

## 1 Corinthians 1:1-17

This letter is written to a young lively church, but one that has no shortage of ‘adolescent’ problems.

The presenting issues are disunity, immorality and litigation. Alongside these, difficulties have arisen around how men and women are to relate to one another and how spiritual gifts are to be exercised. At bottom though there are tensions between the Apostle Paul and his gospel and this young church. Paul’s words in chapter 15 serve as a summary of the whole letter: *By this gospel you are saved if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.* (2)

The opening paragraphs remind this disordered church of who Paul is and what they are meant to be. Paul has been called to be an apostle by the will of God. (1) They should therefore listen to him. They have been called to be God’s holy people (2) those who have been set apart from the corrupt culture of Corinth to serve God’s purposes.

In v4-9 he gives thanks and encourages them to appreciate what the gospel has brought to them. Their rich experience of ‘word gifts’ (*you have been enriched in every way with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge*) is confirmation of Paul’s gospel among them. *6 God thus confirming our testimony about God among you.* He emphasises not only God’s resourcing but also his faithfulness. He can be relied upon to keep us firm to the end.

The letter quickly comes to address the central problem of disunity. The issue of division, schism, splitting has dogged the church down the centuries. Like Corinth sometimes that has been associated with personalities, sometimes with other matters. Our unity arises out of appreciation of and indebtedness to Jesus Christ. Reflecting on his grace towards us and sacrifice for us humbles our pride and enables us to set aside our preferences in order to serve others.

- Do we listen to Paul as the one through whom God speaks and are we committed to being distinct from the behaviour of those around us?
- Why not commit verses 8 & 9 to memory?
- Are you aware of situations of disunity? Are there things you could do to promote agreement and build consensus?

## 1 Corinthians 1: 18 - 2:5

Corinthian disunity arose from the priorities of Greek culture. In Corinth being a powerful speaker, being someone skilled in debate was highly valued. Jewish culture put more emphasis on powerful behaviour. This church was looking for evidently powerful leaders. Were Apollos’s arguments more persuasive than Paul’s? So what’s wrong with thinking in these terms?

*(18) For the message of the cross..... is the power of God.*

God has chosen to reveal his power in something apparently weak. Alongside the isms and ideologies of this world the news of one who has come from heaven to die and rise seems simplistic and childlike. It is though the way God has chosen to save people. *Jews demand signs (powerful evidence) and Greeks look for wisdom (powerful arguments) but we preach Christ crucified .... Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.* (22,23)

*(27) God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong*

From a weak message we turn to a ‘weak’ church. The young church at Corinth was drawn mostly from people at the lower end of society. They were not the ‘movers and shakers’ nor those who belonged to the privilege class. They would mostly have been slaves with

some even coming from Corinth's criminal underworld (see 6:9-11) None of this was a mistake. God has deliberately chosen the weak, those regarded as foolish, those without influence in order to challenge and expose the mistaken values of our world.

(2:3) *I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling.*

This apparently weak message, displayed in a weak church is brought by a weak messenger. The emphasis in 2:1-5 falls not on Paul's personality or on his skill with words but on the Spirit's power that is able to form faith in men and women through this gospel. And because this faith does not rest on human wisdom but God's Spirit it is faith that will last.

- Are we confident in the gospel that as it is proclaimed clearly it is able to change lives?
- What do you think of God's strategy that seeks to shame the wise by choosing people who could be regarded as foolish?
- Do we fear 'great fear and trembling' when it comes to sharing the gospel? Should we?

### 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

You could think Paul has no time for careful thought or serious consideration. That would be wrong. *We do however speak a message of wisdom ..... (6)*

There are two kinds of wisdom. (6-10)

There is the wisdom of this age (6) This is the wisdom employed by those described as '*the rulers of this age*'(8) It could be summed as the way to get on. (acquire power, gain wealth, become successful) To this way of thinking Jesus Christ and all he stands for is incomprehensible.

In contrast Paul speaks of '*God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden..*' (7) This wisdom is a mystery to us not because it's complicated but because it is to do with the world to come. (9)

Paul fears that the Corinthians are going to be attracted to the wisdom of this age rather than that connected to what God has prepared for us, in the world to come.

There are two kinds of spirit (10-16)

In verse 12 he refers to the spirit of the world. We are familiar with the competitiveness and individualism that characterises the life of this planet. Paul speaks here of a different Spirit. Paul and the Corinthians wouldn't have understood God's wisdom if it hadn't been for God's gift of his Spirit. The Spirit is the one who enables us to appreciate the future God has for us (10a) and to comprehend something of God's character.

This understanding doesn't come by some mysterious route. *This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.* (13) It is the word of God conveyed by the Apostle Paul that enables us to benefit from this Spirit-inspired wisdom.

Only those who are 'spiritual' grasp these things. (14) The sign that we deal not in the spirit of the world but the Spirit of God is we will value and protect our unity as God's people.

- Ask God to help you be aware where we are tempted to operate by the wisdom of this age.

- Thank God for the gift of his Spirit and be alive to his presence in your life.
- Value this letter as ‘words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit taught words.

### 1 Corinthians 3: 1-23

This chapter continues to address the problem of disunity. Our relationships with one another are not a side issue. The Bible has a great deal to say about the way Christians ought to relate to one another.

The Bible provides an accurate picture of ourselves (1-4)

The Corinthians liked to think of themselves as mature or spiritual. They had opinions on the merits of the various Christian leaders. Paul calls them ‘infants in Christ’ who display the immature characteristics of jealousy and quarrelling. Maturity is not measured in our ability to assess others but rather in our readiness to give thanks for and encourage those who we may not be naturally drawn to.

Paul displays an accurate picture of himself and his ministry. (5-15)

Notice the language the Apostle uses about himself: *And what is Paul?* (it really should be ‘who’ is Paul but he wants to emphasise his unimportance) *Only servants....I planted the seed....neither the one who plants is anything but only God who makes things grow.* It is folly to flatter the human element when it plays such a small part compared to God who stands behind all life and growth.

This though doesn’t make Paul careless or casual about the work of gospel ministry. He switches to a building metaphor. (10-15) How we build (disciple people) matters. He highlights different materials (12) The distinction between these two groups is what happens to them when you put them in the fire. The worth of someone’s ministry will only be seen on the last day when their work is tested. If we are involved in teaching the bible to our children, other people’s children, young people, home groups, the whole church we need to be taking the long view.

The Bible provides an accurate picture of the church and what it means to belong. (16-23)

When we find ourselves quarrelling or being jealous of others; when we boast about our leaders or criticise others you can be sure we have lost sight of what it means to belong to the church. *Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and God’s Spirit lives among you.* (16) These are words that deserve very careful thought. How we behave in church (ie as we live together) is something God takes very seriously.

- Spend some time giving thanks for and asking God’s blessing on someone you are not naturally drawn towards.
- Most of us are responsible for some ‘building work’ in the lives of others. Do we have the Day (13) in mind so that we teach and encourage with an eye to eternity?
- Recognise what a huge privilege it is to be considered God’s temple, the place where his Spirit dwells. Do all you can to preserve and protect the church from harm.

### 1 Corinthians 4: 1-21.

This chapter illustrates Paul’s view of the Christian life in contrast to that of the Corinthians. For Paul following Jesus Christ is ‘cross bearing’ for the Corinthians its much more about ‘wearing the crown’ (8)

## Waiting versus Reigning (1-8)

The issue of apostles and their respective merits has been a feature of the letter so far. In v1-5 he tells them how they should relate to the apostles. As an apostle Paul sees himself as having been entrusted with certain things. The issue is not how other people judge his performance or even how he feels about himself but rather will he be judged faithful by God. Paul has a recurring focus on the world to come (2:9, 3:12-15, 4:5) His conclusion: *Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes.*

In contrast to this the Corinthians are not interested in waiting. *Already you have all that you want! Already you have become rich! You have begun to reign.* (8) Paul speaks ironically here. He emphasises that our reward is in God's hands and we have to wait for that. (5)

## Power or talk. (9-20)

The Corinthians are unimpressed with Paul's Christianity. It looks far too weak to make any impression on their neighbours and friends. In view of his impending visit (18-21) Paul makes a significant statement: *The Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power* (20) From v9-13 Paul describes his experience of following Christ. He compares himself to a prisoner being put on display at the end of the procession like those condemned to die in the arena. (9). This man though doesn't display weakness and defeat but rather power. *When we are cursed we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered we answer kindly.* (12,13) This is the power of the cross. Those who choose the way of the cross can expect to wear the crown in the world to come.

- Which judgment concerns us: what people think of us, how we judge ourselves or God's final judgment?
- Is our Christianity more talk than power. Look again at v12,13 and ask God to enable you to respond in this powerful way.
- Allow Scripture to set your expectations of the life of following Jesus *don't go beyond what was written.* (6)

## 1 Corinthians 5: 1-13.

This chapter deals with the issue of church discipline. A man is to be 'put out of the fellowship'. It implies the church is not a loose association of people but those who have clearly identified themselves with a particular gathering and submitted themselves to its leadership and government.

There are two problems: *a man is sleeping with his father's wife* (1) *And you are proud!* (2) They may be proud of their broadmindedness or their self-satisfaction may simply prevent them taking any kind of action. By contrast Paul is appalled and urges decisive action. Here is why.

Paul's view of the church is shaped by 3:16. *Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and God's Spirit lives among you.* It is a huge privilege to be a member of the church. But because it is the temple of the Holy Spirit, holiness must characterise the lives of those who belong. If they understood these things, 'mourning' (2) not pride would have been their response.

Church discipline is exercised for the good of the offender. .... *hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved for the day of the Lord* (5). It is not a kindness to gloss over the sin of others. At a person level *Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.* (Proverbs 27:6)

Church discipline is necessary for the health of the church. *Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough.* (6) Christ died as our Passover Lamb so that we would be redeemed from the old life of malice and wickedness and live the new life of sincerity and truth. Sin spreads. The exceptional become the usual. Vigilance is called for.

Church discipline gets things the right way round. It's easy for the church to sit in judgment on the world and stand at a distance from its sinful ways. We need rather to deal with ourselves and 'put our own house in order'

- Does being a member of the church seem an important thing to you?
- Are we aware of situations we are inclined to ignore but in fact need some action?
- The '*unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*' may prompt us to have that difficult conversation. Can we see the bigger picture that concerns the health of the whole fellowship?

### 1 Cor 6:1-11

It's easy to have an idealistic view of the NT church. Corinth is a long way from the church we meet in the early chapters of Acts. This is truly 'messy' church. There is disunity, arrogance, immorality and now lawsuits. It is though hardly surprising when you consider the kind of people sitting in the pews. The list of 'wrongdoers' (9,10) is followed by the words, '*and such were some of you*' The gospel has invaded some extremely disordered lives. If you are travelling at 70mph in the wrong direction, turning round may take a little time.

But repentance is expected. In v1-6 he urges the church to arbitrate in the disputes of its people. (1) However his main point is in v7. To be a Christian is to have a different view on winning and losing. *The fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated. Why not rather be wronged?* (7) At the end of chapter 3 Paul states: *we have the mind of Christ* (3:16) The following chapters contain a variety of situations. In each of these difficulties Paul reveals how Christ would view these things. He is much more interested in winning people than arguments.

On a more serious note we need to be clear that wrongdoers will not inherit the Kingdom of God. He describes them as those who *cheat and do wrong* (8) In other words their behaviour is placing them in danger.

Hope is found in the final sentence of the section: *But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.* (11) The Holy Spirit has come down into the filth of our lives to reclaim and restore in us, the image of the God who made us.

- Real church is messy. Are we prepared to persevere with people who come from very disordered backgrounds?
- Are there arguments we are trying to win when we ought to be prepared to lose for the sake of others spiritual well being?
- Think long and hard about the work of Gods Spirit in your life.

### 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Corinth was renowned for immorality and Greek culture provided plenty of scope for personal involvement. The gospel spoke into a way of life that regarded visiting the prostitutes as normal.

Paul picks up some of the Corinthian catch phrases. They were fond of quoting, “I have a right to do anything” or “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food and God will destroy them both” The implication being if God was going to destroy the body then it only had a temporary significance and it didn’t matter what you did with it.

What you do with your body matters. Here is why.

*The body is not meant for sexual immorality but for ..... (13)* The obvious word would be ‘purity’. Instead he tells us the body is for ‘the Lord’ This means that our physical appetites for food, sleep, sex must take second place to doing Gods will.

Our bodies have a future. As Jesus was raised bodily by the power of God so will our bodies be. (14) They are not mere containers that will be discarded and can therefore be treated with disregard.

Our bodies are not our own. They have been redeemed at a high cost by Christ in order to become a temple of the Holy Spirit (19,20) Sexual sin is particularly serious because to sin sexually is to violate the body. In a very real sense my body is not my own to do with as I please.

Implication: Flee sexual immorality. The real battle ground is our heart. In this respect Jesus spoke of gouging out your eye or cutting off your hand. I need to get ruthless with all forms of immoral temptation.

- Do you need to take some action on this front?
- Could you be a help to someone struggling with sexual temptation?
- Think about v19 *Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?*

### **1 Corinthians 7:1-16**

At this point in the letter Paul turns to some of their questions. *Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman. (1)* Paul goes onto emphasise that sexual relations set in the context of marriage are a good gift of God. Husbands and wives are not to deprive one another with the only exception being times when they specifically devote themselves to prayer. Some marriages will need more sex and some more prayer.

Paul commends singleness (7-9) We don’t need a marriage partner to be complete in some way. Singleness is a good gift from God (7) This doesn’t mean that all single people find their situation easy any more than those who have the gift of marriage are always deliriously happy with their circumstances.

Marriage is a serious business. People ought not to divorce one another. Paul is reflecting the teaching of Jesus here (not I but the Lord) (10) He further emphasises this in the next section where he comments on a situation Jesus did not encounter where a believer is married to an unbeliever. Even this in itself does to provide a reason for divorce. He goes on to say (14) *For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband (ESV)*

“The unbelieving spouse and children are not saved by association (see v16) but they do come under the believing marriage partner’s Christian influence and so Paul notes are much more likely to be saved. In that sense they are set apart (the meaning of made holy) from other unbelievers and from the evil world.” (ESV study Bible)

- If you are married how can you encourage and support your marriage partner better?

- Are there single people you could include in your friendship group or family?
- Do you know of those who are struggling in their marriages? Pray for them to persevere.

### 1 Corinthians 7: 17-40

This section could sound unhelpfully negative about marriage. It does serve though as a corrective to the view that marriage is the be all and end all. Its clear from this chapter:

- Marriage is not sinful (28)
- Singleness is a gift (7)
- Marriage though not sinful does make life more complicated. (28b)

The teaching here is shaped by two statements about time: *because of the present crisis* (26) and *the time is short* (29)

The big lesson of the chapter could be summed up as 'be content in the circumstances God has placed you, because its not going to be forever'. There are various situations described here: circumcised and uncircumcised, slaves and free, single and married. Getting on, being upwardly mobile is considered a normal and beneficial activity. Paul directs the Corinthians and us to different priorities.

Obedience is to be a priority: *keeping God's commandments is what counts* (19)

Know who you are responsible to. *You were bought at a price; do not become slaves to human beings....each person as responsible to God* (23,24)

Don't allow possessions to enslave you. *those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.* (31)

Once again Paul strikes that note reminding us of the priority of the world to come. (See 2:9, 3:13, 4:5)

- What are we more concerned about: improving our circumstances or obeying God?
- We have competing loyalties in our lives. How can we help ourselves to remember that we have been *bought with a price*?
- What can we do to avoid becoming engrossed in the things of the world?

### 1 Corinthians 8: 1-13

Paul addresses a further matter they have written to him about. Is it acceptable for a Christian to eat food sacrificed to an idol? This is not so much about eating market place food that may have had a pagan grace said over it as it is about eating in an idol temple. (10) And for people in Corinth this was a big deal. Idol temples were the first century restaurants. They were the places where business was transacted. To view them as off limits was to exclude yourself from a large section of daily life.

The question becomes what should shape our choices and involvements?

The bible contrasts two things: knowledge and love. We need knowledge, understanding is important but in itself its not enough. I not only need to know the facts I need to know my responsibilities to my Christian brother or sister.

In v4-6 Paul sets out the facts. *An idol is nothing at all in the world and There is no God but one.* (4) There is but one true God, from whom all things came. And idols are no more than lifeless statues and empty shrines. Eating food that has been offered to them in temples dedicated to them doesn't affect your relationship to God in the slightest.

But not everyone knows these things. (7) Paul's concern is not what the food does to the believer but what his example does to his weaker Christian brother.

The bible understands the vital importance of a Christian's conscience. Our consciences are not infallible and a weak conscience (ie one that is not accurately informed) will not adjudicate on right and wrong correctly nevertheless to overrule it is always dangerous. (7)

The bible also understands the power of example. More powerful than what we believe to be right is what we see other people doing. (9-13) I ought to fear what my conduct could do to another Christians relationship with God. (11) Love for my brother or sister will compel me to restrict my freedom for the sake of their Christian progress.

- Knowledge is important. If our consciences are to be strong they need to be correctly 'programmed'. Its Gods word that informs our understanding. Is that a priority for us?
- What will help me remain alive to the impact of my example?
- Are there any areas where you have determined to curtail your freedom for the sake of other people's faith? Should there be?

### 1 Corinthians 9:1-23

The tensions between the apostle and his church in Corinth are never far from the surface. Chapter 9 comprises his defence. *This is my defence to those who sit in judgment on me.* (3) At stake is his apostolic authority. Is he a real apostle? Can he adjudicate on going to idol temples? And if he is a real apostle why doesn't he accept their financial support?

In v4-14 Paul asserts his apostolic rights with a barrage of rhetorical questions. However he doesn't do so in the hope that they will send him money. He is quick to waive his rights. *I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me.* (15)

He doesn't preach the gospel in the hope that he will be well rewarded. This is because for Paul preaching the gospel is not a job he has chosen but a responsibility that has been laid on him. (16,17)

He makes it free of charge because he is careful to place no hindrances in the way of people trusting Christ. The gospel is the news that someone else has paid our debts. Gospel ministry needs to be aligned with this idea.

He makes it free of charge so as not to be in anyone's pocket but to be free to promote the gospel among whoever needs to hear it. (18)

In v19 -23 he describes how he bends and flexes to make it as easy as possible for people to engage with the good news. In adjusting his behaviour in this way he leaves himself open to the charge of lacking conviction. One firm conviction runs through all this: *I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.* (22)

- Do we recognise Paul's apostolic authority, or do we think his views are open to debate?
- The gospel can only be made freely available to others if those of us who have resources share our wealth. Is this something you could do?
- Are there people who are unlike us who we could bend and flex with in order to share the good news with them?

### 1 Corinthians 9:24 - 10:13

The theme of this section is summed up in v24 *Run in such a way as to get the prize.*

The Bible keeps before us the ultimate destination and the worthwhileness of persevering. The sporting world is not short of illustrations of immense sacrifice and endeavour. *They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last for ever.* (25)

The previous paragraph illustrates what it looks like to run to win. The life of identifying with all kinds of people in order to communicate the gospel to them qualifies us in this area.

Central to this lifestyle is self control. (26,27) Paul describes 'making his body his slave'. His great fear is he might be disqualified. Its not hard to see where this concern came from as he goes on in the next chapter to describe the fate of the Exodus generation. *God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.* (5)

The passage goes on to highlight the behaviour that led to this fate: idolatry, sexual immorality, testing Christ and grumbling. They have not been chosen at random. Some of these things have been specifically addressed already (idolatry and immorality) and grumbling describes their attitude towards the apostle. Paul fears they are going to be disqualified.

The lessons:

Read the Old Testament. V6 and 11 refer to our need to do this. *Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.* (6)

Beware complacency. *So if you think you are standing firm be careful that you don't fall.* (12)

It would be easy to think that our secular culture today uniquely pressurises our lives. The Corinthians thought much the same about their day. But no. *No temptation has overtaken you expect what is common to mankind.* (13)

And finally Gods faithfulness is presented as challenge to resist temptation. He knows our limits and will provide a way out, so resisting is not impossible. *And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.* (13)

- Do we have our attention on the ultimate finishing line?
- What areas of our lives do we need to exercise self control over?
- Are we up for the fight to resist temptation?

### **1 Corinthians 10:14 - 11:1**

Some things are incompatible. (14-22)

This ends Pauls long answer to the Corinthians questions about attending idol feasts. The first part of his answer (8:1-13) made the impact of their behaviour on a weaker brother the issue. Here he simply prohibits them from going. *Therefore my dear friends, flee from idolatry.*

Participating in the Lords Supper makes sharing in an idol feast impossible. For Christians, when they take part in the Lord's Supper something real is taking place. The Lord himself is the host and he shares with us the benefits of his death. (16) We are described as the body (17). He is the head of that body and present among his people.

Whilst Paul has earlier declared idols to be ‘nothing at all in the world’ (8:4) he warns that they are exploited by evil forces (20) Idolatry is powerful. It has the capacity to fascinate and control.

Our participation in the Lord’s Supper ought to make us careful about what else we choose to get involved in. Perhaps we need to check our loyalties. Not everything is harmless.

Small things matter (10:23 - 11:1)

Paul was in danger of being accused of double standards. His readiness to eat market place food that had probably been offered to an idol seemed inconsistent with his prohibition of going to idol temples. Yet he writes: *Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience (25) And If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. (27)*

In his mind though one was an idolatry issue whereas the other was a conscience matter. And he shows us what the principle is that shapes his behaviour. *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. (31)* Its possible to do seemingly trivial things like eating and drinking to the glory of God, that is to do it in a way that doesn’t hinder people’s relationship with God. This is what is uppermost in Pauls mind. It is something he has learned from following Christ.

- Do we value our participation in the Lord’s Table?
- Are we tempted to share in things that are incompatible with that?
- Does the glory of God and the good of others shape even the seemingly trivial things in our lives?

### 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

The next four chapters of the letter are concerned with how we are to conduct ourselves ‘as church’. In chapter 14 Paul states: *For God is not a God of disorder but of peace (33)* That could be the strap line for this next section. Our gathering together is intended to reflect God’s character and ways. The first part of chapter 11 addresses the issue of men and women, the second half the rich and poor.

In v3 Paul sets out Gods order: *the head of every man is Christ, and the head of woman is man and the head of Christ is God.* That final phrase emphasises that this is not to do with status. Christ is not inferior to God. Rather the eternal Son submits himself to the will of his Father for the sake of the lost.

Someone has described reading 1 Corinthians as similar to listening to one end of a telephone conversation. You have to guess what is being said by the other party. It seems reasonable to conclude that this is here because there are some local difficulties affecting the way men and women relate to one another in the church at Corinth. It also seems clear we can’t be dogmatic about all the details. Here though is what seems plain:

In Gods order of things, both men and women are able to be involved in praying and prophesying. (4,5)

They are to do so in a way that respects Gods order (set out in v3). The issue would seem to be less about should women wear hats and much more about how men and women are to relate to one another in church. The background to this section maybe Deuteronomy 22:5 *A woman must not wear men’s clothing, nor a man wear women’s clothing, for the Lord your God detests anyone who does this.* This is not a prohibition against women wearing jeans (or Scotsmen kilts). The issue is cross dressing, a man appearing as a woman

or vice versa. And that would seem to be Paul's concern here. A woman without a head covering and her hair shorn would be trying to appear as a man.

The application of this concerns how men and women relate to one another in church. Men are intended to lead in spiritual matters like prayer and the word of God. That ought to be an overflow of how they behave at home.

Women are also involved in prayer and the word of God but not in a way that lets men off the hook. They ought to do all they can to promote Christ-like leadership among God's people.

- Paul praises the Corinthians for '*holding to the traditions*' (2) Some traditions are good. Do we overvalue novelty and creativity? Are we too quick to discard things from the past?
- We live in a culture that is confused about gender. Are we clear about what is required of godly men and godly women?
- Are our church gatherings governed by the kind of order that promotes peace, all round?