

Associates for Scriptural Knowledge • P.O. Box 25000, Portland, OR 97298-0990 USA
© ASK, 2023 • All rights reserved • Number 2/23

Telephone: 503 292 4352

• **Internet: www.askelm.com** •

E-Mail: askoffice@askelm.com

Graduation to Second Corinthians

by Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., late 1970s

Transcribed and Edited by David Sielaff, February 2023

Read the accompanying “[February 2023 Newsletter](#)”



The title of this lecture may seem odd at first, but it has a good practical meaning. We need to look at the epistle of Second Corinthians, as far as our lifestyles are concerned and not to First Corinthians. The New Testament shows clearly that both 1st and 2nd Corinthians are the Word of God. Second Corinthians was written [1] to explain Paul’s first epistle, [2] to show what transpired after Paul wrote 1st Corinthians, and [3] how the problems mentioned in that first epistle were resolved. Not all the problems, but most of them were resolved by the time he wrote Second Corinthians.

This lecture is to show that we are to graduate out of 1st Corinthians, from what Paul said was occurring there at the time, into the more mature and more understanding and more comprehensive 2nd Corinthians. I have often said to people who asked me: “if we just had 1st Corinthians alone in the New Testament, where would we be?” Well, Paul said clearly that the Corinthians were Christians and would be confirmed unto the end to their salvation. Several times in 1st Corinthians he mentions that. But learning what some Christians in Corinth were doing, one would wonder whether or not they were Christians at all! We know they were Christians because Paul tells us they were. We can especially know that because Paul wrote 2nd Corinthians a few weeks later to show they solved most of the problems that so greatly upset him.

We need to go to school in 1st Corinthians, but you need to graduate into 2nd Corinthians. Then you will have learned some lessons. Those two epistles are good examples for people today in the last part of the 20th century, where most people still think the actions described in 1st Corinthians are a model to be followed. What was recorded in 1st Corinthians we see in evidence today all around us. Do you know what they call it? “Modern day contemporary Christianity.”

Some people say that what was recorded in 1st Corinthians represents pristine Christianity, the Christianity of the apostles, the Christianity that we should bring back into existence, the one we ought to teach in all Christian churches of the world. The apostle Paul wrote 2nd Corinthians where he was satisfied that most people in the Corinthian *ekklesia* had graduated out of the problems of 1st Corinthians (which people want to perpetuate today). They finally learned their lesson and got out of the problem. Paul wrote 2nd Corinthians to acknowledge their success.

The “Dual” Epistles

This is the case with all that we might call the dual epistles in the New Testament. There are several written by one man like Peter. Peter wrote two epistles. He wrote the first epistle to a particular people in

northern Asia Minor, and then as a subsequent epistle to explain the first, and to give an addition to it, he wrote a second epistle. So we have 1st Peter and we have 2nd Peter. Really, one cannot be understood without the other. The last epistle, the second, explains the first. That makes sense, doesn't it?¹

The apostle Paul also wrote two epistles to the Thessalonians. The people of Thessalonica lived in northern Greece. Paul was probably in Athens, Greece, some 300–400 miles away. He wrote five chapters to the people of Thessalonica about the Second Coming of Christ and about our being gathered up to be with Him. They also misunderstood what Paul was talking about concerning the *parousia* of Christ. The word *parousia* in Greek means “the appearance,” and referred to the coming of Christ.

They were upset because they thought that several things were occurring at that time, that maybe they were all going to be taken to a place of safety, perhaps to heaven or someplace, they were not quite sure. They were upset. So the apostle Paul wrote 2nd Thessalonians. You cannot understand the First unless you have a Second. The same relationship goes with 1st and 2nd Peter.²

Back to 1st and 2nd Corinthians

It is the same with 1st and 2nd Corinthians. Don't just stay with 1st Corinthians. Read it thoroughly, understand it, and learn the lessons. When you learn the lessons, then go to 2nd Corinthians. The two epistles belong together, but most people want to stay in 1st Corinthians. They say it is the Gospel of Christ, and they want to stay in it. They do not want to learn the lessons that Paul tried to give.

Let's analyze 1st Corinthians to see the problems that inspired Paul to write that long epistle of 16 chapters. It is the longest epistle written by the apostle. From beginning to end he gave good instruction. It is all the Word of God, no question about that, but from beginning to end Paul was critical. He criticized the way the Corinthians were believing. He criticized the methods by which they conducted the services of the *ekklesia* passover services (the Lord's Supper services). He criticized their lifestyles.

He had few good words to say about them, except at the very beginning. He admitted that God “**shall also confirm you unto the end**” (verse 1:8). God will see to it they are saved, but they had to change the way they were living, their ways of looking at things, their ways of conducting religious services. It was chaos in Corinth. It is understandable why. We should not cast too many stones against the Corinthians. The environment they lived in was not conducive to civility.

The city of Corinth was located on the Isthmus of Corinth, a crossroads for trade in the Mediterranean world; built there for that express purpose. People from Syria, Judah, Egypt to Asia Minor, congregated in that Greek city. They also had people from Italy, Spain, Gaul (modern France), and North Africa. People from all over the Mediterranean world seemed to congregate in the port city of Corinth. Not only was it used for east-west movement center but it is located on a little arm of land between the Peloponnesis in the south and northern parts of Greece. There is a tiny strip of land not more than 1½ to 2 miles wide. There also was north/south movement, a center of the Mediterranean world.

All types of peoples, different cultures, different religious beliefs, different races, were coming together. There is nothing wrong with that on the surface, but you can imagine what it would do to the stability of the area. They were not all Greeks. In fact, most were not Greeks. The city of Corinth was reestablished about 146 BC by the Romans after they completely leveled it in the Greco-Roman wars in the 2nd century BC. Roman colonists were brought from the west into that region. A new Corinth rose. From that time from the

¹ See my article “[Biblical Pairs](#).” The Bible itself is a pairing of Old and New Testaments. Other pairings involve people, books of the Bible like First and Second Corinthians, and several other books. The types of pairing are also various, Genesis is completed by Revelation, Daniel compares with Revelation. The twelve Minor Prophets have themes and verbal relationships through and among each other. So too are the Synoptic Gospels paired and tripled to tell a complete story. Biblical pairs of people, places, temples, repeated events, exiles, Colossians and Ephesians, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Peter, and they with Jude — are discussed in the article. DWS

² See Dr. Martin's articles about the *ekklesia* at Corinth: “[The Corinthian Experience](#)” and “[The History and Prophecy of Miracles \(and their Failure\)](#)” and my 2003 Commentary, “[Paul's First Message to the Corinthians](#).” DWS

2nd century BC many peoples began to gather from all the Mediterranean world and they came through this area of Corinth. (See my May 2021 Commentary “[Other Cities Rome Obliterated.](#)”)

As a result of the amalgamation of many different cultures, religious beliefs, etc., it became a melting pot. People were very unstable in many ways. In fact, in the 1st century AD it was common if you wanted to talk about instability, whether on morals, social subjects, or whatever, it was quite common to say, well, these people are living terrible lifestyles, they are just “Corinthianizing.” That was what they would say. To Corinthianize meant to just live a hellish life, if you know what I mean.

That is the type of environment these newly converted Christians were involved in, so you can understand there were going to be a lot of problems. The apostle Paul just spent 18 months in this city “raising up” and establishing that *ekklesia* for all practical purposes. He left Apollos there who earlier had come from Egypt. All were teaching the Gospel as they knew it at the time, the New Covenant revelation, and many Corinthians came to Christ and they had established an *ekklesia*.

There they were, we do not know how many, but there were quite a number from this area of Achaia, as it was called, in the northern part of the Peloponnesis of Greece. They met in this city of Corinth. Paul left after 18 months. He went to Ephesus (an ancient city on the coast of modern Turkey) in Asia Minor. While there, about the year 55 AD (1st Corinthians was written, no doubt in the late winter time because he was talking about Passover services soon to occur [in the spring]). He reminded them about Pentecost. So, he must have written in late winter around 55, perhaps 56 AD.

Paul wrote the 16 chapters of 1st Corinthians because he received a message from the people of Chloe in Corinth (verse 1:11), that great contentions were going on in the *ekklesia* after Paul left. He thought it was in pretty good shape, but when he heard what the people of Chloe were saying, he was greatly disturbed. He writes 1st Corinthians back to them very quickly, and it came into the divine canon as 1st Corinthians.

From beginning to end Paul is scolding them for what was happening in Corinth. I want to say again that many today want to do the very things the Corinthians were doing, and Paul criticized them for doing so. He did not say that all they did was wrong, but they were misusing point after point of doctrine, of teaching, of ritual, of ceremony, all types of things. He criticize them from beginning to end. People today are doing virtually the same things. The same results of bad behavior that Paul saw occurring among the Corinthians is happening in the 20th [and the 21st] century amongst Christians today. It is happening just like it did in the time of the apostle Paul and the people some 1900+ years ago. There is no question about this. That is why it would pay us to see what the problems were and why Paul wrote 1st Corinthians.

Then when we analyze 2nd Corinthians you will see that those people back then were wise enough to graduate out of 1st Corinthians into 2nd Corinthians. Not all their problems were resolved, but the major problems were settled. Paul does not say one word about the difficulties that caused these problems in 2nd Corinthians. They got the point.

It would be a beautiful thing if people today would get the point. They too need to learn from 1st Corinthians and graduate to 2nd Corinthians. I think we will know the Gospel of Jesus Christ much better.

Paul’s Criticisms

The first thing Paul criticizes the Corinthians about in his first letter, and what disturbed him the most, was the matter of division in the *ekklesia*. That is the first matter he addresses in the first chapter. Though there are several other major problems he deals with, the main problem was the divisions in the *ekklesia*. This was the greatest problem.

“For it has been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.”

• 1 Corinthians 1:11

He goes into this matter at the very beginning because this is the heart of the problems, contentions among them. “**Contentions**” means arguments. He goes on to say divisions as well, heresies, sects, and things like

that, big divisions taking place. Any time you have divisions in a community of people, you do not have harmony or stability. You have arguments all the time. If you had unity in mind, then you have no difficulties generally. They had contentions:

“Now this I say, that every one of you says, ‘I am of Paul’; and ‘I of Apollos’; and ‘I of Cephas’; and ‘I of Christ.’ Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”

• 1 Corinthians 1:12–13

Look at how silly these Corinthians are after Paul left them. He could not have been gone more than a few months — three, four months at the most. Suddenly they have contentions and are getting into a party spirit. One group would say, **“I am of Paul,”** I am Paul’s disciple. The next says **“I of Apollos;”** we are his disciples. Another group says we are **“of Cephas”** (the apostle Peter), another says we are on the side of Christ.

Paul makes a “pun” of this whole thing. He says, **“was Paul crucified for you?”** He could have said “was Cephas crucified for you?” Was Apollos crucified for you?” They were even coming to the place of saying that **“I am of Christ.”** They ought have all been **“of Christ,”** of course. Look at the contentions going on.

When you get some saying **“I am of Paul”** you will have one group saying “I heard Paul say such and such.” “I heard Peter say this ...” “Well, I heard Apollos say that.” “We have this record here that Christ said this ...” You have confusion from the beginning. Where does this confusion come from? It will come primarily because of a lack of application of what Paul saw as the prime principle for the governance of Christianity, no matter what age you live in. That principle is recorded in the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians. There the principle is to solve all the problems. They were not applying it.

He continues, saying there were divisions in the *ekklesia*. That was the first thing he starts with. The rest of the problems result from these divisions. That **is** the problem.

Go to chapter 3, verses 1–6, and you see this emphasized again.

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto you were not able to bear it, neither yet now are you able.”

• 1 Corinthians 3:1–2

I will quote the rest below, but I think this needs emphasizing. All the things in these 16 chapters of 1st Corinthians are for children. They are not even for children, they are for infants that are on milk — not pablum, but milk. They are barely living, and they are so immature that Paul has to treat them as carnal-minded people, just out of carnality. They were very close to being normal non-Christian Corinthians.

How would you like being called “an infant”? “I am an infant in the faith.” It might seem good on the surface, calling yourself a baby. This is what Paul is calling them. You have no knowledge at all. You are barely out of carnality, but in fact, Paul says, you are carnal. He goes on:

“For you are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are you not carnal, and walk as men? For while one says, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are you not carnal?”

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.”

• 1 Corinthians 3:3–6

Paul tells the truth about what was happening at Corinth. This 3rd chapter goes along with the 1st chapter to show the divisions. They were acting like infants, like babes in arms. He goes on to say in verses 22–23:

“Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And you are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.”

• 1 Corinthians 3:21–23

Paul, Apollos, Cephas, have nothing to do with it. They are just ministers. Christ is the key. He is the one that you ought to follow. So, the first three chapters hit the nail right on the head of where the problems lie with the Corinthians. They were having divisions, and barely Christians as far as Paul was concerned. Though they had the Spirit of God, and did things God liked in some ways. Yet, when we get into what the Corinthians were doing, how they approached biblical teaching, and the lifestyles they were developing and perpetuating, Paul said they were almost like ordinary carnal Corinthians.

When we see today what is happening in some *ekklesias* with Christian doctrine, I do not want to criticize. I will let Paul do the criticizing, but it is virtually the same thing today. Some people say you ought to have in the churches the very things that were giving the Corinthians the problems. This is most remarkable.

What else were they doing? The Corinthians were Greeks in a Greek area from all over the Mediterranean basin. They spoke Greek, thought in Greek. They were looking on men with a great deal of esteem and were arrogant. Seeking wisdom was to be the most important thing. That was what the Greeks liked.

1st Corinthians chapter 1:22 through verse 31, and even in chapter 2, Paul goes on to say things about the wisdom of the Corinthians. He said it was not good. They were arrogant to seek wisdom. They thought they were smart, but Paul sent word back and said, you are just babies, just infants. This is in chapter 3.

1st Corinthians Chapter 5

What else were they doing as a result of this division? They put up with all types of things in the *ekklesia*:

“It is reported commonly that there is fornication [promiscuity] among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.”

• 1 Corinthians 5:1

This does not mean he was in an incestuous relationship with his own mother, but he did have his father's wife. His father had been married to a woman, no doubt divorced, and this man was living with his father's wife. That to Paul was intolerable. He certainly did not think it was good to show the other Gentiles, the other Greeks, what they were doing. He said it was worse than what they were doing. That was his opinion.

“And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that has done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that has so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

• 1 Corinthians 5:2–5

Paul knew that this man, if he was a Christian (and he was) will have his spiritual part of him be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus. Salvation comes by grace, not by works. In the meantime he could be in some serious trouble. The matter of punishment was dealt with extensively here in 1 Corinthians and other places. But he does say the man will be saved, but he can be afflicted greatly, and to his own destruction of the flesh for continuance in great evil.

He goes on to say that this is leavening in the *ekklesia*. Leavening that is spreading throughout the rest of the *ekklesia*. He says that in the rest of the chapter.

When he said **“you are puffed up”** (verse 2) he is talking to the general people and leaders of the *ekklesia*, they were all putting up with this situation. If the leaders of the *ekklesia* will put up with one man, or with one woman, they will do it with many doing the same. Paul is upset with this. Well, these were just infants, just come out of the world and still in the world. They were barely Christians.

1st Corinthians Chapter 6

Not only that, what this division and problems like that were causing in the *ekklesia* of Corinth, go to the

6th chapter, verse 1. Here they were going to the law courts against one another.

“Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know you not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?”

• 1 Corinthians 6:1–3

Paul was upset because members of the *ekklesia* in Corinth were having a grievance one with another. Instead of just solving the matters within the boundaries of the *ekklesia*, they were going to the outside lawcourts and letting the general law do it, one *ekklesia* member against another. How would that appear to the rest of the Gentiles? “Why, they cannot even get along with one another on law cases.”

Paul was saying, “You are corrupt!” I think they were. It reminds me of people even today, maybe even here in Pasadena, before you know it, they will be suing one another. They had problems there. They also had problems in the marriage relationships and that is in chapter 7. Paul gives much teaching on that.

1st Corinthians Chapter 8

Here they did not know what to do about eating meat offered to idols. Some of them were eating meat offered to idols, but blessing the meat in the name of the idols. Paul is upset about that. He says it is all right to go to the shambles, the meat markets (I am paraphrasing here), to buy your meat that has been blessed by a priest, but Paul says don’t you bless it yourself, because you are bringing idolatry into it. He was upset.

You can go into an idol’s temple and use the meat and it would not make any difference, but if you do it in the presence of others who are idolators, and you allow the meat to be blessed to this idol, to Jupiter, Venus, whatever, and then you partake of it, he says you are doing the same thing as the heathen are.

Some of them were doing it in the Lord’s Supper, at Passover. They were allowing meat to be used in Passover that had been blessed by priests to none other than Jupiter or Minerva. That is what was being done. Paul said they should not do that. It is all right to eat meat that has been in the shambles. Almost all meat at that time that went into the shambles had been blessed and honored to some god or goddess by the people who killed it. That is all right to go in there and get that meat, buy it, and eat it. But if you bless it in the name of the idol you are partaking of idolatry. Paul said don’t do that.

1st Corinthians Chapters 9, 10, 11

Chapter 9 was giving troubles about some saying they were apostles and some saying they were not. The apostle Paul dealt with that.

Chapter 10 is where the communion of the idolatry with the Lord’s Supper was taking place.

Chapter 11 is the Lord’s Supper. Some call it the Passover. He says, look at what you are doing. Some of you when you come together to meet (I’m paraphrasing), he says some of you come and you are hungry and make a big feast out of it. Others like to drink so you make a big drunken “Octoberfest” out of the whole thing. What is happening? This is the Lord’s Supper; it should not be done that way.

That is what was happening with these people.

Do you know what these people wanted more than any other thing? And they were Christians, all right. They were going to law with one another. They were allowing fornication of an severe kind that Paul was talking about. There were great divisions, but do you know what they wanted more than anything else? The spiritual, spiritual gifts in particular.

1st Corinthians Chapters 12, 13, and 14

In all of those chapters Paul talks about spiritual gifts. Here were these people just coming out of heathenism and they were very interested in spiritual gifts. Many are that way. I can say this without a doubt

that many people are “coming to Christ,” as they call it because they are after spiritual gifts that can come immediately, or associated with their conversion. I do not think many people have departed much from what the Corinthians were like. I like spiritual gifts also, and many of them are mentioned here.

I would like to have any spiritual gift that God mentions through the apostle Paul. He did not say a person should not have the gift, but he does say that the spirit of the prophets are subject to the prophets. There ought to be order and design and wisdom in how those gifts are used. The simple gifts are those which are important for salvation and the fruits of the Spirit. They are mentioned in Galatians 5:22–23 and some of the central fruits of the Spirit are not even some of these gifts that the Corinthians wanted at all.

The Corinthians wanted something that was most amazing. They wanted something ecstatic, something that was spiritual but could be shown in a physical way. They loved prophesying. They wanted to give prophecies under inspiration of God’s Spirit. They wanted to know something of the esoteric world, that God would inspire them to see something different than anybody else. They clearly wanted to participate in prophecy. They also wanted to speak in tongues, languages, and things like that.³ However you do it, it should be done in order. The Corinthians were doing it but not in order. They were doing it in other ways.

In **Chapters 12, 13, and 14**, the apostle Paul hits them hard, these babes in Christ, these carnal-minded people. They were going to law with one another, they were having lifestyles that are not coincident with Christ’s life, but oh, are they filled with the Spirit! They love the Spirit. They love to speak in tongues. They love to prophesy. I am talking about the Corinthians of the past.

Before I start criticizing, the Corinthians were Christians. Am I saying that people who want these things are not Christians? Who am I, Ernest Martin, to judge. It is not up to me to judge, right? It is not up to you. But isn’t it interesting that Paul is hitting these Corinthians over the head with practically every type of criticism you can imagine. They are interested in tongues, prophesying, and having a good time in the *ekklesia*.

The apostle Paul is saying (again I am paraphrasing), it is all right to do these things but do them in order. He said when you speak in tongues, let there always be an interpreter and under no circumstance should someone “speak in tongues” unless there be an interpreter. I know people today who just love speaking in, what they call “tongues” without an interpreter at all.

They go contrary to the very things Paul said to do! They may be Christians, but they very well could be as carnal as all these Corinthians. I do not know, but unless there is order, unless there is spiritual discernment, these things should be under the governance of the Spirit of the prophets and sons of the prophets. Things should be under control or they can get out of hand. Before you know it, something could happen that would be even worse than what pagan Corinthians would do.

It is worse in some cases because the Corinthians learned their lesson, but people today do not. Do you know what is some of the central teaching of so-called Christian denominations today? **They say:**

1. First of all, you get saved. That is good and commendable.
2. Get the baptism of the Holy Spirit. That is essential to be fully in the Gospel of Christ, or so they say. They call it the “soul gospel,” it is to have that experience.

The Corinthians had the fullness of the Gospel and the apostle Paul called them carnal. He called them babes in Christ. He called them just barely coming out of heathenism. He said they were acting just like them. Some of the same problems affecting the Corinthians here, take place among people today (again I am not criticizing, but it is a fact). Though they may be very spiritual, having all these things, they have the same problems today that the Corinthians had.

One of the most biblical things of those who love the spiritual is this: Once they have them, if anyone does not show the outward spiritual gifts, as they think they have, then they look down on you with the nose. They are puffed up. They are arrogant. They know things that you don’t know. You can take the Gospel to them

³ Dr. Martin’s articles “[The Corinthian Experience](#)” and “[The History and Prophecy of Miracles \(and their Failure\)](#)” and my 2003 Commentary, “[Paul’s First Message to the Corinthians](#).” “[Subjection in 1 Corinthians 15](#)” DWS

and show them right in the Scripture what Christ said; it will not have any affect on them in many cases. This is because they have “spiritual experiences” with Christ, just like the Corinthians had spiritual experiences, and I reinforce this: **Paul called them carnal.**

If those spirits of the people are not under their control, and if they are not going by the way the apostle Paul said, they are not learning the lessons he tried to teach. I find many of these people, bless their hearts, I will say, are they Christians? Yes, so far as I know, but they are right in the midst of 1st Corinthians errors and they have not come out of it, and they tell people you must have “the experience of 1st Corinthians.” In fact, they ought to read 2nd Corinthians.

1st Corinthians Chapter 15, the Resurrection Chapter

Before I go to 2nd Corinthians, there is Chapter 15, all about the resurrection. They were getting mixed up on the resurrection of the body. They even came to the place in verses 15:28–29 of baptizing for the dead some of them. Isn’t that crazy? Baptizing for the dead. There are all types of explanations on those verses. I will tell you what they mean, they were indeed baptizing **for** the dead! That is what it says. We have people today that baptize for the dead, just as Paul clearly wrote.

The Mormons do so. I am not criticizing Mormons, but they are doing something that is completely erroneous, and the apostle Paul is hitting these Corinthians over the head about it. Yet people today say we ought to have baptism for the dead because the Corinthians had it.⁴

The Corinthians were carnal and just barely out of paganism. The Corinthians were causing idolatrous things to be mixed with the Lord’s Supper. They were doing this, they were doing that, everything you can imagine. Paul said, “Get out of it!”

Do you know what the Corinthians did? They got out of it. That is why 2nd Corinthians was written. When you really look at that epistle, it is most amazing what it says. Analyze it as you contrast it with the 1st epistle to the Corinthians. You will see an entirely different people that Paul is talking to. Yet it is the same people.

These people graduated out of their infantile childish ways of doing things. Such things caused divisions in the *ekklesia*, people going to law with one another, all types of immorality, difficulties like that, and spiritual gifts that were getting out of control — all of those things. Wrong doctrines were coming up.

Almost all those things were finally settled. Almost all were settled by the time they received the second epistle to the Corinthians that Paul wrote. It could not have been much long after. Let’s say a month or two, even six months later, he wrote that second epistle. By that time they had learned their lessons.

This is good for us today. The apostle Paul said we, any of us, who get caught up in the things you can find in those 16 chapters of 1st Corinthians, ourselves, we ought to graduate to 2nd Corinthians as well.

Paul’s Anguish Over the Corinthians

When Paul wrote in 1st Corinthians about the things they were doing in the *ekklesia*, he was very upset with them. In fact, the very beginning of 2nd Corinthians, he starts out by writing about the great suffering he had to undergo about these matters, and then in chapter 2:4 he says:

“For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.”

• **2 Corinthians 2:4**

The first letter Paul wrote was out of great anguish or heaviness of heart. It has often made me wonder when I read that particular Scripture how the apostle Paul would judge matters today, if he could come back into the last part of our 20th century, and see what is happening in contemporary Christianity. He would find some of the very things that are mentioned in 1st Corinthians being perpetuated, and in fact being encouraged.

The very things Paul said not to do, we find people doing them today. He said, let no one speak more than

⁴ See my Commentaries “[First Corinthians Chapter 15](#)” and “[Subjection in 1 Corinthians 15.](#)” DWS

three times with a tongue or a language, and then only when you have an interpreter. But you know there are all types of people today who speak any which way they want to, here, there, whatever, and they do not even seem to pay attention to what Paul was saying even in 1st Corinthians.

I think if the apostle would come back now, he would say the same thing. He said in 2:4 above, **“out of much affliction and anguish of heart.”** I see what is going on today. I am sure what Paul would say. We need to realize we cannot be infants any longer in these things.

Do you know what most people want that are just coming into the knowledge of the truth without any basic, fundamental background to what real Christianity is? They want a Christianity based upon the Old and the New Testaments, a way that shows Jesus Christ with stability and a goodness of stature, and common sense. That is what the Bible shows.

Do you know what most people want? They want the physical: to be titillated, to be honest with you. When you come to spiritual gifts mentioned in 1st Corinthians chapters 12, 13, and 14, and Paul did not say those things could not be done, but when you come to them, in almost every case there is something physical coming out in a spiritual gift. Tongues, for example. Most people say they are very spiritual when they speak in tongues, but do you know what they are actually doing? They are giving forth physical release. It makes them feel “I am in special contact with God almighty.” Maybe others who do not speak in tongues, are not as good, as I am ...” There is a lot of snobbery that can come out with things of this nature.

If Paul could see what is going on today, he would be upset and have a heaviness of heart again. We need to learn there are more important things to do in Christianity than some of the things emphasized in 1st Corinthians. We need to come to 2nd Corinthians. We need to graduate to it.

Divisions were in the Corinthian *ekklesia*. Before long the people who do not want that feel some have a say over them, and act like they are superior. Before you know it you have divisions in the *ekklesia*, exactly as Paul said in 1st Corinthians chapter 1. That is why Paul said you ought to have harmony in the *ekklesia*, and not the things we see going on at the present time. What we need to do, like the Corinthians did do, was to read 1st Corinthians chapter 13 where Paul says, it is not knowledge, it is not prophesying, it is not tongues that are important, it is love between people with Christ being in their midst. That is what we truly need to do.

He said: **“And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.”** (1 Corinthians 14:32–33). That is what the Paul said, we need to graduate to 2nd Corinthians. Read it and see how many of those people back then actually got the point Paul was trying to bring out. What we should do is not to emphasize the physical (though it is called spiritual), but to emphasize the spiritual that goes to the depths of righteousness which we find in Christ. We need to graduate to 2nd Corinthians. I think we will all be a lot better off if we do.

Ernest L. Martin, late 1970s
David Sielaff, February 2023