

## Book of Faith for November: 1 Corinthians

*1 Corinthians* is marvelous. It goes from the ridiculous to the sublime. For sublime we have Paul's astonishing meditation in chapter one about the foolishness of God that is wiser than human wisdom, and his weakness more powerful than human strength. We have Paul's instruction for the Lord's Supper in chapter 11, the Love Chapter (13) and the Resurrection Chapter (15). For ridiculous, we have the congregation squabbling about who is the best preacher, who has the best spiritual gifts, who gets to eat the best food at pot lucks, and their questions whether marriage is OK for Christians and whether they can eat meat that was sacrificed to an idol.

**Structure:** St. Paul carefully planned this letter. Following the usual form of a letter's beginning (sender, recipient, greeting, thanksgiving) Paul begins (chapters 1-4) with what he considers most important to the spirituality of the Corinthian Christians: that they recognize that "God works in a mysterious way," namely, that God's strength comes in weakness and his supreme wisdom through what appears foolish! In cc 5-6 he takes up problems in the church he heard about from the people who brought him the letter. Finally in cc 7-14 he deals with the questions and controversies they submitted in their letter to his definitive apostolic judgment. Even in these almost laughable controversies, though, it is wonderful to see how St. Paul carries through from the first chapter (which is first for a reason) that the **wisdom of the cross** is the way to sort out all these questions! Ch. 15 he takes on what he considers their second biggest problem, a denial of bodily resurrection. Ch. 16 is house-keeping matters and exchanges of greetings.

**Background:** We know far more about Paul's interactions with this congregation than with any other. Paul mentions several visits. His first evangelizing visit is narrated by Luke in Acts 18:1-18, which you should read for background. **Apollo** is a key figure in 1 Cor; to be introduced to him read Acts 18:24-19:1. Though we call it "1 Cor" it was not his first letter to them, for in it he mentions another letter. In our Bibles, you may have noticed, Paul's letters are ordered basically from longest to shortest. So we call it "first" because it comes Bibles before 2 Cor!—though indeed it was written earlier. From mentions Paul makes, we know that there were at least two other letters he sent—and maybe part of one of them somehow was folded into our "2 Cor." They wrote him at least once. From 2 Cor we know he visited at least a second time.

**A note on background:** Remember that we are reading someone else's mail! Paul does not describe what he is telling them about, because they already know, but we do not. However, scholars have been able by detective work to fill in much of what we don't know. I will often include this in "Background" notes.

**The Corinthians:** Just as we expect New Yorkers to act differently from Californians, and Texans to think differently from Wisconsinites, so it may help you to know a bit about the city of Corinth. Corinth was at the time a large, prosperous port city. It was therefore immoral as large cities and as port cities are. It was competitive (it was from the Greeks that we get our love of competition). There was a wild mix of different people from different places. It was a religiously fervent, and sometimes strange, society.

**November 6 assignment. Read by (11/13) 1 Corinthians 1-4**

1 Corinthians 1 V.1 Paul immediately asserts his unassailable authority (clearly it is being doubted in the church he founded!) V. 2 “Church” is really “assembly,” the people God has called together—a beautiful thought. “Called to be saints” gives the wrong impression, as if perhaps saints were something they were yet to become; really it means they *are* saints, and they are saints because God *summoned* them to be so. 4-9 The Corinthians think they are spiritually “hot stuff;” Paul must begin by acknowledging the many great spiritual gifts that the Spirit has indeed given them. *What three things to the Corinthians especially prize (two in v. 5, one in v. 7)?* Speech is the subject of cc. 1-4, knowledge of cc. 8-10, and gifts of cc. 12-14! V. 8 *does “blameless” mean that they will have no sin because of their perfect behavior, or that they will have no sin because their sins will have been removed? How?* 10-17 Paul is appalled that there are divisions in the church, AS WE ALL SHOULD BE! *Why?* V.11 Chloe is woman in the congregation who must be a well-off enough to dispatch some slaves or employees to hand-deliver the congregation’s letter to Paul. V. 12 Apollos you met in Acts 18:24-19:1; “Cephas” is what Hebrew-speaking Jesus called Peter (“Peter” is a translation into Greek; both words mean “Rock”). V. 17 is the rub: some Corinthians were so impressed with Apollos’ eloquence, that their loyalty to him on that basis was dividing the church! Here Paul must sharply say that what makes the church is not eloquence but the cross! 18-25 Here Paul develops that into a major, and profound, theme of the NT. While Jews, whose history has been filled with miracles, look for powerful miracles as signs of God’s presence and approval, and Greeks (proud of their heritage of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle) look for wisdom/insight/understanding as the most precious good, God sidesteps both when he comes. God does not come on our terms! Rather, he comes crucified (what is weaker or more foolish?!!) to save those who trust, not those who demand miracles or judge wisdom. 26-31 Paul demonstrates the truth of his claim (this is always how Paul argues: he states his claim then bring supporting arguments) by pointing the Corinthians to their own experience! “You were not the best, brightest, more beautiful or wealthiest in Corinth—and that’s why God chose you! God must make it clear that ALL depends on his grace, not on human attainments of any kind.

1 Corinthians 2 1-5 Next Paul applies this principle to his own ministry among them: he did not come with beautiful poetry or ingenious insight (according to Acts, just before coming to Corinth Paul was largely unsuccessful in Athens, capital of the philosophers, where he tried that approach) but was simple and straightforward: “God’s Messiah was crucified to death for you!” There were also miracles and spiritual gifts attendant on his speaking. 6-16 Paul seems to pick up here on the Corinthians desire for special knowledge, and says, Indeed the Church knows things no one else does, but it is not the kind of wisdom you Greeks are known for. *What do you think is this “wisdom spoken among the [spiritually] mature”?* 14-16 makes an important observation. People naturally, from birth, cannot understand God and his wisdom. Only by a miracle of the Spirit can people “get” God.

1 Corinthians 3 1-5 Here Paul is dressing them down. They think themselves worthy of great wisdom, but he says “With all your quarreling about who is superior, you clearly are not spiritual enough, but too fleshly to understand the spiritual wisdom. 5-17 Since the Corinthians have shown they cannot understand correctly the roles of Paul, Apollos and the Spirit, he will now explain. V. 10 Paul switches from a gardening metaphor to one of building. Paul reminds that he was the first to bring the news to Corinth, “laying the foundation” for the congregation. Subsequent pastors build on the foundation; some build with materials that will last through the fiery trials; some build with materials that will not last. *Get practical: what “materials” can a pastor use to build up a people that will last; what “materials” do pastors use that will not last?* [Note: Luther famously called James an “epistle of straw,” meaning that its emphasis on good works would not survive the fire, in contrast to Paul, Peter and John who epistles emphasize trust in Christ.] 16-17 The “you” here is plural: “you-all, together, are God’s temple” (not each one of you is). 18-23 Paul returns to his theme. And his concluding command: do not boast in human leaders; why limit yourself to one, since ALL belongs to you! *Do you think Lutherans are guilty of boasting in their human leader; why or why not?*

1 Corinthians 4 Paul returns to the mistaken way they look at Paul and Apollos. 1-5 Remember that Apollos and I are not working for you! Pastors do not work for their congregations, we are working for the Lord. Our duty is to be trustworthy to Him concerning what He has entrusted to us and he will be the one to judge whether we are or not; so that neither your judgment nor even mine means anything. 8-13 Again on the theme of what Luther calls “the theology of the cross,” Paul shows the ridiculousness of the Corinthians’ pride. They think they are so advanced that they are spiritually royal, rich. Yet here we apostles are condemned, a spectacle, regarded as fools, weak, disrespected, hungry, thirsty, beaten and homeless! His point (and he will make it again in 2 Cor) is that Christianity is not the way to worldly success, since the apostolic princes of the Church are by worldly standards total losers. *In what ways are you a loser; does that show that you are not a Christian, or that you are?* 14-21 His rebuke is not to harm them but is paternal. He reminds that he begot them through the Gospel seed, no matter how many “step-fathers” (like Apollos) they have.

**November 13 assignment. Read by (11/20) 1 Corinthians 5-7**

1 Corinthians 5 Yet before turning to their letter, Paul takes up two problems of gross behavior in the congregation. V. 1 Paul does not describe the situation to the Corinthians because they know it, so only refers to it. A man is having sex with his now-deceased father’s second wife, his stepmother. The situation is worsened because the congregation is proud of him (vv 2, 6). Why?

Background: Apparently the Corinthians think that because it is spiritual things that are important, that what people do with their bodies doesn’t matter. This is a corruption of what Paul taught them, but it comes from what Paul taught. (Think of all that Paul says about freedom from the Law! Or about the spirit being good and the flesh being temporary or evil or unimportant.) To their view, this man is showing great faith (! doing this “in the name of the Lord Jesus”!!) by showing how little he cares about bodies. How bold! How bravely unconventional! (This is basically the same error the ELCA is making in approving of men

having sex with men and women with women.) This same belief appears in the church members' use of prostitutes (6:13-15).

Paul's correction is instructive.

1. The act itself is so gross that not even the Gentiles (and think what that means to a Jew!) do it, V. 1.
2. A little yeast leavens the whole dough, v. 6. In other words, if your congregation tolerates such wicked behavior, then the rest of you will become corrupted as well.
3. The man must be got rid of (vv. 2, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13).

Note that Paul says that any church members guilty of gross sins (11) must be ostracized, excommunicated ("not even eat with him"). *Is your congregation loving enough to be vigilant over the behavior of its members? Why not?*

1 Corinthians 6 1-6 The next case of unchristian behavior is one church member suing another. Christians should regard their congregation as their most important authority, not the government. So contentions between Christians ought to be handled within the church, not outside it! *Is your congregation strong enough to handle this task? Why not?* 7-8 In fact, Paul says, isn't it more Christian to let yourself be wronged (Sermon on the Mount). But instead you so-called Christians are wronging each other! 9-11 Apparently the Corinthians have mistaken the grace of God for permission! Paul sharply corrects them: people—even Christians—guilty of these gross sins will NOT go to heaven (not because Jesus' blood is inadequate to cover such sins—see in fact v. 11!) but because people sinning so badly have lost the Holy Spirit and faith and have fallen from grace. Paul reminds them that, though some of them were such bad people, they were baptized which changes everything. 12-13 Here Paul seems to quote some Corinthians slogans. Indeed, "All things are lawful for me" sounds just like Paul! But what Paul means is that literally all things, all objects are permitted to those with faith in Christ, even pork and foreskins that were prohibited to Jews by the Law; there are no unclean things. Paul does not mean that all behaviors are lawful. We are not to take the grace of Christ as permission for all things, but as freedom to focus on "what builds up." "Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food" seems to be their coy way of saying that human sexual organs are made to be used for each other—so all sex is OK. *How many different reasons does Paul give in 13-20 not to indulge in extra-marital sex but to be chaste?*

1 Corinthians 7 Paul turns finally to a question in their letter to him. 1-9 Paul teaches that celibacy is better than the married state (vv 1, 6, 7, 8, 25-28, 32-35). This is unusual, for in the Judaism of his day marriage was seen as an obligation (Gen 1:27f!). However, sinless Jesus died a virgin, so there must be freedom not to marry and to spare oneself all its pain, strife, obligations and worries. But, God has implanted libidos in people, so that for those who cannot suppress the desire, marriage is the lawful place for sexual acts and so marriage is better than the sins of fornication, prostitution, sodomy and masturbation. Again, for the sake of relieving the sexual urge so that it does not drive one to sin, husbands and wives should always give their bodies to each other and not refuse. For only a few have the gift of contented celibacy. Notice that this whole section is given as "reasonable advice," more instruction than command. 10-11 Here however, Paul gives a command—though it is not his but the Lord Jesus'!—do not divorce. And someone who

does divorce (interesting!) should not remarry. We know these words from Jesus' own mouth in Matthew 5 and 19. 12-16 Notice that Paul is careful to say that this is not a command from the Lord, but Paul's own word (though he is an apostle and therefore to be obeyed). Mixed marriages. A Christian should not leave husband or wife because he or she is an unbeliever. It could turn out (v. 16) that the person will come to faith so that the Christian will have saved her unbelieving spouse. V. 14, in fact, there is some sanctification of the unbeliever through his union with his Christian wife, so that even their children are set apart for God. V. 15 But if an unbelieving spouse divorces a Christian, the Christian should not fight it, and is free to re-marry (different from the situation in 10-11). 17-24 After telling the married to stay married, here Paul broadens his point from various states of marriage to other social categories, as if to say, "Look, people: Christianity is not about exchanging your place in society, but about being a holy person where you are!" Circumcision is nothing, the 10 commandments are! Slave or free does not affect your faith: in fact, a slave is spiritually free in Christ and a free person is a slave to Christ so what's the difference! "Don't move from where you are, but make your station holy!" 25-31 (Again Paul is careful to distinguish between a word of Jesus that is absolute, and a word from an apostle that is not necessarily universal.) He has told the married, circumcised and slaves to stay as they are, now he gives the same word to the unmarried. 29-31 is a brilliant wording of Christian truth: Our faith does not take us out of the world or out of worldly responsibilities, but it does mean that our primary focus is on things that are eternal not things of this life. So Paul says: do not leave the things of your life, but "hold them loosely, not tightly in your hand." *What are ways that you do this?* 32-35 gives reasons to remain single but . . . 36-38 . . . marrying is fine. 39f Finally, he has talked about everyone but widows. His advice is, as always, against marriage, but a widow may remarry as long as she marries a Christian. *Do you believe your married life is under Christ's authority?*

### **November 20 assignment. Read by (11/27) 1 Corinthians 8-11**

1 Corinthians 8-10 Paul turns to a second question in their letter to him: "concerning food offered to idols."

General Background: Like Judaism, Greco-Roman paganism called for lots of sacrifices: lots of animals were killed as a gift to the gods. (When I visited Pompeii, which was preserved from this period, there were lots of altars to various gods, including the spirit of Caesar, in a modest-sized city.) However, most sacrifices were not "holocausts" (that is, the entire thing burned up), also in Judaism. Often only a part was burned in sacrifice, so that the rest . . . was there to be eaten (some by the priest, in payment for his labor, some by the worshiper). In time, perhaps any rancher with livestock to butcher and sell thought, "Why not sacrifice a bit of it, get some credit with a god, then sell the rest?" So, anyone who bought wares in the Corinthians meat-market was likely buying meat that had been sacrificed to a pagan god.

Unsurprisingly, we know that this was a big no-no to the Jews, and therefore to the Church. In Acts 15:29 the decision of the council of all the apostles was that Gentiles did not have to follow peculiarly Jewish laws like circumcision and Sabbath, but had only to "abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols . . . and from [sex not between husband and wife]." In Rev., too, it was an act that Christ "hates" (Rev. 2:14f, 6, 20).

Background in the Corinthians church: Members who were not Jews had of course been pagans. They had eaten meat offered to idols, even accepted invitations from friends to dinner in a pagan temple (the temples had banquet rooms downstairs) on meat just sacrificed,

so that the banquet was a gustatory tribute to Zeus or Athena or Poseidon or Apollo or Asclepius. Having become Christians, now, and schooled that idols were insults to God and his Christ, they were no longer to participate.

**However**, some bright Corinthian Christians thought: “Meat is just meat; idols are all big fakes: who cares is some benighted holy man waved this lamb chop at a statue of Poseidon? That is bogus--and this chop looks really tasty. I am going to eat it and that is no disrespect to Christ.”

**Further**, this came to a disagreement between the two kinds of people. The non-eaters accused the eaters of impiety. The eaters accused the non-eaters of being dense. As we will see, Paul agrees that the eaters are basically right—idols are just dumb statues so who cares.

**But**, says Paul, the most important thing in a matter like this is not who is right but who LOVES.

1-3 See how he contrasts knowledge with love. V. 5 is Paul’s expression of the difficulty: there are no other gods or lords, really; yet some people believe there are and so to them they exist though not for us. V. 7 “Weak conscience”: the “weak” are not completely sure the idols are bogus. So, even though the strong are doing nothing wrong by eating idol-meat, yet if their eating discourages the weak from refusing invitations that they think are wrong, the strong are harming their weaker brethren. (It is hard to think of a modern situation like that, but Halloween is close. We all know that Halloween is a great time for kids to have fun dressing up and getting candy from neighbors. Some Christians, being weak in understanding, think that this harmless and indeed community-building activity is somehow honoring the devil.) Bottom line: freedom is good, but if in your use of your freedom you harm a fellow church member, you must not use your freedom in that way but be more loving.

1 Cor 9 Paul offers his own manner of life both to instruct and encourage the Corinthian strong. 1-14 Paul reminds them of the rights apostles have. (These are the same rights to support that pastors have today from the churches.) 15-18 Paul however has not exercised his rights. His reason: he has to preach the gospel; he is under orders from Christ and can do no different, but so that he can have a reason to boast (Paul is competitive too!) he preaches for free! 19-23 A beautiful expression of how Paul adapts his entire manner of life for his work of saving people (by using the Gospel to create faith in them). *How is it that you do not always exercise your freedoms, but adapt your life to serve and save others?* 24-27 A warning that not all who are baptized are saved; for the race must be won, not merely begun.

1 Cor 10 After his own instructive example, Paul returns to the Corinthians, continuing the theme of failure from 9:24-27. 1-5 Interesting passage! The gist is, that the ancient Hebrews, though blessed by God, still most of them God killed in the desert. But note the blessing: “baptism” and “spiritual food and drink.” Clearly with the latter he refers to the Eucharist. (While we call baptism and Eucharist “sacraments,” this is the ONLY place in Bible that the two are spoken of together, as if two species of one kind.) Paul is saying that Moses’ followers had a kind of baptism and holy meal, like the Corinthian Christians had—yet many were judged and condemned by God. 6-13 It is a warning to the Corinthians that sacraments will not save you if you desire evil (7-8 was a party in honor of an idol). *Do you think you can “relax” as a Christian, that since you are baptized you will be saved even if you desire evil? Do people in your family think that?*

14-22 Therefore, stay away from idols' temples!! His reasoning (with Paul, the reasoning always follows the statement) draws a parallel from the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, our sharing the bread and cup joins us to each other and to Christ. Further, in old Israel those who ate from the altar had a "communion" with each other and with the Lord whose altar it is. By analogy eating from a pagan altar also makes a communion with . . . the idol? NO, Paul says, for idols are nothing, but what the pagans serve is not a fictional god but a real demon! To eat from the pagan altar, therefore, puts one in communion with the demon! 23-32 "All things are lawful" is the Corinthian slogan we saw in 6:12. Notice that Paul will not renege on freedom; but also that he insists that freedom can be wrongly, lovelessly used! Paul is trying hard here to give rules for behavior that will honor the freedom Christ so dearly purchased for us but also will be in charity toward other people. 31f Good summary! Make sure that whatever you do glorifies God—either by expressing your freedom from superstition or by sacrificing in charity for others. *In what ways do you exercise your Christian freedom? In what ways do you curtail your freedom to save others?*

1 Cor 11 2-16 is odd. Apparently there was a serious problem involving hairstyles or veils (it is unclear which). When a woman is leading in worship by prophesying (inspired preaching) or praying, she should have her hair up or veiled, and a man should not. 17-34 is a more serious worship matter.

Background: As will become clear, the Corinthians celebrated the Lord's Supper as a supper! That is, in the evening as part of a pot luck (!). The well-off who were in control of their own schedule were able to arrive earlier than slaves or laborers. They helped themselves both to the best of food and to the wine, leaving little for the others when they arrive. "In their defense," so to speak, that was how they lived at home and in society—probably they did so at church without thinking. The Apostle has no patience with that; he scolds them sharply for not treating the slaves as their equals! Paul goes so far as to say that their lovelessness means it is not even the Lord's Supper they eat, even if they follow the required rite.

23-26 Interesting; beyond Jesus' birth, death and resurrection this is the only event in his life Paul ever mentions! It is clear that these dear holy words were handed on from apostles to the churches they founded. 27-34 In 10:1-5 Paul warned that receiving the sacraments would not save someone who desired evil. Here Paul warns that the Sacrament will itself increase the guilt of someone who misuses it. He begins by drawing the obvious conclusion from the "Words of Institution" just quoted: whoever misuses the Eucharistic bread and cup is guilty of abusing the body and blood of the Lord Jesus! So doing a "gut check" is wise. V. 29 is a bit of a puzzle. Does "body" refer to the Eucharistic body-bread that Paul has been talking about, so that those who do not discern treat it as ordinary food? Or does it refer to the congregation, which is the "body" of Christ, so that those who do not discern treat their fellow members as nobodies instead of members of Christ? Or . . . both? *What do you think?* (I like "both;" since the reasons for either are so very strong, and Paul was smart enough to know he was making a kind of pun, and because in 10:17 he says the loaf is a body that makes us a body. And it is exactly that, which, people ignoring puts them under judgment.) *How do you approach the Holy Supper?*

## November 27 assignment. Read by (12/4) 1 Corinthians 12-16

1 Corinthians 12-14 Here Paul takes up a third question from their letter. It is not usually a problem in churches today, but still gives an important general lesson in how to be a Christian congregation.

Background: Often the Spirit would show His powerful coming by inspiring people to do unusual things: healing, prophesying (inspired preaching or predictions) or “speaking in tongues.” The Pentecost miracle, when the apostles were enabled to speak in foreign languages that they did not know, in order to tell people from all nations the Gospel, was never repeated. But there were times (the conversion of Cornelius’ household Acts 10:46 and the baptism of the Ephesians in Acts 19:6—both times when it was especially important that the coming of the Spirit be evident) when new converts “spoke in tongues.” In Corinth, and in Paul’s own experience, this continued to happen. This was not a foreign language intelligible to anyone (14:2-5), but we might call it “inspired babbling” or “word-less praise.”

Further: In all religions, ancient and modern, there are elements that thrive on ecstasy: the overwhelming emotional experience of being “carried away.” Hindus (?) have their “whirling dervishes” and Christians have their Pentecostals. Some Corinthians came from practicing ancient paganism (12:2) with those ecstatic experiences.

Further, more: We have already seen the Corinthians divide themselves into parties: ch. 1: Paul and Apollos parties; ch. 8: the weak and the strong consciences; ch. 11: the well-off and the poor. Now we see them competing and dividing in a fourth way: over “Who has the superior gifts from the Spirit?”

4-11 Paul begins acknowledging the variety of gifts present, but (to quell their competitiveness) lays stress on how the gifts are given to all people from the one God and all for the common good! 12-26 Again, Paul acknowledges the differences in gifts, but explains the differences using the picture of parts of the body that also have different functions but do not compete with each other but rather aid each other. 27-31 Finally, Paul acknowledges that some gifts are more important than others—and lists the tongue-speaking of which some Corinthians are so proud last. *What gifts do you have and how do you use them to build up the church?*

1 Cor 13 is the famous Love Chapter. 1-3 The sharply criticizes the Corinthians Christians’ values; competing in spiritual powers rather than seeking in charity the well-being of others. 4-7 holds up to them what love is, so that they can see how far short they fall. 8-13 Though Paul takes second place to no one in extolling the value of faith, here he points out that, indispensable as faith and hope are for this life, in heaven they will be unnecessary and all will be only love. *What distracts you from pursuing charity in all life, to your harm; money, control, your feelings, status, popularity?*

1 Cor 14 Here he comes to detailed instructions, how to regard tongue-speaking rightly: as valuable, but not all that valuable. And again, for the same reason: the most important things are those that strengthen the church. *What do you do to strengthen your church?* V. 16, interesting that these Gentile, Greek-speaking churches use the Hebrew word “Amen” to join in another’s prayer. V. 22-25 Ecstasy (and other miracles that the Lord and apostles used both to help people and to get attention to the Gospel they tell) would show unbelievers that there is a powerful Spirit present; but if that is all there is, it would seem to a church visitor only unhelpful craziness. V. 29 Often in the NT we see gratefulness that the Spirit inspires people to speak, but also recognition that what is said

must be checked (“tested”) for authenticity by the community. 33b-36 is extremely odd. First, it does not fit with the (also odd) instructions in chapter 11 about women’s headdress when they pray and prophesy. Second, there are no good reasons given (where does the law say so? Why is it “shameful”?) Third, it is not even true, women were not silent in all churches. Fourth, it looks like it was not part of Paul’s writing, since it is a change of subject and v. 37 would follow smoothly from 33b.

1 Corinthians 15 The great Resurrection Chapter. As Paul began this letter with the highest priority item, so he closes it with the second highest.

Background: Greeks, like most humans, had mixed feelings about our bodies. Understandably: sometimes our bodies are wonderful; sometimes they are awful—like miserable prisons for our noble souls. Apparently, Corinthians thought that there would be no resurrection of our bodies. Paul tells them they are wrong, and gives several different arguments, as well as answering their arguments, for example v. 35.

1-2 is a wonderful statement of the history of the Good News of Christ’s resurrection, and of how important it is, now and forever. 3-7 are the earliest and most basic version of the Good News (remember that “scripture” always means the OT). 8-9 Paul adds his own eye witness testimony, insisting that although he not one of the 12, he saw the risen Lord who commissioned him as a genuine apostle. V. 10 is a lovely expression of Christian truth; *in what ways do you do great work—yet it is not you, but God’s grace to you energizing you to work in love?* 12-19 Notice that Paul unites Jesus’ resurrection with ours; they are not separate events, but the beginning and the completion of one event: we are all raised or else Jesus isn’t either. And if Christ is not raised (here is why Easter is so important!) then all of Christianity (preaching, faith, knowing God, forgiveness, and living in hope) is all gone. *How important is the Lord’s resurrection to you?* 20-28 Paul explains the progress of resurrection to help them believe and understand. V.29 Perhaps some Corinthians thought they would try vicarious baptism for deceased loved ones. Paul neither commands nor even commends this practice, which is otherwise unheard of, but only points to their own inconsistency: if there is no resurrection to an afterlife, then why worry about the dead? 30-34 Paul expands that into an even broader argument from absurdity: if there were no resurrection why would I be working so hard! 35-49 Paul uses several analogies to help people understand the risen body: it is a body, like ours—yet not like ours. 50-58 Because it is simply impossible for our earthy bodies to live the exalted life of the heavenly kingdom, even those of us who are still alive when Christ returns (notice that at this point Paul still expects it to be in his lifetime) will have to be changed from biodegradable and mortal to immortal.

1 Corinthians 16 Various house-keeping matters. 1-4 the collection, an important project to Paul, mentioned in several letters. His advice in v 2 is still good: plan your giving and do not wait until the last minute. *Do you plan your giving to God?* 5-9 Travel plans, which correspond to Acts 19:1-20:2. Macedonia then, as now, is northern Greece, and Achaia, where Corinth is, is the southern peninsula. 10-12 regarding other traveling Christian workers. 15-20 The first Christians were huge international networkers! Remember Stephanus from 1:16? Prisca and Aquila had a long and close partnership with Paul (Acts 18). V. 21 Paul dictated his letters.