

1 Corinthians: Lord's Supper, Spiritual Gifts, and Resurrection

New Testament History and Literature — Session 17

Author: Dr. Dave Mathewson

Sponsored by Biblicalelearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Keywords

1 Corinthians, Spiritual Gifts, Lord's Supper, Status, Tongues, Body of Christ, Prophecy, Love, Resurrection, Ecclesial Purity

Abstract

In this lecture, Dr. Dave Mathewson analyzes the internal conflicts within the Corinthian church caused by secular social hierarchies infiltrating corporate worship. He explains how the abuse of the Lord's Supper and the elitist boastings over spiritual gifts, particularly tongues, undermined the church's unity as the body of Christ. Paul counters these divisions by elevating love as the supreme motivation for edifying the community and defense of bodily resurrection as essential for defeating death. Ultimately, the lecture highlights the overarching theme of 1 Corinthians: preserving church purity amidst a surrounding pagan culture.

Outline

I. Introduction and Course Context

- A. Opening remarks and administrative updates regarding Blackboard exam scores
- B. Opening prayer focusing on sustained intellectual and spiritual analysis of 1 Corinthians
- C. Contextual methodology: Reconstructing the socio-historical background of Corinth

II. The Lord's Supper and Socio-Economic Divisions (1 Corinthians 11:17–34)

- A. Socio-economic status in secular Corinth infiltrating corporate church gatherings
 - 1. Wealthy elite arriving early and marginalizing working-class members
 - 2. Perpetuation of patron-client social hierarchies during the Eucharist
- B. Reinterpreting Paul's directives on self-examination and unworthy participation
 - 1. Unworthy participation defined as creating and promoting socio-economic division
 - 2. Self-examination as evaluating relational unity rather than individual sin confession
- C. Paul's pastoral solution: Waiting for one another to manifest unity in Christ

III. Spiritual Gifts and Social Status (1 Corinthians 12:1–31)

- A. Transition signaled by 'Now concerning' (peri de) regarding spiritual gifts
- B. Definition of a spiritual gift: Holy Spirit-energized ability for communal edification
- C. Infiltration of status-seeking into spiritual gifts
 - 1. Association of tongues with elite social and spiritual status

2. Parallel practices of ecstatic speech in surrounding pagan religions

D. Foundational test of spiritual authenticity: Confessing 'Jesus is Lord' (12:3)

E. Metaphor of the physical body (12:12–31)

1. Unity in diversity: One Spirit bestowing varied gifts
2. Interdependence of body parts: No single gift or member constitutes the whole

IV. Love as the More Excellent Way (1 Corinthians 13:1–13)

- A. Literary context and function of Chapter 13 within the spiritual gifts discourse
- B. Superiority of love over spiritual manifestations and accomplishments
- C. Character of love (patient, kind, not arrogant, boastful, or rude) countering Corinthian pride
- D. Primacy of love among faith, hope, and love as the reflection of God's character

V. Prophecy versus Tongues in Public Worship (1 Corinthians 14:1–40)

- A. Clarifying the command to strive for 'greater gifts'
- B. Definition of prophecy: Communicating an intelligible message to build up the church
- C. Contrast between prophecy and uninterpreted tongues
 1. Tongues edify the individual speaker; prophecy edifies the gathered body
 2. Requirement of an interpreter for public use of tongues to ensure intelligibility
- D. Pastoral evaluation: Validity of tongues versus misuse as a required spiritual metric

VI. Defense of the Physical Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1–58)

- A. Background to Corinthian denial of physical resurrection
 1. Influence of Platonic dualism prioritizing spirit over physical matter
 2. Over-realized eschatology: Believing elite spiritual status negated future physical need
- B. Paul's two core arguments for bodily resurrection
 1. Logical link: Denying physical resurrection invalidates Christ's resurrection and gospel faith
 2. Theological necessity: Overcoming the final enemy (death) requires physical resurrection
- C. Implications for Christian eschatology: Salvation of the whole person and a renewed earth

VII. Synthesis and Overarching Theme of 1 Corinthians

- A. Reevaluating proposed themes (Unity vs. Purity)
- B. Central theme: Ecclesial purity in the midst of a secular pagan culture
- C. Concluding course administration note