satan, the god of this world. Thus to Satan he must be handed, but all for his ultimate salvation. Satan had rule over the flesh. Consequently as he was permitted, for disciplinary purposes, to afflict Job ; so, for the same purpose, would the fornicator be handed to him, that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

But the conscience of the Assembly evidently was all wrong by allowing such evil amongst them. Did they not know that a little leaven leavened the whole lump? Their dull conscience was an evidence of this. But they as to their position were an unleavened lump. The body of Christ was outside evil, raised by the power of the Holy Ghost out of death together with Christ, and seated in heavenly places in Him. It was a new creation, a new man (Eph. ii.). Old leaven then had no place there ; it was to be purged out, so that their practice might correspond to what they really were, namely, an unleavened lump. As for their past lost position, as connected with evil, Christ,

their Passover Lamb, had been sacrificed for them; therefore, as Israel had to put away all leaven from their houses where the blood was sprinkled, so the Corinthians were to keep the feast, not with the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. As the Passover was the memorial of Israel's redemption out of Egypt, so is the Lord's Table the memorial of our redemption from a greater slavery, even from Satan and the world. Whilst it is a most blessed and privileged place therefore, it is also a place of self-judgment, that is to say, a place from whence all evil is judged and put away. The soul that does not judge itself is apt to come under the judgment of the Assembly, when the evil is discovered; as the soul in Israel that did not put away the evil leaven was to be cut off. Awful and solemn place for the Church of God on earth to have! Yet such is its responsibility before God. The body of Christ being an unleavened lump has thus no need of mercy (see Paul's salutation at the beginning of each Epistle). Consequently, it has the power of judgment, which individual believers have not (see Matt. vii. 1-4).

He had written to them not to company with fornicators; yet he did not mean altogether that they were not to company with the fornicators or other sinners of the world, for to keep

altogether separate from such we must go out of the world. The world was full of them. What he meant was this, that if any man that was called a brother was a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such they were not even to eat. They had not to judge the world outside. God judged that. But they were responsible to judge evil within, and therefore to put away the evil person. This might go against amiable nature, but the glory of the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ required it. The without and within of the Assembly is thus with jealousy guarded.¹ Within was an unleavened lump, and in their practical walk they must conform to their position by putting away the evil, if not judged, by the discipline of the Assembly. Outside was the world, of which Satan was the god. Thus in chaps. i.—iv. we have the true nature of the Assembly brought out, as the temple of God, as well as the position of the servants in it, as to correction to human wisdom and sectarianism working amongst the saints. But next, if the temple of God is set up it must be kept clean, and this is what we have in chap. v. 8,—the discipline of the house of God. The Lord's table is our feast founded on

¹ I have no doubt that the WITHIN and WITHOUT of Assemblies should be outwardly marked and kept distinct: otherwise there is confusion.

redemption, and the place in the house of God where christians gather, and from which evil must be put away.

CHAPTER VI.

The next evil manifested among the saints at Corinth was they were going to law with one another, and that before unbelievers. Did they not know that the saints should judge the world? Were they therefore unworthy to judge in the smallest matters? But they would judge also the fallen angels. Were they not then able to judge the things of this life? What humiliation were they exposing themselves to! They were bringing their differences before unconverted judges, and they would sit hereafter in judgment on those very men! They were going to judge angels, the least esteemed amongst them too, and yet did not think themselves competent to judge in the things of this life. Let the least esteemed in the Church judge such matters. Was there no wise man amongst them? They had far better take wrong, be defrauded, than do this. A manifest lack of love was shown in it all. Did they not know that the unrighteous should not inherit the kingdom of God? Don't let them deceive themselves; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor thieves, nor

drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, should inherit the kingdom of God. This was the former state of some of them, but they had nothing to do with such things now; they were washed, they were sanctified, they were justified, in the Name of the Lord Jesus and in the Spirit of God.

The Assembly as shown in chap. v. and beginning of chap. vi. is the place where judgment is administered amongst the saints. The world has its law courts as the place where its judgment is administered; but the Assembly of God is outside the world, though the saints are to submit themselves to the powers that be. Rom. xii. 1. In chap. v. we have church discipline for the putting away of open manifested evil. In chap. vi. we have the Assembly as the place where differences between brethren should be settled, by a wise, or two or three wise brethren; just as the world settles its differences before its law courts. Brethren should never take their differences before the world. It is a mean thing to do; they are going to judge it. They should have confidence in their brethren, even in the most unwise, to settle their matters; for Christ in their midst is made unto them wisdom. 1 Cor. i. 30.

All things were lawful, but all things were not expedient; all things were lawful, but he would not be brought under the power of any.

He then fully brings out the two-fold indi-

vidual position of the Corinthian saints, to guard them against fornication and all unrighteousness. The first in reference to Christ, the second in reference to the Holy Ghost. They were washed, sanctified, justified, in this double relation. Their bodies were not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body, and God had both raised up the Lord and would raise up the Christian by the same power. Their bodies were first members of Christ, secondly temples of the Holy Ghost. If committing fornication, they were members of an harlot, one body with her ; for two, saith God, shall be one flesh ; but their bodies were members of Christ, so that he that was joined to the Lord was one spirit. No union therefore in the flesh. We are one spirit with the Lord. But they were to flee fornication for a second reason. An awful sin ! for together with other uncleanness mentioned above, it was done against the body, and brings, even in this life, its own judgment. Did they not know that their bodies were temples of the Holy Ghost that was in them, which they had of God, and they were not their own ? They were bought with a price, and therefore responsible to glorify God in their bodies, which were His. Wonderful position ! The believer's body is a house bought by God Himself, at the cost of His Son's blood, for Himself to dwell in. It

is also a member of Christ Himself, washed so clean, set apart so fully, and justified so completely, that the Holy Ghost can fill it, and indwell it. It is likewise going to be raised up by the power of the Lord when He comes. I am fit at any moment then to be introduced into the revealed presence of God. My future destiny is to sit with Christ on His throne, to judge the world and the angels. And yet the saints were going to law before unbelievers! How could they, if such was the case? How could they live in sin, if their bodies were members of Christ and temples of the Holy Ghost, bought at such a cost, even the precious blood of Christ? Such is the truth brought forward in this chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

The apostle now turns to matters whereof they had written to him. The subject of vers. 1-10 is concerning marriage, whether it is better to do so or not, under various circumstances; with some regulations to the married. It was better not to marry, by the apostle's judgment, nevertheless to avoid fornication let every man have his own wife; every one has not the gift to live above nature. Comp. Matt. xix. 10-12. Vers. 10-17 take up the case of those already married, and whether it be better or no to remain in that state, bringing in the special cases

of a Christian husband married to a heathen wife, and of a Christian wife married to an unbelieving husband. In such cases, if the unbeliever was pleased to dwell with the other, they were not to part. This was different to what a Jew was to do under Judaism (comp. Ezra ix., Neh. ix.) The unbelieving wife was sanctified by the husband, and the unbelieving husband sanctified by the wife, else were their children unclean, but now are they holy. They are brought into the outward privileges of Christianity. Besides the believing wife was encouraged to count on the salvation of her husband, and *vice-versa*, according to the passage, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house" (Acts xvi. 30).

Vers. 18-24 refer to the different positions of life, whether Jew, or Gentile, or slave, in which a man might be converted to Christianity. Is any man called being circumcised? let him not be uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. In the case of a slave, it was better if possible not to be the servants of men, but if in an honest calling, and this was certainly one if he could not be free, he was there to abide with God.

Ver. 25. With regard to virgins, he had no commandment from the Lord; he would only therefore give his judgment, as one who had obtained mercy to be faithful. He judged it

was good to abide so in the present necessitous times. Yet there was perfect liberty for such an one to marry, whether man or woman, only they would be likely to have trial in the flesh in these troublous, persecuting times. But what regulated every state was this, the time was short; those that had wives should be as those that had not; those that wept and rejoiced, as though they did not; those that bought, as though they possessed not; those that used this world, as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away. Let the light of the Coming of the Lord shine on every thing. He would have them without carefulness. The unmarried cared for the things of the Lord; the married cared for the things of the world and how to please his wife. Ver. 34. There was a difference also between a wife and a virgin. The latter, unmarried, cared for the things of the Lord; the former was in danger of putting the world and her husband first. All this was spoken for their profit, that, as he had said before, and with the light of the second Coming of the Lord also thrown upon it—comp. Phil. iv. 4,—they might attend upon the Lord without distraction.

Vers. 36-38 refer to the case of a father having an unmarried virgin, and to whether he is to give her in marriage or not. The wife was bound to her husband as long as he lived, but

if her husband died she was free to marry again (ver. 39). In all these regulations we see the bond of marriage as instituted in the Garden of Eden upheld in all its integrity, yet a superior power in Christianity introduced, so that one might live above nature by the power of the Spirit of God. We also see here the apostle affirming the inspiration of his writings (ver. 10); at the same time making a distinction between what the Lord said, and that which was the result of his own spiritual judgment as one whom the Lord had found faithful (vers. 12, 25).

CHAPTER VIII.

This chapter is occupied with questions about whether it was right to eat things offered to idols. Those who had knowledge and who knew that an idol was nothing were offending their weak brethren who had not the same knowledge. With regard to this, knowledge puffed up, taken simply as such, but love edified. If any thought he knew any thing, he knew nothing yet as he ought to know, whereas, if any loved God, the same was known of Him. The character of the new nature is love, and God knows such (see John x. 14). As to things offered to idols, an idol was nothing, and there was none other God but one. There were many in heaven and earth called gods and lords, but with us, Christians, there was one

God, the Father, of whom are all things and we *unto* Him,¹ and one Lord Jesus Christ, *through* whom are all things and we through Him. God was the Source of all things; of Him are all things and to Him were all things to be gathered. Christ was the Divine Workman through whom were all things and we through Him. Of Him, and *through* Him, and to Him are all things. That was the true knowledge to have, but every one had not got this knowledge. Some had a conscience that the idol was something, and ate it as such. Their conscience thus became defiled. Not that meats made us pleasing to God, but if my liberty becomes a stumblingblock to a weak brother, I must take heed. A weak brother, seeing me eat in an idol's temple, would be emboldened to do the same, and, not apprehending the truth in ver. 5, 6, would sin. Could you thus let the weak brother perish for whom Christ died? In thus offending the brethren you offend against Christ. Notice, the case of the weak brother's perishing is put in the form of a question, as a warning to those who had knowledge (comp. Matt. xviii. 6-10; Luke xvii. 1, 2). The Lord doubtless would preserve His own children from being thus the

¹This is translated as the original Greek. (Comp. Rom. xi. 36.)

cause of a weak brother's perishing. The conclusion is, If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

CHAPTER IX.

The apostle answers, in this chapter, to charges brought against him about his apostleship and preaching, and as to extorting money for his maintenance, etc. He asserts his perfect freedom in the Lord, and as to a proof of his apostleship, with regard to them, they were the seal of his apostleship in the Lord. A blessed answer to confound his accusers! Was he not free to eat and drink and carry about a wife, as Cephas and others, or to forbear to work altogether? (Ver. 7.) But if he did work, he proves from natural similes that he had a right to reap the fruits of his labour. He refers to the law of Moses to prove this. An ox was not muzzled who trod out the corn. It was right for a preacher who sowed spiritual things to reap carnal things. (Ver. 12.) Nevertheless as to them he had not used this power, he had not asked any money. He gloried in preaching the gospel without charge, though, referring again to the law, it was quite right that they that preached the gospel should live of the gospel. As for himself, he made himself a servant of all, that he might gain the more. To the

Jew he became a Jew, that he might gain the Jews; to those under the law, as under the law, that he might gain them that were under the law; to them that were without law, as without law, that he might gain those that were without law; not that he was without law to God, but lawfully subject to Christ. To the weak he became as weak, to gain the weak: he became all things to all men, that he might by all means save some.

Lastly, he has a word of warning for those preachers who were judging his liberty. He was running a race to win a prize, and he exhorted those others, as they ran in the Isthmian games, so to run that they might obtain. He had one object to win, and that was Christ in glory (Phil. iii.). Every thing else he laid aside as dung and dross. Those in the earthly games, ran for a corruptible crown; he for an incorruptible. He ran not as uncertainly; he had not a doubt as to the result. He fought not as one that beateth the air, but he kept his body under and brought it into subjection, lest by any means, when he had preached to others, he himself should be a reprobate. An awful warning for those preachers who professed so much, and knew so much, and yet were puffed up! He put himself with them in order to test them, as to whether they were doing what he did. The warning he gives to preachers, he

gives to the whole company of the professing saints, in the beginning of chap. x. There is no question here as to the final perseverance of the elect. It is not a question of becoming a Christian, or continuing to be one, but of the path and responsibilities of the servants of God. Paul as simply a servant might be reprobate, as a child, he could not be, but that is not the subject here. He is testing preachers, and, in the beginning of the next chapter, the professing Assembly at Corinth. This gives a meaning to the large address at the beginning of the Epistle, to those who in every place call on the Name of the Lord, both theirs and ours. (Compare, as to preachers, Matt. vii. 21—23, &c.)

CHAPTER X.

He takes the wider range of the professing Church at the beginning of the tenth chapter, bringing Israel before them as an example. All the Jewish fathers were under the cloud. All passed through the sea. The cloud outwardly rested upon them, typical of the Holy Ghost. They passed through the sea, typical of the baptism of water.

The one rested on them, the other they passed through, and so were in figure saved. (Comp. 1 Peter iii. 21).

BAPTISM.

Just like Noah and his family passed through the deluge in the ark into a new place of privilege under God's government, in the post-diluvian earth, and as Israel passed through the Red Sea, and thus were separated from Egypt to Jehovah and his government, so the professing Christian by the death and resurrection of Christ, and instrumentally by baptism, gets a new place of privilege on the earth in the temple of God where Christ is, and the Holy Ghost is, and the word of God; and yet after all he may be eternally lost, if not born again.

Beside this they all ate the manna, and drank the rock typical of Christ; yet with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Thus outward privileges as to Baptism and the Lord's Supper are no proofs that a man is really saved. These outward privileges might go on without life, the Holy Ghost dwelling in the midst of them all the time (comp. Heb. vi. 4), and yet those who partook of them might perish. The various sins that Israel fell into are then brought forward as a warning and an example, and he that thought he stood was to take heed lest he fell.

The Corinthians were to take heed of trusting in outward privileges, and their church place, or baptism; nothing but real life in Christ,

a dependence upon Him, would avail for eternity. (Compare Numb. xi.-xvi.) But then, to encourage them, there was no temptation that came upon them but such as was common to man; but God was faithful, who would give strength, and not suffer them to be tempted above what they were able to bear, making a way for them to escape.

THE LORD'S TABLE.

The apostle's conclusion is, flee from idolatry. He speaks to wise men, let them judge what he says. 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? For we being many are one bread, one body, for we are all partakers of the one bread. The Lord's Table is here brought forward, and put in the very centre of Christian worship, as a safeguard against idolatry and Judaism. It is put in contrast with the altars of Judaism and of the Gentiles. In it we do two things: First, we express association and communion with our altar, viz., Christ's death, in eating and drinking of the two symbols of His broken body and His blood; 2ndly, we express that we are one bread, one body, for we are all partakers of the one bread. The unbroken loaf represents Christ and His Body in union together. This is our corporate position, which we express by partaking of the one loaf.

(Ver. 18) The Israelite after the flesh by partaking of the sacrifices off the Jewish altar showed his identity and association with Jewish worship. So likewise the Gentile, who ate of the sacrifices offered to idols. (Ver. 19) The idol indeed was nothing in the light of Christianity; (ver. 20,) but through the idol they really offered to devils, and he would not have them hold fellowship with devils. By eating of these sacrifices they expressed identity with devil worship. (Ver. 21) The table was the Table of the Lord; the cup on the Lord's Table was the cup of the Lord. How could they drink the cup of the Lord, thus expressing association with His altar, and the cup of devils? How could they be partakers of the Lord's Table and the table of devils (ver. 22), without provoking the Lord to jealousy, who is one Lord (Deut. xxxii. 15-18)? An important principle as to sectarian tables in the present day. I cannot sit at any table which is professedly a table of the Lord without expressing my identity with its system of worship. In the case of national worship, or of Roman Catholic worship, if infidels, Puseyites, idolaters, and unconverted people are there, I express that I am one bread, one body with them. In the case of sectarianism, I express I am one bread, one body with such a system. To be on true ground is to give the Lord His true place at His Table. The Lord alone

has authority there. If a great man gives a dinner at his house and invites the guests, the guests sit at his table. To take the great man's place at the head of his table would be to insult him. So with the Lord at His Table; no man has a right to preside there but the Lord. We are gathered to the Lord and not to man. And as the Assembly there in the one loaf expresses her oneness with Christ and His members, so only the members of Christ's body have any place there. To meet on any other ground, but as members of the body of Christ, owning the Lord in the midst, and His authority is to be on sectarian ground.

The reader will notice that fellowship with the blood and body of Christ is contrasted with Israel's feeding on the sacrifices of their altars, and the Gentiles feeding on their sacrifices which they offered to devils. How blessed that at the Lord's Table we show our association with, and feed on that sacrifice which expresses death to every false and even mixed system, and that we are one bread and one body with Him who thus died, and shed the last drop of His blood for His Church! The Lord's Table is thus put in the very central place of Christian worship. It is the place of communion for the saints on earth, the place where the unity of the body is expressed. Consequently to be away from that place is to be away from the Lord whose table

it is and where He is seated; it is to be away from communion, and the child who does it, does not express his church-place as a member of the body of Christ. Where the church does not gather on the ground of the unity of the body to the Lord's Name, owning His authority, and as expressed at the Lord's Table, there is no exhibition of the church as the body of Christ in the place. Would to God that every dear Christian saw his place to walk with the Lord.

(Ver. 23) Outside the Lord's Table they might have difficulties, but this was the general principle to act upon, viz., All things were lawful, yet all things were not expedient; all things were lawful, yet all things edify not. (Ver. 25) This principle is illustrated in what follows. The Corinthians would continually come in contact with things offered to idols, so that even in going to market they might be buying things that were offered to idols. Well, they were to ask no questions. The idol was nothing. (Ver. 26) The earth was the Lord's and the fulness thereof. (Ver. 27) If any unbeliever asked them to a feast, and they were disposed to go, they were to eat such things as were set before them, asking no question for conscience sake. (Ver. 28) But if there was one sitting there who had a conscience of an idol, and told him he was eating a thing offered to an idol, he was to respect his brother's

conscience, and not let his liberty be judged of. His brother spoke and acted on the same principle, viz., the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; only he judged the idol to be something, and that something not the Lord's, and so he did not eat. (Ver. 29) I, who have liberty, therefore, ought to respect his conscience. (Ver. 31, 32) The conclusion is, that whether eating, or drinking, or whatsoever they did, they were to do all to the glory of God, giving none offence to any, whether Jew, or Gentile, or the Church of God,—the three circles into which the world was divided. (Ver. 33) In doing so, I would be studying every man's profit, in order to save them. In saying this Paul puts before them his own example, and exhorts them to follow him as he followed Christ. An important principle with regard to devoted Christians. As far as they follow Christ I am to follow them, but no further, otherwise I put them in the place of Christ.

CHAPTER XI.

We have two great points brought before us in chapter xi. 1st, God's order of creation, now Christ has come into it; He is the firstborn of every creature, compare Col. i., and therefore has the pre-eminence there; 2nd, the order of the Assembly of which the Lord's Supper is the central meeting. The first thing

the apostle does is to show the persons who compose the inside, and to put them in their proper place one towards another. From ver. 17 to end he talks positively of the Assembly Meeting, the Lord's Supper. (Ver. 3) Now in the new creation, there was the man, whose head was Christ; there was the woman, whose head was the man; there was Christ, whose Head was God. In the old creation we have simply Adam, whose Creator was God, and the woman, whose head was Adam (comp. Gen. i., ii.) But in the new creation, of which we get a beautiful picture in Luke i., ii., we have the man, the woman, *Christ* and God; angels too looking on and rejoicing. Redemption was not then accomplished, true, so that the holy men and women therein mentioned were not yet introduced into the new place, nor had they received the Spirit of adoption, which constitutes a man a Christian, but they were born again, and the whole atmosphere breathes of the new creation.

The relationships of man and woman one towards another were important for the Assemblies to know; for a woman must always realize her position in creation, as having her head in the man, and being of the man (ver. 3-8), and thus being in subjection, though also created for the man as a helpmeet (ver. 9). Therefore, in praying and prophesying, her head was to be

covered, for she was the glory of the man; whereas the man, in doing the same, was to have his head uncovered, for he was the image and glory of God. The hair was a sign of power (ver. 10; comp. Judges xvi. 17). All her power was on her head, which was the man. She ought to own that place in the Assemblies. Angels rejoiced again when Christ was born. The Church showed to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. iii.). The woman was to own her proper place on account of these angels. Nature even taught the same thing, that it was uncomely for the man to have long hair, but it was the glory of the woman, for it was given her as a covering. These verses seem to own that in certain places or meetings the woman prayed and prophesied, as also in the case of Philip's daughters (Acts xxi. 8-9). It seems also as if they did on the day of Pentecost, but it was outside in creation (comp. Acts i. 13, 14; ii. 1-18), and comparing it with 1 Cor. xiv. and 1 Tim. ii., it seems clear that they were silent in the Assembly meetings, where they were distinctly forbidden to teach, which however is distinct from prophesying. From chap. xi. 16 to xiv. end, the subject is distinctly the Assembly meeting, as such (see chap. xi. 18; xiv. 19-24). There the woman has evidently no place except to be silent.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

As to remembering Paul in all things, and keeping the ordinances, he could praise them, but as to the matter of detail, and the manner of their doing it, he could not praise them. They came not together for the better, but for the worse. (Ver. 18) For when they came together in Assembly, he heard there were schisms amongst them. (Ver. 19) Divisions were necessary in a way that those really approved might be manifest amongst them. (Ver. 20) Still he could not allow that the way in which they came together was to eat the Lord's Supper. (Ver. 21) They were making it a time of feasting, eating their own suppers; one was hungry, another was drunken. (Ver. 22) Surely they had houses to eat and to drink in; for to confound a common meal with eating the Lord's Supper, was to despise the Assembly of God, of which the latter was the expression. He then puts them right on the subject, not denying that the Lord's Supper was the Assembly meeting, but denying that as they met it was such.

(Ver. 23, 24) He had received of the Lord that which he had delivered unto them, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you. Do

this in remembrance of me. Our thoughts are carried back to the night in which the Lord was betrayed : and yet, with a Judas there, He could give thanks, and break the bread. He could bring that before them which alone, in the midst of evil, could attract their hearts, and enable them to overcome. Blessed Saviour! His love always mounted above the evil, and overcame it with good. My heart finds rest in Him. (Ver. 25, 26) After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come. It is His little photograph which brings to our remembrance His unbounded love to us in times past. The bread broken, and the blood shed, cause us to remember our precious Lord's body broken and His blood shed for us. He is absent from us. We announce His death till He come. Thus the love of Christ, in putting away sin, and bearing our sins, is continually before our minds. His blood also not only answering to all the claims of God against us, but sealing to us all the blessings of the New Testament. We remember it all, and announce His death till He come. The Lord's Supper thus links our Lord's death with His coming. His death

shutting out every thing of the flesh, world, and devil ; His coming, as that when we shall no longer have need of a symbolical ordinance to remember Him during His absence.

(Ver. 27) But to announce the Lord's death as to responsibility is important, for to eat and to drink unworthily, was to be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord ; for I allow the flesh which killed the Lord. (Ver. 28) To come into the Assembly without having examined myself, was to bring living flesh into the Assembly of God. (Ver. 29) The Lord, in such a case, could only be present as a Judge, and for living flesh to eat and drink the Lord's death, was to eat and to drink judgment to itself, not discerning the Lord's body, which announced death and judgment to the flesh. (Ver. 30) For this cause many of the Corinthians were weak and sickly, and many even had died. This was the Lord's chastening hand, because the Corinthians did not judge themselves. (Ver. 31) If they had done so, they would not have been judged. (Ver. 32) The effect of this chastening of the Lord was that that they might not be condemned with the world. Thus the Lord's Supper holds a most important place, as keeping the saints in a habit of individual self-judgment. (Comp. Matt. xxvi., Mark xiv., Luke xxii.) Not that they ought to judge themselves when they come

there, but before (see ver. 28); not that they ought, if failing, to keep away: that would be to get worse. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat.

The Lord's government here is shown to be most graciously exercised, in order that the saint might never be condemned eternally. Sickness, and even temporal death, consequently, are the Lord's ways towards His saints, to preserve their walk up to their standing before God, and to preserve them from ever being lost. Temporal death would be a last resource to separate the Christian from the body of sin, which he ought by faith daily to reckon dead. (Ver. 33, 34.) But what confusion had the Assembly at Corinth got into! Every one was eating before other his own supper. They did not tarry one for the other; one poor man was hungry, not getting anything, another was drunken. He exhorted them, therefore, if any were hungry to eat at home, that they might not come together for condemnation; and the rest he would set in order when he came.

We have in this Epistle the full doctrine of the Lord's supper set forth. First, in chap. v., we see it as the centre from which the discipline of the house of God is exercised; secondly, in chap. x., we see the Lord's Table placed as the central expression of the saints' communion on

the earth ; thirdly, in chap. xi., we have the Lord's Supper as the place where we are called to remember the Lord's death, and where we are kept in the individual judgment of ourselves in view of that death. The Lord's Supper gives a more individual aspect of the Table, and links it more to the original institution on the night on which the Lord was betrayed. It is blessed to think that though a Christian may be in a wrong ecclesiastical position, and deny the unity of the body by his position, he may yet get individual blessing to his soul, as remembering his Lord, in the midst of a mass of evil.

CHAPTER XII.

The Assembly was the place where spiritual gifts would be developed and manifested. These chapters are taken up largely with this subject, the apostle taking occasion thereby to bring in the whole principles of the Assembly of God, to regulate their working. The Lord's Table was the Assembly Meeting, but gifts might be developed there, and it was important they should be regulated. (Ver. 2, 3.) The first great thing was to discern what was the true working of the Spirit of God, for they had been Gentiles, carried away by dumb idols, and the power of the enemy was manifested there. How were they to discern the workings of the

true Spirit? By two tests: first, no one speaking by the Spirit of God would call Jesus, Anathema; and, 2ndly, no one would call Jesus, Lord, but by the power of the Holy Ghost. (Ver. 4-6.) But though there were diversities of gifts, there was but one Spirit; whilst there were diversities of ministries there was but one Lord; and whilst there were diversities of operations, yet it was the same God that worked all in all. Thus, whilst the apostle guards the Corinthians from what was false, he brings them into holy separation to one Spirit, one Lord, and one God; not exactly the Trinity, yet if each Person were traced back to His source, it might come to it. If, then, the Christian is separated from Satan and all the powers of darkness, as exhibited in false religion, he is separated to God, the Source of all unity and ministry, to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Head and Centre of it, giving the persons to minister, and to the Holy Ghost, as the Power of unity, the Giver of the gifts to the persons whom Christ gives. This Spirit of God manifests His Presence in the gifts for every man's profit; not for show, as the Corinthians used it (see chap. xiv.)

(Ver. 8-11.) To one is given the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another faith, to another gifts of healing, &c.; but all these worked that one and the self-same

Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will. The unity of the Spirit is here insisted on, as likewise His presence in the Assembly, for the regulation of the gifts. He is the Sovereign Power within the Assembly, manifesting His presence by acting as He pleases, and distributing to every man severally as He wills. What ignorance, then, and unbelief, for Assemblies to be crying out for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. It is as great ignorance and folly for Christians to pray for the Holy Ghost to come, as it would have been if the disciples had asked God to send Jesus on earth, after He was there amongst them. The Holy Ghost came down as really on the day of Pentecost, as Jesus came down when he was born in the virgin's womb. Let us rejoice, then, and own His presence, for this is really what Christendom has lost, even the realization of the Presence and Power of the Holy Ghost in the Assembly of God. If this is denied, I ask, why have you your printed prayer-books, themselves a substitute for and a denial of the worship of the Spirit? Why your one-man ministry, itself a denial of the ministry of the Spirit? I ask, how can the Spirit act, as manifested in this chapter, in the churches and chapels of this day? Man has substituted his order for God's order. The Spirit cannot Himself act in the gifts as He will.

(Ver. 12, 13) But to return to this chapter, if the Spirit acts and manifests his Presence, it is upon and in a Body which He has formed. This is the Church, which is here likened to a human Body and Head. And as there is only one Spirit (ver. 11), so there is only one Body (ver. 12.) (Comp. Eph. iv. 4.) As the Body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ. Marvellous and holy truth ! Christ and the Church are so one that they are likened to one human body, and called the Christ. The Baptism of the Holy Ghost introduces us into and constitutes us members of that Body, for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, or bond, or free, and have been all made to drink of that one Spirit. Before Pentecost, the Holy Ghost had not yet come (see John vii. 39 ; Acts i. 5-8.) The Assembly was not yet formed (see Matt. xvi. 18) : but on that day 3,000 were gathered out of all nations, and, together with the 120 disciples (who had already received life in Christ) already gathered, formed the Body of Christ, united to the Head in heaven by the Holy Ghost sent down. This was entirely a new creation, a new man formed outside the Jewish and Gentile world. Every sect formed is an addition to this truth, and a denial of the truth of one Body and one Spirit.

If the Church is in disorder (and who will deny it?) the saints' only resource is to drop every thing which shows division and worldliness, and come together simply as members of Christ, acknowledging that membership as the only bond of union throughout the world; not making a fresh body, but acknowledging that which the Holy Ghost has already formed. To put the Lord's Table into a place, then, where I become a member of a body, is wrong; but to own it as the place where the Membership of Christ, already formed by the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, is expressed, is to put it in its right place. So are the saints preserved from sectarianism and worldliness. What follows in our chapter brings out the

WORKING OF THE ASSEMBLY.

There are two chief principles: first (ver. 14), the body is not one member but many; secondly (ver. 20), they are many members yet but one body. (Ver. 15) Now, if the foot should say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? (Ver. 16) And if the ear should say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? Such a principle would be independency and schism, a principle most common all around. (Ver. 17) But if the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing?

If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? (Ver. 18) But now hath God set the members every one of them in the Body as it hath pleased Him. To own this, is the corrective power to all wilfulness. (Ver. 19) If, however, they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. A sharp rebuke against the principle of one-man ministry. (Ver. 20) The true principle is, many members working in the one great unity, the body. (Ver. 21) Therefore the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor, again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Man may try to do it, but glory be to God, the Blessed Head will not say, of the smallest member, I can do without you. Oh, that all dear Christians would follow His example. (Ver. 21-25) Nay, much more, those members of the Body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary; and those we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour. God Himself hath joined the body so together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked, that there might be no schism in the Body, but that the members should have the same care one of another. (Ver. 26) And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

(Ver. 27) The apostle now directly applies this working of a human body to the local Assembly at Corinth. Now ye are the Body of Christ, and members in particular. This is a complete answer to those who deny the present responsibility of the saints to manifest the Body of Christ on earth. For though no local Assembly can claim, now-a-days, to be the Assembly of God on earth, the saints being all divided, and therefore the Assembly being not all together; still the saints who see the evil are responsible to own the truth, and come together on the basis of that truth; and if they do, God will most surely own them as far as they are faithful as representing His Assembly. That all this part of the chapter applies to the manifestation of the Body on earth is certain, for members do not suffer in heaven. Miracles and tongues are not for heaven, but are the fruits of the Spirit working on and in the Body, as the manifestation of its unity on earth. If Christendom has failed, yet the responsibility of the saints most surely remains, as long as the truth of God remains. (Ver. 28-30) As for the need of the Assembly, God has set in it, first apostles (they are the foundations); 2ndly, prophets; 3rdly, teachers; then miracles, gifts of healing, helps, governments, different tongues. All are not apostles, all are not prophets, all are not teachers, &c. There was

thus lots to covet for every one, and yet there was something better at the bottom. Better than all gifts ! Better than all theories of truth ! And that was Love. That was the character of the Spirit and of Christ, and what bound all together, and that was what the Corinthians were lacking in.

We have, then, in this chapter, the doctrine of the Church of God, the Body of Christ. In the beginning, the Spirit of God is put in contrast with the spirits of dumb idols, and known by two tests, ver. 3. His presence and unity, working by several gifts, is then insisted on to ver. 11; ver. 12, 13 take us on to the truth, that if there was one Spirit, there was one Body, of which Christ was the Head, and altogether named the Christ, the entrance into which was by the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, who formed it at Pentecost, and constitutes those thus baptized members of it. Ver. 14-27 show us the working of it, by the figure of a human body; the two chief principles being, first, the Body was not one member but many; secondly, that the members were several, yet but one body. (Ver 27-31) He applies this truth to the local Assembly at Corinth, and shows the different members God had set in the Church to meet their need.

CHAPTER XIII.

Gifts might abound, but love is the more excellent way. It is the bond of perfection and the character of God, the Lord, and the Spirit. Ver. 1-3 show the negative side, viz., all the things I may have without love. Ver. 4-7 give the positive side, showing the different qualities of love, no doubt perfectly exhibited by the Lord Jesus Christ on earth. From ver. 8-13 it is compared with other things, and shown to continue in the future state, when all other things have failed. (Ver. 1-3) I may speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but if I have not love, I am become as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. I may have the gift of prophecy, the gift most to be coveted; I may understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; I may have that faith which removes mountains, and yet be nothing. I may give all my goods to feed the poor, and give my body to be burned, but if I have not love, it profits me nothing. (Ver. 4-7) Its positive qualities are these,—it suffers long, is kind, it envies not, it vaunts not itself, is not puffed up, is not dishonest or selfish, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil. It rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (Ver. 8-13) As to the future, it never fails. Prophecies will fail,

tongues will cease, knowledge will vanish away. The present time is then compared with the future state. We know now in part, and we prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. The two states are now compared to the states of childhood and manhood; as a child, I think as a child: as a man, I put away childish things. I know now in part, this is the time of my childhood, but in the world to come, when everything is perfect, and when my manhood is arrived at, that which is in part shall be done away, I shall know as I am known; though at this present time we only see through a glass darkly. All this reasoning shows the superiority of that Love which never fails, and which, in the future ages, will stand out when other things have ceased. Three things abide at the present time—Faith, Hope Love, —but the greatest of these is Love. That abides for ever.

CHAPTER XIV.

Having made this digression to show the real thing which binds together, he returns to the subject of the gifts, and of the order of the Assembly, showing the superiority of the gift of prophecy to that of tongues. The great thing in Assembly meetings was that the Assembly might be edified, but a person speaking in

an unknown tongue, though he spake to God (ver. 2), edified nobody but himself (ver. 4), unless he could himself interpret (ver. 5), for no one understood him; whilst he that prophesied, spoke to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. (Ver. 6) If Paul himself came amongst them speaking with tongues, what profit was there, unless he spoke in revelation by God, revealing what he meant to one sitting by (see ver. 30), or in knowledge, so that the sitter-by could interpret it, or in prophecy, or in doctrine? (Ver. 7-13) Even in things without life, such as music, how can it be enjoyed unless there are distinctions in the sounds? If a trumpet gave an uncertain sound, who was to prepare himself for the battle? The great thing was, if they were zealous for the spiritual gifts, to excel in the edification of the church. If a man therefore had the gift of tongues, let him pray that he might interpret.

He then distinctly applies what he had been speaking of to three different actions that are manifested in Assembly meetings—prayer, singing, and praise (ver 14). A man who was praying in an unknown tongue does not seem to have understood himself what he was praying about. But what folly and childishness, to think of showing forth in prayer or singing their gift of tongues, and all the time not understanding themselves what they were saying, much

less the Assembly! How could the unlearned say, Amen, if he did not understand what the other was praising God about? It was all childish pride. (Ver. 18) Paul could thank God that he could speak with tongues more than they all, but he had rather speak five words to be understood, or to edify others, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. What would he have said if he had gone into one of the churches of this day, which prides herself on being the one apostolic church of God, and heard the whole service muttered in an unknown tongue, by a shaved priest, with his attendant acolytes? No wonder, when John got a picture of the harlot church in the Revelation, and saw in her what the Church of God had turned into, that he wondered with a great astonishment (comp. Rev. xvii. 1-6). Little did the Corinthians think they were working to this end. (Ver. 21, 22) The apostle goes on to prove from the law that tongues were a sign for unbelievers, and not for believers (comp. Acts ii.), whereas prophesying was for those that believed. (Ver. 23-25) They should think of those outside the Assembly. Supposing an unlearned man, or an unbeliever, came into the place where the Assembly met, and saw one after another getting up and speaking with unknown tongues, they would go away, and say,

these Christians were all mad; whereas, if one after another prophesied, the unbeliever would be made so to feel the presence of God amongst them, that, perhaps he would fall down, and publicly acknowledge that God the Holy Ghost was among them of a truth. (Ver. 26) But every thing was in confusion in the Assembly at Corinth. Thank God for it, for we have this blessed chapter, which gives us an insight into the working of an Assembly in the primitive times. So far from it being the custom for one man to do the whole service, there was liberty for every one to engage, either in speaking, prayer, singing or praise. The liberty of the Spirit was turned into license of the flesh. One came in with his psalm, already to give out; another with his doctrine; another with his tongue, &c.: but instead of saying, you must have one man over you, to correct the confusion, he exhorts, first of all, Let every thing be done to edifying, and then regulates the two gifts, of tongues and of prophesying; telling them plainly (ver. 33) that God who was in the Assembly (chap. iii. 16; xii. 7-11) was not the God of confusion but of peace. So far from appointing official rule to correct the disorder, he insists on the Presence and Character of that God who was amongst them, and gives them commandments from Him (ver. 27-33, 37). Lastly, the women were to

keep silence in the Assembly. They were not permitted to speak, but to be in subjection, as also said the law. If they would learn any thing, they were not to ask in the Assembly, and chatter away there, but to ask their husbands at home, for it was a shame for them to speak in any way in the Assembly. They were really going on as if the Word of God was their monopoly, instead of coming to them from God. If any among them thought themselves spiritual, they were to acknowledge that what Paul wrote were the commandments of the Lord. But if any man would be ignorant, let him be ignorant. The liberty of the Spirit however was to be carefully guarded; they were to covet to prophesy, and not to forbid speaking with tongues, only they were to remember that the God of order was amongst them, so that every thing was to be done decently and in order, according to the Character of the God of Order and of Peace.

CHAPTER XV.

The apostle now comes back to the simple Gospel of the Grace of God. There were some of the Corinthians that were striking a blow at that very gospel that had saved them, for they were denying the resurrection of the dead. The apostle takes occasion by this error to bring out the great truth of the first resurrection and the

coming of the Lord, which gives further importance to this Epistle. It takes up the two great truths which are of such importance for this day, 1st, the doctrine of the church, 2nd, the coming of the Lord for the saints, and resurrection of the body. The Epistle to the Romans lays the foundation by setting forth the gospel and the righteousness of God.

The chapter may be divided thus :—In ver. 1-11 the gospel is brought forward as the foundation of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body ; ver. 12-19 give us the consequences of no resurrection ; ver. 29-34 continue the argument of ver. 18, 19 ; ver. 20-28 give the direct consequences of the resurrection of Christ ; ver. 36-50 answer the questions of ver. 35, Christ's body after resurrection being the type of the one we shall receive ; ver. 51-54 give us the doctrine of the first resurrection.

The gospel then as the foundation of this is insisted on, particularly the resurrection of Christ. This was the gospel that Paul preached, which he now calls to their remembrance, the gospel which he had announced to them, which they had received and in which they stood ; by which also they were saved, if they kept it in memory, as he had announced it to them, unless some of them had indeed believed in vain, and had only professedly received it. What, then, was this gospel ? He only gave to

them what he himself had received; and that was, first of all Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures. Our sins were the cause of Christ's death. He answered in that manner before a just, Holy God, for them, and bore the punishment due to them which was death. This was part of the good news of the gospel. How were they to know that that was true? It was according to the whole teaching of Scripture from Abel's sacrifice downwards, summed up in the verse, "It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul" (Lev. xvi. 11.) God had thus told them so in His own Word, and that was sufficient. But, secondly, Christ was buried. I bury a dead body; I give it a sepulchre. Here is something additional to the good news of the sins having been all answered for in the death of Christ. Not only are the sins gone, but the nature of sin is buried; we are buried with Him by Baptism unto death. Our old man is crucified, dead and buried in and with Christ, before God, and to faith, so that we may reckon death, by faith, to be already past. The actual death of the body, or the coming of Christ, would be the end of death instead of the beginning. But, thirdly, He rose again the third day, and if this was true He rose without the sins and without the sin. It was the same Life also which descended into death and took the sin and

sins on the way, and rose again the third day without them; it was a Life thoroughly tested, found perfect, obedient unto death, so that the Judge in righteousness raised Him again, to be our righteousness before Him. How am I to know this piece of good news? The Scriptures tell me so (Ps. xvi. 10, &c.) I am not called to make the feelings of my heart a test of salvation, but I am to know it from the truth of God's own Word. Besides the testimony of the Scriptures to the resurrection of Christ, there were living witnesses to it. He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve, then by more than 500 brethren at once, then He was seen of James, then of all the apostles, and last of all He was seen of Paul, as one born out of due time. He not only saw Him risen, but in ascended glory. He could say, I have really seen that Jesus, a real man in glory; I thought He was an impostor, but He revealed Himself to me on the way to Damascus, and I believe that that poor despised Nazarene is the Son of God. I persecuted the Church of God, and therefore am the least of the apostles, am not worthy to be called an apostle. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace was not bestowed on me in vain, for I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. This, then, was the gospel which Paul preached, a gospel

which set forth Christ risen and glorified, which all the apostles also bore witness to, and preached, and which the Corinthians had believed.

Ver. 1-10 is the foundation of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body brought forward in this chapter, Christ was risen. This was Paul's gospel. How was it, then, that some of them were denying it by denying the resurrection of the body? Ver. 12-19 give us the consequences of the doctrine of no resurrection: first, that if there were no resurrection, then *Christ* was not risen; secondly, if Christ was not risen, their *preaching* was vain, they were false witnesses; and, thirdly, if this was the case, the Corinthians' *faith* also was vain, they were yet in their sins; for this was the only gospel they had received. This was a serious conclusion for the Corinthians to be brought to, for the only gospel they had received was that from Paul. But if the doctrine he *preached* was false, their *faith* was vain too. (Ver 18) Another consequence was that those that had fallen asleep in Jesus had perished.

(Ver. 29) If, however, this latter were the case, why was it as fast as saints died others eagerly filled up their places in Baptism, saying, by faith, I reckon myself now dead with Christ, in order to have part in the resurrection; but why, then, were they baptized for the dead, if

the dead rise not? (Comp. Rom. vi. 3-5. Comp. ver. 19, ver. 30-32.) and, secondly, why do we stand in jeopardy every hour, having death before us, in every circumstance through which we pass, such as fighting with beasts of Ephesus, persecutions, &c., if the dead rise not? If we have only in this life hope in Christ, certainly we are of all men most miserable, if this is the life we pass. (Ver. 32-34) If that is the case, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. These ignorant men were not only taking away the doctrine that Paul preached, but also all the power of the Christian's life and hope. They had not the knowledge of God, so that the Corinthians were to beware of evil communications and awake to righteousness.¹

(Ver. 20-28) Having now shown the consequences of the doctrine of no resurrection, he turns, in these verses, to the direct consequences of the resurrection of Christ, to the end. Not only were the Corinthians not in their sins, not only were they delivered from the body of sin itself by the death and resurrection of Christ, and given a risen and glorified Christ, as their present portion by faith (ver. 1-11), but Christ risen from the dead was the foundation of their hope as to the resurrection of their bodies. (Ver. 20) He was the first-fruits of

¹ Read ver. 20-28 as a parenthesis; ver. 29, 30, and following, take up the sense of ver. 18, 19.

them that slept. It was a resurrection *from among* the dead, not the Jewish thought of a general resurrection, good and wicked all together. Christ rose (*ek nekrôn*) leaving the dead behind. This was to be the character of the saints' resurrection,—they should be raised from amongst the dead, and in being so, the rest of the dead should be left behind, to be raised and judged more than 1000 years afterwards (comp. Rev. xx.) Christ's resurrection, then, first, was a resurrection from amongst the dead (John v.); and, 2ndly, He was the first-fruits of the harvest of them that slept,—a term which is never applied except to the bodies of the redeemed, and never to the wicked.

(Ver. 21, 22) By man came death; by Man came the resurrection of the dead: in Adam all die; in Christ shall all be made alive. This is a comparison of the two families linked each to their Heads. The words used are *in* Adam, *in* Christ. This, of course, gives no ground for teaching the evil doctrine of universalism. (Ver. 23-28) Then come the order of events: first, Christ the first-fruits, this has taken place; secondly, they that are Christ's at His coming; thirdly, then cometh the end. Now we know that above 1,800 years have already elapsed between the first and second events; and we know, from Rev. xx. 5, 6, that at least 1000 years will take place between Christ's

coming and the end, when the wicked will be judged, death destroyed, the kingdom delivered up to God the Father, so that God may be all in all (see Rev. xx. 11-15; xxi. 1-8, &c.) Time is not the question when God talks of life in Christ. What we know is that at Christ's coming, those that are Christ's will be raised from amongst the dead, as Christ was, and only those that are Christ's, not the wicked. Then cometh the end—1000 years after. All enemies will not be under Christ's feet till the end. Satan, though bound, will be let loose at the end of the 1000 years. Sin and death will be still then on the earth, but will be kept in abeyance by Christ's authority. The millennium will be Christ's kingdom set up in power, and at the end subduing all enemies, the last of which is death. Then He gives up the kingdom to God the Father, and God is all in all. His blessed place of service is never given up as long as He is Man, and that will be for ever. As Son of God, then, as ever, He is co-equal with the Father. Notice, all this is connected with the resurrection of Christ. Adam was tested,—disobeyed, fell, and the consequence was death to the body, not to speak of the soul and spirit. Christ, the Second Man, obeyed, glorified God up to death, and the consequence will be resurrection to the body, not to speak of present resurrection with Christ as to the soul. By

Man came the resurrection of the dead. In Christ shall all be made alive. Blessed portion for the saints! All the fruit of the work of Christ, the Corn of Wheat that fell into the ground and died, John xii. 24. The song shall resound through the ages of eternity,—Thou art worthy! Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!

Ver. 35-50 give answers to the questions, How do the dead rise? with what bodies do they come? (Ver. 36) The only answer given is by the simile of the corn. It does not rise and bear fruit unless it die first. A corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, then rises and bears much fruit. (Ver. 37) And as to the body that comes, it is not the same body. You put mere grain and seed into the ground. But God gives each grain its body as it hath pleased Him. There are also different kinds of grain, different kinds of flesh also; there may be different glories, as one star differeth from another star in glory, so may it be with the heavenly saints; others may have their portion on earth, as bodies terrestrial. But all these are primarily but pictures of the resurrection of the bodies of the saints. It is a great point in understanding this chapter to see that Paul was combating the denial of the resurrection of the body. (Ver. 42-44) This is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in weak-

ness, it is raised in power ; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. (Ver. 45-47) Adam and Christ are then again introduced as the type of each body, but we must remember that as the subject is the resurrection of the body, so we are to look at the body of Christ in resurrection, as the type or picture of what our bodies will be.

There is a natural body, of which Adam was a type, as it is written, 'The first man Adam was made a living soul.' That was the life of his body: but there is also a spiritual body, as the last Adam was a quickening Spirit: as Son of God He had life in Himself, and hence the power of quickening others. The first Adam had no such power, and as having sinned, it was mortal and liable to death. The soul is only looked at here in connection with the body, the subject of the apostle's remarks. In other places, such as Heb. iv., it is closely connected with the spirit, God having breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life. This made him immortal, but that subject is not entered into here. The natural came first, the spiritual next. The first man was of the earth, earthy; the second Man was the Lord from heaven. The first man has the race of the earthy; the second Man's race will be heavenly, after the type of His resurrection body that is now in heaven. The thought now

turns more directly to us. As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Flesh and blood cannot enter into the kingdom of God, even as is evidenced by the Lord Jesus (comp. John xix. 34 : Luke xxiv. 30), neither can corruption inherit incorruption.

Then, how does this wonderful resurrection take place? (Ver 51-54) Behold, I show you a mystery, unrevealed in Old Testament times, but now made clear: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we, the living, shall be changed (comp. 1 Thess. iv. 13-18). With regard to the living saints, it will be necessary, seeing they have mortal bodies subject to death, that this mortal should put on immortality: with regard to the sleeping saints, it will be necessary that their corruptible bodies should put on incorruption. When that is accomplished, then shall the Scripture be fulfilled which said, Death is swallowed up in Victory. If a lion swallows up a lamb, there is an end of the lamb; if death is swallowed up in victory, there is an end of death with regard to the saints. Blessed be God, it will be so in that day. At that period will be the ushering in of the glory of the kingdom, spoken of in Isaiah xxv. 8, when the Lord

will make a feast for all people in Mount Sion, and take away the veil spread over all nations, and wipe away all tears from all faces. This is the heavenly part in chap. xv. That in Isaiah is the earthly part, but the one ushers in the other, and the first resurrection will not be complete till Israel is again established in Jerusalem. Comp. Rev. xx. 1-5, with Rev. iv., v., where the seated, crowned, and clothed elders, as representatives of the Church and Old Testament saints, are already in glory.

But with the thought of this glorious ending, there is the present shout of faith,—O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Resurrection is not only a future reality, as to my hope, but it is a present reality to faith, for Christ is risen. I am victorious over death now, and can say by faith, I am risen with Christ. He was made sin for us, and put it away, so that the sting of death is gone. What is death without sin? It is merely the doorway into glory. Christ has died to sin, and in doing so not only has put it away, but taken death also out of the hands of the enemy, and made it His own. The law having been given as the perfect rule of life for a child of Adam, is the strength of

sin. Sin uses the holy commandment to slay man in the flesh. Instead of checking lust it excites it, by discovering it ; and then forbidding it, under the penalty of a curse: sin takes advantage, uses its curse to pay to its poor slave its wages, that is death (comp. Rom. vi., vii.). So that the law, instead of being man's power against sin, is sin's power against man. It uses the holy commandment to slay me, Paul says, in Rom. vii., so showing itself exceeding sinful, and making me cry out as much for deliverance from law as from sin. Christ, having fulfilled it perfectly, died under its curse, thus giving present deliverance from the law by His death, as from sin. He has risen again, the victorious Son of God, so that I, a believing sinner, now rejoice in His victory, and daily do so. The Christian thus anticipates death by faith, for, on accepting Christ's death by faith, he can say, I have died with Christ. He anticipates resurrection too, for he holds the risen Son of God by faith, and says, His life is my life; His victory my victory; His righteousness my righteousness. He overcomes daily by faith, always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be manifested, and the resurrection of the body is the full result. Comp. 2 Cor. iv., v. Glory be to God! Beloved brethren, seeing then you have this glorious victory, and these

glorious prospects, Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

And now I would have my reader dwell on that wonderful exhortation, "Be ye stedfast, unmoveable." Connect it with what precedes in the Epistle, and you will see its beauty and value. Be stedfast, unmoveable in your church position, as belonging to the temple of God, chap iii., and the body of Christ, chap xii., judging all human wisdom and sectarianism by the cross of Christ, chap i. 18-30. Cleave to the Holy Name of the Lord Jesus for the maintenance of the holiness of God's house, chap v., vi. 1-6. Be stedfast, unmoveable in your place at the Lord's Table, as the place of communion, and where the unity of the body is expressed by breaking the one loaf, and where you remember your Lord and His love in dying for you, chap. x., xi. Be stedfast in your hope as to His speedy coming again, and the reality of the resurrection of your body at that day, which will take you actually for ever out of this scene of death and judgment to be for ever with the Lord. Thus you will have the assurance of final victory. And then, standing firmly in your true church-place, and assured of final victory at His coming, you will be able freely to obey the latter part of the exhortation, "Always

abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." You will get besides the glory, a reward at the judgment seat of Christ.

CHAPTER XVI.

Chap. xvi. concludes the Epistle. (Ver. 1-4) There was a collection to be made for the poor saints at Jerusalem. Paul counsels systematic laying aside every first day of the week, according as God had prospered them; so that he might not have to call for a collection when he came (comp. 2 Cor. viii. 20, as to this.) A blessed rule for the saints at all times, but it is the work of each individual, in responsibility to the Lord, and has nothing to do with weekly collections at church-doors, or in boxes at the Lord's Table. Then, when there is a special need any where, the money is always ready. Special men, approved by letters of commendation by the Assembly, were to take their gifts to Jerusalem. Paul himself might go with them. (Ver. 5-9) He hopes to see them sooner or later, but at present, till Pentecost, he will tarry at Ephesus, for there a great door was opened, though there were many adversaries. Thus an open door and many adversaries oft go together in the work of the Lord, a principle perhaps little thought of in these lax days. (Ver. 10-18) Different labourers then are brought for-

ward by name, viz., Timothy, Apollos, the household of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, all having their different spheres of labour in the Church of God. No sort of official rule is mentioned. Each was free to act according to his own gift, in responsibility to the Lord. If Timothy came, they were to receive him, and as he was young and naturally timid, they were to see that he should be amongst them without fear, and no man was to despise him. He had greatly desired Apollos to come to them, but the latter was not willing, no doubt fearing to add to the party feeling at Corinth, though Paul himself had not the slightest feeling of jealousy or fear about it. Apollos thus exerted his own independent will, in responsibility to the Lord, in refusing to go at the present moment, though he might at some future time. The apostle then no doubt thinking of the character of his brother, Apollos, as an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, and fervent in spirit (Acts xix. 24-28), gives to the Corinthians a summary of what he thought Apollos's ministry would have supplied. Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong: at the same time warning them that all things be done in love. the household of Stephanas had all of them addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints. They were to submit themselves to

such, as well as to every one who helped or laboured.

Though the Corinthians had, as an Assembly, forgotten Paul in his necessities, there were whole-hearted individual saints such as Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, who had supplied what had been lacking on the part of the Corinthians; they were also to acknowledge such (Rom. xii. 8). Giving was a gift in the Assembly of no mean order. Grace on the part of Paul says, They have refreshed my spirit *and yours*. (Ver. 19) The Assemblies of Asia saluted them. It is to be remarked, that wherever Scripture talks of Assemblies in the *plural*, they are Assemblies in a province, never in a town (Acts ix. 31; 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 19; 2 Cor. viii. 1; Gal. i. 2, 22; Rev. i. 11). An Assembly in a place is always in the singular, though they numbered many thousands, as at Jerusalem, and met in different rooms. So Paul addresses the Assembly of God at Corinth, &c.; but never Assemblies when it refers to a town. An attentive examination of these simple facts will help much to show the state of ruin of the Church in these days. (Ver. 20-24) The apostle ends up by binding them together in love, exhorting them to greet one another with an holy kiss, without suspicion, the only test being love to Christ. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let

him be Anathema Maranatha. He prayed that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ might be with them, and sent his own love, as showing his own unfailing affection to his poor failing Corinthian children. Oh, that the grace and love, manifested in this great apostle may more and more fill our hearts, and, amid the failure, and ruin, and coldness, and self-satisfaction displayed in the saints all around us, may we be enabled to kindle the hidden spark of divine love in their hearts, by showing one another grace and love, the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ!