

## 1 Corinthians 8-13 Ep 217



In this outline are a few links to some of my favorite books that have really helped me understand the context and content of the scriptures. [Click here to see all of my favorite books on Amazon](#). As an Amazon Affiliate, I do earn a small commission from qualifying purchases (at no extra cost to you).

**Sent from:** Paul, at Ephesus, joined by Sosthenes.

**Sent to:** Members at Corinth, provincial capital of southern Greece.

**Date:** Around 53-55 A.D.<sup>1</sup>

**Purpose:** To correct dissension in that branch, to correct many wrong beliefs and actions, and to prepare them for Paul's future visit.

**Main themes:** Appeal for unity; revelation and man's wisdom; Paul's apostleship; sexual standards; marriage questions; true and false worship; Church organization and spiritual gifts; pure love; the Resurrection.

### 1 Corinthians 8: The Issue of Food Offered to Idols

The main idea in 1 Corinthians 8 revolves around the issue of food offered to idols. Paul addresses the Corinthians' questions and concerns regarding this matter, emphasizing the balance between knowledge and love. He highlights that idols are not real gods and that mature believers should be mindful of their actions and considerate of weaker believers. The chapter also explores the principle of Christian liberty, urging believers to exercise self-control and deny personal rights for the sake of the gospel. Ultimately, Paul emphasizes the importance of glorifying God in all things and seeking the good of others in matters of conscience and Christian practice.

- A. The Corinthians' question regarding food offered to idols (1 Corinthians 8.1-3)
- B. The importance of knowledge tempered by love (1 Corinthians 8.4-6)
- C. The understanding that idols are not real gods (1 Corinthians 8.7-8)
- D. The responsibility of mature believers towards weaker believers (1 Corinthians 8.9-13)

---

<sup>1</sup> This date is up to debate. I have read students of Paul's writings citing this text as early as 51 A.D., as well as others dating 1 Corinthians to a later time, even as late as 57 A.D. Since I was not there, I do not know. Richard Lloyd Anderson states that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians "about 57 A.D." (see: [New Testament: Sperry Symposium Classics](#), "Paul's Witness to the Historical Integrity of the Gospels," Deseret Book, 2006. Chuck Swindoll states that 1 Corinthians was penned in 55 A.D. See: [Swindoll, "First Corinthians"](#). Accessed 6.1.23. Douglas Campbell dates the text to the Spring of 51 A.D. See: Campbell, "[Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to a community in the middle of a culture war.](#)" Accessed 6.1.23. Randall Niles cites 53 as the date of this letter. Niles, "[Paul's letter to the Corinthians.](#)" Accessed 6.1.23.

One scholar shared this background to this passage:

Most Jews were at pains to avoid food consecrated to idols. Palestinian Jewish teachers debated what to do in many cases of uncertainty (such as untithed food), but would never have taken a chance on food that might have been offered to an idol. They believed that Jews outside Palestine unwittingly compromised with idolatry when invited to pagans' banquets for their sons, even if they brought their own food. Following such teachings strictly (as some did) would have greatly circumscribed Gentile believers' relationships with pagan colleagues. The matter was more troubling for Christians converted from pagan backgrounds: e.g., could they meet over lunch with business associates or fellow members of their trade guild, or attend a reception in a temple for a relative's wedding?

Although Paul is theologically opposed to food known to be offered to idols (10:1-22), he frames that argument with a social one based on loving fellow believers (8:1-9:27; 10:23-33). The more educated and socially elite group, who unlike the poor ate meat regularly and not especially when it was doled out at pagan festivals, had well-to-do friends who would serve meat. They probably represent the liberal faction, who consider themselves "strong" and the socially lower group "weak."

The person who associates meat with idols might think that eating it was all right even if it meant participating in idolatry, misunderstanding the "strong" person's convictions. (Some Jewish people had scruples similar to Paul's. For example, \*Pharisees said that if one saw a Pharisee accepting food from an unreligious person, that did not mean one could assume that the food had been tithed; the Pharisee might have simply committed himself in his heart to tithe on it when he got home.) Giving up "meat" (8:13) would be more difficult for the elite, who had more access to it.<sup>2</sup>

Joseph Fielding Smith said, "I believe in obeying the commandments of God, or else get out of the way. We ought not to be stumbling blocks to those who are trying to enter in at the door. God will hold us responsible for this. If there is a man on earth that has done wrong because I have set him the example, I am in some measure responsible for that wrong, and I will have to pay the debt in some way."<sup>3</sup>

### **1 Corinthians 9: Christian Liberty**

The main idea in 1 Corinthians 9 centers around the concept of Christian liberty and the rights and responsibilities of believers, particularly those in leadership positions. Paul defends his apostleship and highlights his rights as a minister, but he also sets a personal example of self-denial for the sake of the gospel. He emphasizes the importance of discipline and self-control in the Christian life, using his own life as an illustration. Paul's message encourages believers to exercise their freedom wisely, considering the impact of their choices on others and remaining focused on the proclamation of the gospel above personal rights and preferences.

A. The concept of Christian liberty and its limitations (1 Corinthians 9.1-2)

"Am I not free?" (1 Cor. 9.2)

---

<sup>2</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, IVP Academic, 2014, p. 476-477.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph F. Smith, *Collected Discourses*, 4:153.

In 1 Corinthians 9, the concept of freedom is discussed. Philosophers understood freedom as being liberated from false values, free from material possessions, and self-sufficient.<sup>4</sup> They were unconcerned with others' opinions of them. This notion of freedom was closely linked to authority and rights. However, Paul, while acknowledging the Corinthians' understanding of freedom, urges them to exercise restraint. He calls on his readers to limit their freedom, just as he himself sacrifices his own rights for the sake of the gospel (1 Corinthians 9.4-6, 12, 18).

B. Paul's defense of his apostleship and rights as a minister (1 Corinthians 9.3-14)

“Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?” (1 Cor. 9.7)

Paul here in these verses advocates for his right to be supported financially for his ministry. He explains that, as an apostle and preacher of the gospel, he has the right to receive compensation for his work, just like other apostles and believers who are supported by the churches they serve. Paul provides examples from everyday life, such as the right of a soldier to receive wages and a farmer to partake in the fruit of his labor, to support his argument. However, he also emphasizes that he willingly foregoes this right and chooses not to make use of it in order to avoid any hindrance to the spread of the gospel. Paul's primary concern is the proclamation of the good news, and he is willing to forgo his rights for the sake of his mission.

“For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?” (1 Cor. 9.9)

Deuteronomy 25:4 may have communicated a principle that the laborer should be fed; others recognized that such laws related to more general principles of kindness (e.g., Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.213; Philo, *Virtues* 140, 145). Here Paul may argue in the sense of the common Jewish *qal vahomer* argument: if for an ox, how much more for a person. Some Jewish teachers felt that God's teachings about animals were only to teach people principles (cf. *Letter of Aristeas* 144).<sup>5</sup>

“If we have sown unto you spiritual things, *is it* a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of *this* power over you, *are not* we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.” (1 Cor. 9.11-12)

Paul, in order to prevent offense or questioning of his motives for preaching the gospel, chooses not to exercise his right to receive material support. This is because many itinerant teachers relied on support from others, and if Paul were perceived in the same way, it could lead to doubts about his intentions or affiliations within the church. Philosophers, including Stoics and Cynics, debated whether they should be concerned about public opinion. Some believed in living freely without regard to others' opinions, while others believed in avoiding unnecessary offense to attract others to the wisdom of philosophy.

---

<sup>4</sup> The arguments regarding freedom from false values, self-sufficiency, and lack of concern for others' opinions align with the teachings of the Stoic philosophers in Greek tradition. The Stoics believed in living in accordance with nature, maintaining inner freedom by not being attached to external circumstances or material possessions, and prioritizing virtue and reason above all else. Philosophers such as Epictetus (50-135 AD), Seneca (4 BC-65 AD), and Marcus Aurelius (121 – 180 AD) elaborated on these principles and emphasized the importance of personal freedom and self-mastery. See, for example, Epictetus' work, “[The Enchiridion](#),” where Epictetus elaborated on freedom, giving practical advice for living a virtuous life.

<sup>5</sup> Keener, p. 478.

“Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live *of the things* of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” (1 Cor. 9.13-14)

Priests and Levites in ancient times received support through the tithes offered by the people, as seen in examples like 2 Chronicles 31.4. Additionally, they had a rightful claim to specific portions of the sacrificial food that was presented on the altar, a practice similar to priests in other pagan temples of that era.

In 1 Corinthians 9.14, Paul makes the point that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. He emphasizes the right of those who proclaim the message of the gospel to be financially supported by the communities they serve. Paul argues that just as people who work in other professions receive compensation for their labor, those who are dedicated to spreading the gospel should also have their material needs met. This point serves to highlight the importance of recognizing and supporting the ministry of those who devote themselves to the preaching and teaching of the gospel. He also seems to be tying this into a teaching of Jesus as found in Matt 10.10; Luke 10.7. In both of these verses Jesus emphasizes that the “laborer is worthy of his hire.”

Both Elder McConkie and Elder Ballard emphasized this:

"The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints doesn't have a paid, professional clergy. Everywhere the Church is organized, it is administered and staffed by members of the ward or branch (which is what we call our congregations) who have been called to their positions through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And that's quite an accomplishment."<sup>6</sup>

"'Salvation is free.' (2 Ne. 2:4.) It has no price tag; it cannot be purchased with money. None is ever asked to buy saving grace. God's decree is: Every living soul is entitled to hear the truth taught and the testimony of Jesus born by a legal administrator, who has no purpose in preaching except the eternal welfare of his hearers. To all preachers the Lord's directive is: 'Freely ye have received, freely give.' (Matt. 10:8.)

"But the ministers of salvation must eat and drink; they must be clothed, marry, raise families, and live as other men do. When all of their time and strength is expended in building up the kingdom, others—happily, those blessed by their ministrations—must supply the just needs and wants of the laborers in the vineyard, for 'the laborer is worthy of his hire.' (D. & C. 84:79.) 'But the laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion; for if they labor for money they shall perish.' (2 Ne. 26:31.)"<sup>7</sup>

C. Paul's personal example of denying his rights for the sake of the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:15-23)

“But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.” (1 Cor. 9.15)

Self-reliance was a basic characteristic highly extolled among philosophers. Cynics claimed that their lack of dependence on others made them free (e.g., Crates, *Epistles* 7; 8; 29); Socrates felt that refusing to charge fees kept him free (Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.2.6). No one could charge them with

---

<sup>6</sup> Elder Ballard, [\*Our Search for Happiness: An Invitation to Understand The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints\*](#), Deseret Book, 1993, p. 108.

<sup>7</sup> Elder McConkie, [\*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary\*](#), Bookcraft, 1965-1973, 2:351.

accommodating their views to maintain financial support. Both Jews and Gentiles sometimes spoke of death as preferable to some extreme situation (e.g., Jon 4:8; Cicero, *Letters to Atticus* 11.9; *Letters to Friends* 9.11.1; 9.18.2).<sup>8</sup>

#### 1 Cor. 9.16-20 RSV:

16 For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! 17 For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. 18 What then is my reward? Just this: that in my preaching I may make the gospel free of charge, not making full use of my right in the gospel. 19 For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. 20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law--though not being myself under the law--that I might win those under the law.

The reward and the wage/commission:

Stoic philosophers said that Fate imposed its will whether one accepted it or not; hence one might as well accept it. The Old Testament taught that one must submit to God's call, even if (as in the case of Moses, Gideon, Isaiah and Jeremiah) one felt unprepared or inadequate for it. The "reward" (9:18) can be translated "wage"; by serving people freely Paul has better payment from God. His "gain" (often translated "win") would be especially people brought to Christ (9:19-21).<sup>9</sup>

#### D. The importance of discipline and self-control in the Christian life (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

Paul employs the use of athletic imagery, specifically boxing and racing, to convey spiritual lessons and teachings in his efforts to spread the gospel. This practice aligns with the common use of athletic illustrations by philosophers and Diaspora Jewish sources such as Philo and 4 Maccabees to illustrate their pursuit of truth and virtuous living. Paul draws parallels between the discipline, self-sacrifice, and intense training required in sports and the Christian life. He emphasizes the rigorous effort and dedication needed to emerge victorious in a race, highlighting the exclusive nature of the prize obtained. In Corinth, which hosted significant games every two years, athletes would receive withered celery or pine garlands as awards. Paul extends this analogy to his own life, underscoring the need for personal discipline and sacrifice in his ministry to avoid being disqualified from the ultimate prize of eternal life. Additionally, Paul alludes to boxing, a violent sport in Greek games, to convey the importance of rigorous training and self-discipline in his own spiritual journey.<sup>10</sup>

### **1 Corinthians 10**

---

<sup>8</sup> Keener, p. 478-479.

<sup>9</sup> Keener, p. 479.

<sup>10</sup> Keener (p. 479) writes, "Boxing was one of the major competitions at Greek games (but not part of the pentathlon, mentioned above); boxers wore leather gloves covering most of the forearm except the fingers, and boxing was a violent sport. The pankration further mixed boxing with wrestling, forbidding only gouging and biting. Shadowboxing or "beating the air" was insufficient preparation for a real boxing competition; a boxer had to discipline his body better than that to win. In the same way, Paul had to discipline his life to sacrifice what he needed to sacrifice for the sake of the gospel, lest he himself be disqualified from the race and fall short of the wreath of eternal life (9:25)."

The main idea in 1 Corinthians 10 centers around the themes of caution, idolatry, and the importance of faithful living. Paul addresses the Corinthians' need to be vigilant and cautious in their Christian walk, drawing lessons from the experiences of the Israelites in the Old Testament. He highlights the dangers of idolatry and warns against partaking in idolatrous practices or feasts, stressing the need for wholehearted devotion to God. Paul emphasizes that believers should not test the Lord or give in to sinful desires, but instead seek to glorify God in all things. He encourages them to consider the well-being of others, avoiding actions that may cause them to stumble. Ultimately, Paul's message in 1 Corinthians 10 underscores the significance of steadfast faithfulness, wise decision-making, and a commitment to honoring the Savior Jesus Christ above every other consideration.

A. Paul cautions his readers to not be like ancient Israel (1 Corinthians 10:1-5)

“And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.” (1 Cor. 10.4)

There was a tradition in Paul's day that a rock followed the Israelites in the wilderness, and that this rock provided water for them while they were in their wanderings. Paul, picking up this idea, emphasizes that this rock which followed his ancestors *was* Christ.<sup>11</sup> This seems to be his point in 1 Corinthians 10.1-4.<sup>12</sup>

B. Lessons from Israel's history and their idolatrous practices (1 Corinthians 10:6-11)

C. Warnings against idolatry and participating in the Lord's table and idolatrous feasts (1 Corinthians 10:12-22)

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” (1 Cor. 10.13)

Elder Soares taught:

“Metaphorically speaking, yielding to temptation is like approaching a magnet with a metal object. The magnet's invisible force attracts the metal object and holds it tightly. The magnet loses its power over it only when the metal object is placed far from it. Therefore, just as the magnet is unable to exercise power over a faraway metal object, as we resist temptation, it fades away and loses its power over our mind and heart and, consequently, over our actions.”<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Other Jewish teachers compared the rock with Wisdom (Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation* 2.86).

<sup>12</sup> See: Day, [The Moving Rock in the Wilderness – Exodus 17 and Numbers 20](#). See also: James Kugel, [How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now](#), p. 238-239.

<sup>13</sup> Elder Ulisses Soares, [“Seek Christ in Every Thought,”](#) *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 83. He also said in this address, “Fighting against temptation takes a lifetime of diligence and faithfulness. But please know that the Lord is ready to assist us in our personal efforts and promises remarkable blessings if we endure to the end. ... My beloved brothers and sisters, I testify that as we rely upon the rock of salvation, the Savior of our souls, ... our ability to control our thoughts will increase significantly. I can assure you that our spiritual maturity will grow at an increasing pace, changing our heart, making us more like Jesus Christ. Additionally, the influence of the Holy Ghost will be more intense and continuous in our life. Then the enemy's temptations, little by little, will lose their power over us, resulting in a happier and more pure and consecrated life. For those who, for whatever reason, fall into temptation and are dwelling upon unrighteous actions, I assure you that there is a way back, that there is hope in Christ.”

Elder Quentin L. Cook taught:

A principle of eternal progression is that exercising self-control and living righteously strengthen our ability to resist temptation. This is true both in the spiritual realm and in temporal matters. ...

As part of God's divine plan, we are blessed with the gift of the Holy Ghost. ... He also is a voice of warning against evil and a voice of protection against danger. As we navigate the seas of life, following the impressions of the Holy Ghost is essential. The Spirit will help us avoid temptations and dangers, and comfort and lead us through challenges.<sup>14</sup>

Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught:

"Some men may justify sin by saying the level of temptation and trial they experience is unavoidable or that it is beyond their ability to cope with it. However, we have the double assurance of Paul writing on one continent and Alma on another, that there is nothing in the mathematics of life to excuse us when we sin: '. . . but God . . . will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.' (1 Corinthians 10:13.)

"Pray continually, that ye may not be tempted above that which ye can bear. . . .' (Alma 13:28.)

"Prayerful people will not be pressed beyond their limits, although, as C. S. Lewis observed, some of us quit or surrender just before the relief column comes into sight. We can, and often do, of course, dig pits for ourselves and burn the escape ladder; but such irrationality is of our own willful doing-not God's!"<sup>15</sup>

President Kimball taught:

Right decisions are easiest to make when we make them well in advance, having ultimate objectives in mind; this saves a lot of anguish [during moments of decision], when we're tired and sorely tempted. ...

Develop discipline of self so that, more and more, you do not have to decide and redecide what you will do when you are confronted with the same temptation time and time again. You only need to decide some things *once!* ...

The time to quit evil ways is before they start. The secret of the good life is in protection and prevention. Those who yield to evil are usually those who have placed themselves in a vulnerable position.<sup>16</sup>

Paul's views of the gods of his world (1 Cor. 10.20-21)

Similar to Isaiah's teachings, Paul affirms that physical idols hold no real power or significance (see: Isaiah 44.12-20; 45.20-25; 46.1-11). However, in line with various Old Testament passages and subsequent Jewish and Christian literature, Paul believes that the false gods who seek human worship are, in fact, demons. This understanding is shared by texts like [Jubilees 1:10-11](#); [22:16-17](#); [1 Enoch 19:1](#), as well as references to demons in Greek translations of Leviticus 17.7, Deuteronomy 32.17, 37-39, and

---

<sup>14</sup> Quentin L. Cook, "[Shipshape and Bristol Fashion: Be Temple Worthy—in Good Times and Bad Times,](#)" *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 41–42.

<sup>15</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, [A Time to Choose](#), Deseret Book, 1972, p. 56.

<sup>16</sup> *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* [2006], 108–9.



Psalm 106.28, 37. In this context, Paul quotes a line from Deuteronomy 32.17, aligning his teachings with the recognition of the spiritual reality behind false gods.

D. The call to glorify God in all things and seek the good of others (1 Corinthians 10:23-33)

### **1 Corinthians 11: Head Coverings, Modesty, and the Lord's Supper**

The main message in 1 Corinthians 11 centers around the proper conduct of believers, particularly in the context of worship gatherings and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Paul addresses various issues related to gender roles, head coverings, and the significance of the Lord's Supper. He emphasizes the importance of maintaining order and respect within the church, with men and women each understanding and embracing their respective roles. Additionally, Paul provides instructions on the appropriate manner of partaking in the Lord's Supper, highlighting its significance as a commemoration of Christ's sacrifice and a symbol of unity among believers. The overarching message calls for reverence, unity, and mutual respect in worship, honoring God and reflecting the character of Christ within the church community.

I. Introduction and Commendation (1 Corinthians 11.1-3)

A. Paul's exhortation to imitate him as he imitates Christ

B. Acknowledgment of the headship order in God's design

II. Head Coverings and Gender Roles (1 Corinthians 11.4-16)

A. Instruction for men and women regarding head coverings

Paul's argument here must be understood in its context. Paul essentially takes the position that women must have their heads covered so as to avoid being accosted by the fallen angels that rebelled against God in Genesis 6.1-4.<sup>17</sup>

B. Affirmation of the divine order and reasons behind head coverings

C. Emphasis on mutual interdependence and honoring of gender distinctions

III. Correcting Disruptions in the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11.17-34)

A. Rebuke for divisions, heresies, and disorderliness during the Lord's Supper

Despite Greek ideals of equality, even for banquets, ancient seating at public events was arranged according to rank, usually including at banquets. The churches in Corinth met especially in well-to-do patrons' homes. In Greco-Roman society, patrons often seated members of their own high social class in the special *triclinium* (the best room), ideally reclining about nine diners, but more would be possible depending on the room's size and the seating arrangements. If more space were needed, others could be served in the larger *atrium* (which might comfortably seat an estimated forty persons, again depending on the size of the room and seating arrangements). Guests further from the host received (or brought) inferior food and inferior wine, and clients often complained about where their patrons had seated them (cf. Seneca, *Epistle to Lucilius* 4; Juvenal, *Satire* 4.15-18, 24-25, 37-79, 146-58; Martial 3.49;

---

<sup>17</sup> See Michael Heiser's argument for this in "[The Head Covering of 1 Corinthians 11.13-15](#)," *Naked Bible* 86, Feb. 7, 2016. The transcript to this podcast can be found [here](#).



4.85; 12.28; Lk 14:8-10). (Common meals even at Qumran included seating by rank; 1Q28a 2.21.) This societal problem spilled over into the church. The background for the meal itself is the Jewish Passover meal, a sacred meal and celebration commemorating redemption. But most Corinthian believers seem to have lost sight of this background; they treat the meal as a festal banquet such as they knew from Greek festivals or meetings of Greek religious associations.<sup>18</sup>

“For in eating every one taketh before *other* his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise *you* not.” (1 Cor. 11.21-22)

Some are treated more honorably than others at the meal, and this treatment reflects the status values of the world. Some scholars suggest that some taking their meal before others (11:21) refers to slaves and other workers who could not come as early as the more well-to-do with more leisure.<sup>19</sup>

B. Remembrance of the significance and purpose of the Lord's Supper

C. Call to self-examination and discernment before partaking

IV. Concluding Remarks and Instructions (1 Corinthians 11.1, 35-34)

A. Commendation for certain practices observed

B. Additional instructions on orderly worship and participation

### **1 Corinthians 12: Diverse Spiritual Gifts and the Importance of Every Member of the Church**

The main message in 1 Corinthians 12 revolves around the unity and diversity within the body of Christ, emphasizing the essential role of spiritual gifts and the importance of mutual dependence among the early saints. Paul highlights the diverse spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit to individual believers, emphasizing that each gift is essential and valuable for the functioning of the entire body. He stresses the need for unity and cooperation, discouraging divisions and elevating the concept of love as the underlying motivation for the use of spiritual gifts. The chapter emphasizes the interdependence of believers, encouraging them to value and appreciate the unique contributions of each member within the church, ultimately pointing to the unity that should exist among the saints as the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

I. Introduction and Importance of Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1-3)

A. Acknowledgment of diverse spiritual gifts

B. Emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in distributing gifts

C. Reminder of the importance of recognizing Jesus as Lord

II. Unity and Diversity in the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:4-26)

A. Explanation of the diversity of spiritual gifts and their sources

---

<sup>18</sup> Keener, p. 483-484.

<sup>19</sup> Keener, p. 484.

There are many different spiritual gifts. To learn about others, see Moroni 10:8–18 ; Doctrine and Covenants 46:11–26.

Elder McConkie taught, “Spiritual gifts are endless in number and infinite in variety. Those listed in the revealed word are simply illustrations of the boundless outpouring of divine grace that a gracious God gives those who love and serve him.”<sup>20</sup>

Elder Marvin J. Ashton (1915–94) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

Let me mention a few gifts that are not always evident or noteworthy but that are very important ... : the gift of asking; the gift of listening; the gift of hearing and using a still, small voice; the gift of being able to weep; the gift of avoiding contention; ... the gift of seeking that which is righteous; the gift of not passing judgment; the gift of looking to God for guidance; ... the gift of caring for others; the gift of being able to ponder; the gift of offering prayer; the gift of bearing a mighty testimony.<sup>21</sup>

Bryce shared the following list relating to spiritual gifts in the podcast this week:

1. We should seek them (46:7-8; 1 Cor 12:31; 14:1, 12; Moroni 10:30).
2. Given to benefit the Church (46:9,10,12,26); Not to glorify self (D&C 46:9; 3:4).
3. There are many gifts (46:11).
4. Different ways gifts are administered (Moroni 10:8).
5. Everyone has at least one gift (46:11).
6. Gifts must be developed (8:4; 11:10).
7. Every gift is needed (46:12; 1 Cor. 12:12-27).
8. You have the gift God wants you to have (1 Cor. 12:18).
9. One man has them all (46:29; 107:91-92).
10. Gifts can be taken away; misuse (3:4, 9-15) or neglect (60:2-3).
11. One gift is most important-Charity (1 Cor. 12-13).

#### B. Comparison of the body of Christ to a human body

“For 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 Christ.” (1 Cor. 12.12)

Paul adapts an image commonly used for the Roman state or for the universe and applies it to the church (as in Rom 12:3-5). When the plebeians (the lower class in earlier Rome) had proposed revolt, the aristocrat Menenius Agrippa convinced them that although they were less noticeable members (like the stomach), they were necessary; the upper and lower classes had different roles but equal importance (e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquities of Rome* 6.86.1-5; Livy, *History of Rome* 2.32.9-12). This

<sup>20</sup> Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 371.

<sup>21</sup> Marvin J. Ashton, “[There Are Many Gifts](#),” *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 20.

argument was mere aristocratic sophistry to keep the masses down; but after him other writers, especially Stoic philosophers, borrowed the image. Many continued to apply it to the state (cf., e.g., Cicero, *On the Republic* 3.25.37; *Orationes philippicae* 8.5.15). Stoics even said that the universe was like a body, and God's *logos*, or reason, was the mind or head that directed it (cf., e.g., Seneca, *Epistle to Lucilius* 95.52; Epictetus, *Diatribes* 1.12.26). Paul here refers to the unity of the body not to keep one group down but to tell all the Christians in Corinth to respect and appreciate one another. Just as a solitary eye or foot is useless, so is any member of the church apart from other Christians.<sup>22</sup>

C. Emphasis on the interdependence and equal value of all members

D. Discouragement of divisions or superiority among members

### III. Honor and Value of All Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:27-31)

A. Identification of the church as the body of Christ

B. Listing of various spiritual gifts bestowed upon believers

C. Encouragement to desire and pursue spiritual gifts in love

D. Emphasis on the priority of love as the greatest gift

#### **How can I use my spiritual gifts to serve others?**

Elder Uchtdorf emphasized how we can follow the example of Jesus when he taught:

“When I think of the Savior, I often picture Him with hands outstretched, reaching out to comfort, heal, bless, and love. And He always talked with, never down to, people. He loved the humble and the meek and walked among them, ministering to them and offering hope and salvation.

That is what He did during His mortal life; it is what He would be doing if He were living among us today; and it is what we should be doing as His disciples and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. ... As we emulate His perfect example, our hands can become His hands; our eyes, His eyes; our heart, His heart.”<sup>23</sup>

#### **1 Corinthians 13: Charity (Agape - ἀγάπη) is the greatest gift**

Paul emphasizes that love, or charity is the most important thing in this early Christian community. Paul stresses that no matter how great one's spiritual gifts or accomplishments may be, without love, they hold little value. He presents an eloquent description of love's characteristics, highlighting its selflessness, patience, kindness, and humility. Love is presented as the foundation and motivation for all actions and interactions within the church. Paul concludes that love surpasses all other virtues and endures beyond temporal things, emphasizing the eternal nature of love. The chapter serves as a profound reminder of the centrality of love in our quest to become more like the Savior and calls Latter-day Saints and all other Christians to make love a priority in every aspect of our lives. In the words of Elder Dallin H. Oaks:

<sup>22</sup> Keener, p. 485-486.

<sup>23</sup> Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “[You Are My Hands](#),” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2010, 68.

Charity, “the pure love of Christ” (Moroni 7.47), is not an act but a condition or state of being. Charity is attained through a succession of acts that result in a conversion. Charity is something one becomes.<sup>24</sup>

### **Faith, Hope, and Charity – The Greatest of these is charity – 1 Cor. 13.13**

To me, Moroni 8 gives a better explanation of Charity, especially as it relates to faith and hope. I see Moroni expounding all of these ideas in a ritual setting encoded in his message for those that are the “peaceable followers of Christ” (Mor. 7.3).<sup>25</sup>

Note that Moroni speaks of the shalems or peaceable ones **having a peaceable walk** with the children of men (Moroni 7.4). They have covenanted to be those that live the way, the *halakah*. They have promised to be kind to one another. This is what we today call the **Law of the Gospel**, as President Benson has stated:

“We covenant to live the law of the gospel. The law of the gospel embraces all laws, principles, and ordinances necessary for our exaltation. We agree to exercise faith in Jesus Christ and sincere repentance borne out of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. As we comply with the ordinances of baptism and confirmation, and continue in faith and prayer, the power of the Savior’s atoning sacrifice covers our sins and we are cleansed from all unrighteousness. ... The law of the gospel is more than understanding the plan of salvation. It consists of partaking of the ordinances and the sealing powers culminating in a man being sealed up unto eternal life. ‘Being born again,’ said the Prophet Joseph Smith, ‘comes by the spirit of God through ordinances.’”<sup>26</sup>

President Russell M. Nelson put it this way:

“As individual members of the Church, **you and I participate in the Lord’s ‘own way.’** At least once a month, we fast and pray and contribute generous offerings to funds that enable bishops to disperse aid. This is **part of the law of the gospel**. Each of us truly can help the poor and the needy, now, and wherever they are. And we, too, will be blessed and protected from apostasy by so doing.”<sup>27</sup>

### **The Bringing of Gifts to the Altar and Our Inner Hearts**

After we have covenanted to have this peaceable walk, note that Moroni speaks of giving a gift (Moroni 7.6-10). Anciently this “gift” was taken to the altar of the temple. It is noteworthy that Moroni speaks of our hearts as we do this. We are not to bring this gift “grudgingly,” rather we are to bring this gift with “real intent,” something that only God can see.

The Peaceable Ones or the *shalems* are instructed on how to discern true servants of God from the false ones: “Ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night” (Moroni 7.15). These individuals are warned about the persuasions of the devil and “his angels” (Moroni 7.17). All of these motifs were played out in the First

<sup>24</sup> Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “[The Challenge to Become](#),” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, p. 34.

<sup>25</sup> These individuals are what D. John Butler calls “the shalems.” See: [The Goodness and the Mysteries: On the Path of the Book of Mormon’s Visionary Men](#), 2012, p. 7. These are the completed ones, or the peaceable followers of Jesus. These are they who have “entered into the rest of the Lord” (Moroni 7.3).

<sup>26</sup> [Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson](#), p. 337. See also: [Prophetic Teachings on Temples](#).

<sup>27</sup> President Russell M. Nelson, “[In the Lord’s Own Way](#),” April Conference 1986.

Israelite temples: getting on the path, bringing gifts to God, knowing how to discern truth from error, and “laying hold” upon truth (Moroni 7.21).

### Lay Hold on Every Good Thing

In Moroni 7.21-24 we read “I will tell you the way whereby ye may lay hold on every good thing... and in Christ there should come every good thing.” Moroni instructs his audience that God “declared unto prophets by his own mouth, that Christ should come” and that “there were divers ways that he did manifest things unto the children of men, and all things which are good cometh of Christ.” Who were these prophets to the Book of Mormon peoples? Nephi, Lehi and all of the Book of Mormon prophets. Other ways this was manifest to these people would have been the recorded visions, for example 1 Nephi 8 and 11. We would also probably include the festivals or feasts held each year when the Nephites were walking in truth: The Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles, and so forth. We see another manifestation of “divers ways” that Christ was manifest in the missionary efforts of those that preached to the people as well as their righteous military leaders. We would also include their written text.

One thing worth mentioning here as well is the idea of “laying hold” upon every good “thing.” The word for thing and word in Hebrew is דָּבָר *davar* and is the same word. Could Moroni be speaking in a layered way here? Could the things we are to “lay hold” upon also be words? To “lay hold” means to take by the hand. A great symbol for trust or faith in the ancient world is the image of two hands clasping. Note how Moroni phrases this: “And now **I come to that faith**, of which I said I would speak; and I will tell you the way whereby **ye may lay hold on every good thing**” (Moroni 7.21). **The image of faith and grasping something is intentional.** One way to think of this is in the image of grasping the iron rod (which is also the *word*, as well as a *thing*), which is another symbol of Christ. By “grasping” Christ, these peaceable followers are coming into his presence.

After laying hold on every good thing “by faith” (there it is again- see Moroni 7.25), they “become the sons of God” (Moroni 7.26, see also 1 Cor. 13.11 “becoming a man”) and are given the promise that “whatsoever thing (word) ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is good, in faith (again!) believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be done unto you.”

All of these ideas are wrapped up in the teaching on miracles. Have miracles ceased? Moroni tells us they have not – see Moroni 7.27, 29, 35. He then proceeds to tell his audience that faith leads to hope which leads to charity. These are symbolic of the three areas of sacred space in the temple. Once we attain charity, we have the pure love of Christ and we see the Savior. We “see as we are seen and know as we are known” (1 Cor. 13.12 and D&C 76.94). This is the state of those who are exalted, being in the presence of God, those who are “equal in power, and in might, and in dominion” with celestial beings (D&C 76.95).

We are called “true followers of his Son” and “he shall appear” and “we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” and be “purified even as he is pure” (Moroni 7.48). This has many echoes and connections ritually to the sermon Moroni gave at the end of Ether 12. These two chapters really should be read together and considered from a ritual perspective. I also see these passages connected ritually to the things in 1 Corinthians 13. I especially see this connection in the last 5 verses of 1 Corinthians 13:

9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.<sup>28</sup> 10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.<sup>29</sup> 11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. 13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

### Other views of faith, hope and charity:

LeGrand Baker explains that “if one reads faith as *pistis*, the substance and the evidence of the covenants, then, in the triumvirate faith, hope, and charity, hope is greater than *pistis*, but lesser than charity, “which is the greatest of all.” (Moroni 7:46) Prayer is the way that leads to all three.

Prayer is like walking in the mountain with a friend. There are times when you see a sunrise so expansive and glorious that it must be shared with your friend to be fully appreciated. There are times you walk with the other in silence, then you stop and your eyes look—alone—as you ponder the perfect beauty of a columbine. Sometimes you talk together—your friend and you—but only briefly – because a smile can say so much more. Sometimes the words flow like the confluence of two great rivers and the ideas reach out to embrace a world as big as the open sea. Sometimes you walk together quietly and say nothing, and the unspoken words are more profound than speech. There is no aloneness in the quiet, just as there was no aloneness when all your conscious world was only the beauty of a single columbine. Friendship is like that. So is prayer... One’s faith in Christ increases as one begins to rely more heavily on the feelings that can be identified as the testimony of the Holy Ghost. Those feelings are the evidence—the assurance—the *pistis*—of the divinity of Christ, of the validity of the Atonement, and of the absolute integrity of the Father who first made the covenant. When we exercise “faith in Christ,” we evoke the powers promised by the Father’s covenants, but we also give evidences of our own faithfulness to the conditions of the covenants.”<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> 1 Cor. 13.9 Greek: ἐκ μέρους γὰρ γινώσκομεν καὶ ἐκ μέρους προφητεύομεν “For out of *our* portion we know, and we prophesy out of *this* portion.” (my translation)

<sup>29</sup> 1 Cor. 13.10 Greek: ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ τὸ τέλειον τότε τὸ ἐκ μέρους καταργηθήσεται “But then that which is completed has arrived, then that portion will be deprived of force.” (my translation) I see these passages similar to the ones where Nephi has received the sealing power in Helaman 10.4-11. He prophesied in part, according to his portion, but he received a greater power when he came into God’s presence, fully endowed with the power of celestial beings.

<sup>30</sup> LeGrand Baker and Stephen Ricks, [Who Shall Ascend to the Hill of the Lord?](#) Eborn Books, 2010, p. 710-711.