

An Introduction to 1 Corinthians

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Christianity is for real life. And Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians puts us as close to the real lives of his audience as we are ever privileged to get in Bible study. By letting us in on the daily life of the Christians in Corinth, Paul reminds us that faith is a way of life and not just a time-and-place ritual practice. By giving us a window to the way the Christians and Corinth don't always "get it" about Christian discipleship, we realize that when we don't "get it" we are in good company.

Let's take a quick walk through the letter. This ancient group is divided (1.11-12). They're arguing over who is their true pastor (chs. 3—4). Some are patronizing prostitutes (ch. 5), others are suing one another in Roman courts (ch. 6); a few are confused about faith and marriage (ch. 7); and others are fighting over what they can and can't eat as Christians. (8.10) There are people grabbing for the best seats in worship (ch. 11), chasing after shiny things that aren't the presence of God (chs. 12—14), and wondering if Jesus' resurrection really happened (ch. 15).

This is not a stellar report. But, oddly enough, when Paul searches for the best word to describe them in his greeting, he chooses "saints". (1.2) Making people "saints" must be something God does, which is good news for us. This introduction is designed as a teaser, an appetizer that invites us to read deeply together for these two months. Enjoy!

Paul's First Visit to Corinth – Building a Family

Once upon a time, a tentmaker named Paul met a couple of his race and trade called Aquila and Priscilla, who had just been thrown out of their home in Italy by an Emperor's decree (sound familiar?) and moved their family to Greece. Paul told these two the best news he had ever heard, about how God had reconciled humanity to Himself through Jesus' death and transformed his own life in the process. This couple and others named Stephanas, Chloe, Fortunatus, Achaicus, and Crispus embraced Paul's good news, not just with their brains, but also with their lives. Soon other people did the same, and this growing group began to meet in one of their houses (maybe Stephanas's) to learn more about Paul's good news, to sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, to hear the scriptures together, to share a holy meal, and to worship God. Soon they would call themselves an "assembly" (Greek: *ekklesia*) and meet regularly.

Paul's news was new. Most of these non-Jews had formerly frequented the temples of an eclectic assortment of Greek, Roman and Egyptian gods. They customarily sacrificed with their families to those gods in order to secure their favor – safe travel from Poseidon, abundant crops from Demeter, good health from Asclepius, and so on. Paul's

picture was different altogether. He told them there is only one God over all – that the gods of their place and time were idols of human making.

This monotheism was, to understate, a minority belief in their city; so joining this group came with a cost. Embracing Paul’s Gospel meant parting with the religion of family and friends and business associates. As Paul put it in another letter, they have “turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God.” (1 Thessalonians 1.9) In the context of this alienation and separation from their former family and friends, Paul taught these Corinthians that God was building a family out of this new Christian group – adopting them through baptism, so that they were all brothers and sisters. This message of family belonging must have been welcome news to those whose biological families had disowned them. He drove home this mutual belonging, too. In 1 Corinthians, Paul will call them “brothers and sisters” no fewer than 36 times!

Paul stayed with this family of Christians for eighteen months. Acts says he lived first with Priscilla and Aquila, then moved in for a while with Titius Justus, a “God-fearer” (anon-Jew who found synagogue monotheism intriguing). In his letter, Paul reminds the Corinthians that, when he was with them, he had a proper right to the church’s hospitality, but didn’t take them up on it (1 Corinthians 9). So he probably rented a place for most of his time there.

Paul built tents to support himself financially. He put a leadership group in place -- Priscilla and Aquila and Chloe, among others – because he knew there would be a next city where he would repeat the same process. When he was satisfied that the Corinthian Christians were ready, Paul left town to go do it all again.

While “brother” and “sister” language abounded, Paul actually saw himself as the Corinthians’ spiritual father – the one who gave birth to them in Christ. So, this relationship continued beyond his stay. Paul knew he wasn’t finished leading a group after he left. He checked in with the leaders, crossed paths with people from that church who traveled the empire, sent messengers to them and received messengers from them.

Phase Two

Soon after Paul left Corinth, other itinerant Christian teachers and leaders also came to town. A golden-tongued orator named Apollos, from Alexandria, impacted the Corinthian Christians greatly. He pleased the existing congregation and also brought in a new crowd, better-educated, and richer. They loved the rich rhetoric of Apollos. Later, the Apostle Peter himself came through town and added his leadership for a time.

All of this traffic must have been flattering to the fledgling Corinthian church, but it also caused some internal problems in the group. Partisan rivalries have emerged. Some remained strong Paul supporters, but others took up Apollos’ cause, and others still

gave their allegiance to Peter. Amid all this multiplicity, some members even decided to form a Christ party. (1 Corinthians 1.11-14)

In the time leading up to his letter, Paul also heard that in his absence some of the Corinthian Christians have lost their moral compass. “A man is sleeping with his father’s wife.” (1 Corinthians 5.1) Others were suing each other in Roman courts. Some within the community still want to eat dinner at the temples of their former gods, while others fear that old associations will tempt them away from their One God. These people aren’t caring for one another very well at their weekly meal together, and they aren’t deferring to one another very well in worship. To Paul this clearly indicated that his converts had not quite grasped the full importance of this new family they have in Christ.

It’s no wonder Paul writes! He knows a lot about what is going on in Corinth. He also knows that his authority with this group.

A Note on Paul’s People

Who was Paul’s main audience? Many times in his letter, Paul tells us he has been called to give his good news to the Gentiles. (e.g., Romans 1.13; Galatians 1.16)

In Acts, though, Luke seems to have an interest in the sequence that appears in Acts 18, where Paul goes to synagogues first, and then get persecuted, then go the Gentiles. Scholars call this part of Luke’s *Tendenz* – his tendency as an author with a theological purpose.

Paul’s letters and Acts together give us a more complete picture: Paul’s “target audience” was non-Jews, but as a Jew he naturally connected with other Jews when he came to cities.

Experiencing the Letter

Just a reminder: in first-century Corinth, the gathered community that Paul had formed would have experienced the letter together, read out orally. This was the custom for two reasons:

1. Only 10-15 percent of the population could read, so most of these new Christians would have been baffled before a page of text.
2. Even for those who could read, with no copy machines to mass-produce individual texts.

So we ought to picture one of Paul’s co-workers carrying this letter to leaders of the Corinthian church, those leaders assigning someone to read it aloud at the next

meeting, and the whole group – both pro-Paul and anti-Paul members – sitting on the edge of their seat to hear what the apostle would say to them.

Section One: Reconnecting (Chapters 1—4)

Paul begins the letter we call First Corinthians by reconnecting with the family. To do this, knowing that they have become divided and are at one another, he goes immediately to what they all have in common: the cross of Christ. “For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 1.18) For Paul, humanity is saved by God’s power, which is revealed in the ultimate emblem of weakness: Jesus’ death on a Roman cross. Paul knows that some think it foolish. To the world, celebrating such a humiliating, shaming death IS foolish. But to those who are being saved by it, it is “the wisdom of God.”

Next, Paul does something remarkable. He shows that the cross is more than God’s salvation. In fact, it dictates the very shape of Christian living – some call it “cruciform” – even the shape of Paul’s preaching. “When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.” (1 Corinthians 2.1-3)

The whole letter will build on this: for Paul, Christians live out the cross in our daily life. He never met Jesus, but he may as well have been at Caesarea Philippi with the twelve who heard Jesus say, “If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves, take up their crosses and follow me.” (Mark 8.34) Paul had his critics within the group. Some – possibly of a group that had been converted by Apollos’s ministry – thought the apostle’s rhetoric was not fancy enough. They knew a good wine when they tasted it, they extended their pinky finger properly when drinking tea, they had read the latest “in” books, and they preferred Apollos’s lofty words and refined manner. Paul answers, “My preaching is about the cross and it is shaped like the cross.”

After beginning with the cross, Paul turns to answer a couple Corinthian concerns. Some have said that Paul’s message didn’t challenge them enough. Perhaps Peter or another gave them sterner stuff. Or perhaps they think they have already become Advanced Placement Christians. Or maybe they think they’ve grown out of Paul’s 01 classes into Apollos’ graduate curriculum. Whatever the case, Paul explains that they weren’t ready for more challenge, and they aren’t ready now:

Brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving

according to human inclinations? For when one says, 'I belong to Paul', and another, 'I belong to Apollos', are you not merely human? (1 Corinthians 3.1-4)

They were new Christians before. Paul came with the basics. He may wish they have grown, but their divisions tell another story. For all their pretense, they're still immature in Christ.

If part of their problem is immaturity, Paul knows that they also have a basic level confusion about their various leaders' roles. So he turns to metaphors about building and planting. "I planted, Apollos watered, but God brought the growth..." (1 Corinthians 3.6) Paul laid a foundation, and Apollos and Peter built on it. (1 Corinthians 3.10) In each of these pictures, God is working in every phase. But Paul worries that some have stopped listening to him (which would make his letter much less effective!) so he is keen to re-establish his authority as the community's founder. He drives this home with his final metaphor: "Though you might have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers. Indeed, in Christ Jesus I became your father (literally: gave birth to you) through the gospel." (1 Corinthians 4.15)

All of these images have pointed to one conclusion. Paul needs to reclaim his authority as a leader: "I appeal to you, then, be imitators of me." (1 Corinthians 4.16; 11.1) If the first four chapters have done their job, the rest of the letter will be effective. If not, Paul has lost at least some of them. The tenor of Second Corinthians hints that there will remain a persistent and active group of Paul's detractors in this church

A New Standard (Chapters 5—14)

Time for a diagnosis. Thus far in this letter, Paul has called himself a farmer, a master builder, and a father. In an earlier letter to the Thessalonians, we discover that he also sees himself as a healthcare worker (1 Thessalonians 2, where he was "gentle as a nurse" among them). In this last role, his central diagnosis of the Corinthian illness is clear: arrogance. And this letter's very next words challenge their high estimate of themselves:

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Should you not rather have mourned, so that he who has done this would have been removed from among you? (1 Corinthians 5.1-2)

One of the Corinthian Christians is having an affair with his stepmother. It borders on incest – Paul says not even the naturally immoral pagans (non-Jews) would call this kosher – and Paul offers it as Exhibit A of the Corinthians' arrogance.

What is Paul's point?

First, this group needs a higher standard. To Jews of Paul's day – and therefore to the earliest Christian leaders -- Gentile culture was immoral, especially sexually. For Paul, this is true of all Gentiles. But Corinth takes it up a notch. The city was so well known for its sexual profligacy that Aristophanes, the great comic poet of Athens, coined the word *korinthiazesthai*, which meant "to fornicate." Philoeretus wrote a play called "Korinthiastes" – The Whoremonger – and Plato's "Korinthia Kore" meant "prostitute girl." You get the picture. From Paul's perspective, this church lives in Sin City.

What is the solution? Paul reframes their relativity. "Don't play down to your context, play up to the Holy One." To stop the cycle of relativity, Paul teaches them that their bodies are temples where God lives. "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?"

Paul's second point tells them why the standard even matters. Some of the Corinthians think their bodies are meaningless stuff. "Food for the stomach, the body for food, and God will destroy both one and the other." Physical matter doesn't matter. That's what some of the Corinthians think. Paul again reframes for them. "You were bought with a price," he says. God values their life in this body so much that Jesus died for them. "Therefore, glorify God in your body." (1 Corinthians 6.19)

Paul's two points speak to us, too, because you and I face the same problem the Corinthians faced: we live in a society that sets the bar low for us – in sexual morality and across the spectrum of our ethics. Popular media coaxes us to lose clarity – to objectify other people's bodies, to compromise our ideals because "everyone does it," to begin believing that license is freedom.

Solution #1: Paul's letter reminds us that God calls us to holiness – not better-than-thou righteousness, but a true commitment to be capable hosts for God's Spirit.

Solution #2: We also need to remember that what we do with our bodies (and others'!) matters enough to God for Jesus to put his on a Roman cross.

This is not a call to Victorian prudishness. It is a call to proper Christian value of the bodies God gave us – not as ornaments, but as homes for God's Spirit.

Pen Pals

We have in our New Testament two letters from Paul to the Corinthians. However, these were not the only two, and the epistolary communication was not unidirectional.

We know First Corinthians is not really Paul's first letter to this church, because he himself alludes to a previous note in 5.9.

I wrote to you in my letter...

We'll get back to the content of that note later. For now, it gives us access to prior correspondence – to which the Corinthians actually responded with their own letter. So, here's what we know about Paul's communications with the Corinthians after he left town.

- Paul himself mentions “my letter” – something he wrote to them about boundaries with the world – that precedes this one. (1 Corinthians 5.1)
- “Chloe’s people” have updated him on the current events in the group, which include divisions.
- The Corinthians have sent Paul a letter, too, with a list of their issues and confusions. (1 Corinthians 7.1)
 - Would it be extra spiritual for a married man not to have sexual relations with his wife. (1 Cor 7.1)
 - Is it better to stay a virgin/unmarried? (1 Cor 7.25)
 - Can a Christian continue to eat meat that has been sacrificed to a Greek or Roman god? (1 Cor 8.1)
 - What are spiritual gifts, and how do they work? (1 Cor 12.1)
- Paul writes the letter we call 1 Corinthians.
- Paul gets word from Corinth about the nature of the Corinthian response.
- Paul responds with what we call Second Corinthians. It may be one epistle, or it may contain several missives. (Some scholars say that 2 Corinthians is really a collection of small letters from Paul to this church.)

Paul and his churches knew one another, and they stayed in touch.

Notice how practical their questions are. Given the chance to ask four questions of Paul or your pastor, what would they be?

Divine Deference to the Other

The Corinthians need help! They are suing one another in Roman courts, some of them are frequenting prostitutes, while others think they have the moral restraint to refrain from sex even in marriage. Some fancy themselves all done with the “idols” of their former lives, while others feel very vulnerable to their allure. These practical issues of life lived individually and communally span the pages of this letter.

Paul offers help, but the Corinthians may not like that help. To all of these concerns, he gives the same answer over and over, but in different forms: defer to the other. Consider the needs of your Christian brother or sister even more than you consider your own. Do all of this for two reasons:

1. First, Jesus deferred. He did not consider his needs first, but the needs of others. The cross should be your guide. At letter's start, Paul said the cross shapes all Christian lives. Now he begins to apply that principle to everyday life.
2. Second, Jesus died for the people around you. Take their value seriously!

All of chapters 6—14 will continue the thrum, thrum, thrumming of this call to deference.

If someone has wronged you, don't take her to court. As a community, come up with some wise people who can discern your issues. And, absent that, it's better to be wronged than to wrong another. Here Paul sounds downright turn-the-other-cheek-ish: "In fact, to have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? ⁸But you yourselves wrong and defraud—and Christian brothers and sisters at that. (1 Cor 6.7-8)

In a marriage relationship, husbands defer to wives, and wives defer to husbands. One does not run the other. Each submits to the other. (1 Cor 7.1—24)

When you are deciding whether to marry or not, defer not to your own desires, but to the needs of the gospel. Do the thing that helps God do the most good through you in the church and world. (1 Cor 7.25-40)

If you "know" that idols are not real – if you feel firmly ensconced in the world of monotheism, you are not the only one at stake. Look around you in your Christian community, and you will notice people who are still tempted by idols. If you eat meat that has been sacrificed to those gods, you might cause your brother or sister to stumble. So...defer to their needs. If you need an example to follow, I (Paul) tried to defer to you all while among you, not taking money for my troubles but supporting myself with the work of my own hands. (1 Cor 8—10)

When you gather for worship, don't hustle to the food and leave others without any. The meal is about the community. Defer. (1 Corinthians 11)

When you assess what is most important in your worship community, try not to be enthralled by what is shiny and spectacular. Defer to what God is doing. Seek out the people who bring God's truth. Let true love be your principle – not seeking your own good but the good of others. (1 Corinthians 12—14)

Self-sacrifice is everywhere in 1 Corinthians. For Paul, Jesus' cross is not simply a pathway to afterlife: it is a way of life now. His creative interpretation and application of this "way of the cross" is the highest calling Christian disciples can receive.

How does the cross figure in your own moral calculus? Do you make decisions about how you will treat people on the basis of Jesus' willingness to die for all? If not yet, how would it look to do that? Imagine the day ahead of you. What would it be to live out the cross of Jesus through this day?

Paul and Women

I saw a comic strip once with a bald, bearded man walking down the ramp from a ship, next to a "Welcome to Corinth" sign. On the beach are angry-looking women marching with signs that say, "Go Home, Paul!" "Return the Tyrant to Tarsus," etc. The dialogue bubble next to Paul tells the story: "I see you got my letter."

Some Christians in our time refuse to read Paul's letters because they hear in them an anti-female screed. One of the offending articles is 1 Corinthians 14.

As in all the churches of the saints, women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. (1 Corinthians 14.33-35)

Taken by itself, and particularly through the eyes of 21st-century westerners, this passage feels Neanderthal. If the Wayzata Community Church congregation followed Paul's lead, wouldn't three of our six pastors would need to sit silently?! Reading it this way, some Bible readers simply stop here and stamp Paul: "REJECTED."

So, did Paul want women to shut up in church? Let's dig deeper, because this issue provides a case in point for always reading Bible verses in context.

Question 1: Did women participate in Paul's ministry?

Answer 1: Yes! In Romans 16, where Paul greets a laundry list of friends and fellow workers, he mentions: "our sister Phoebe, a deacon in the church at Cenchræa (just outside Corinth)...Prisca, who works with me in Christ Jesus, and who risked [her] neck for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles....Greet Mary, who has worked hard among you...Greet...Junia, who was in prison with me and is prominent among the apostles..." And the list goes on. The list of Paul's female "co-workers" in ministry is remarkable, and he sets them right next to (in fact in front of) the male co-workers. In this letter, in fact, Paul mentions his conversation with a group of people associated with a Christian leader named "Chloe."

Question 2: Did Paul want women to participate in worship leadership in Corinth?

Answer 2: Yes! Prophets were truth-tellers in Paul's churches: people who brought God's word to play in the context of their worship time together. In 1 Corinthians 14,

Paul urges the Corinthians to prize prophecy over all the spiritual gifts. And in 1 Corinthians 11, he treats the question how prophets should wear their hair or hats while prophesying. That has been an opportune time for Paul to say, “Only men can prophesy!” Instead, he goes to great (and somewhat strained) lengths to make way for female prophets. In other words, the ministry Paul recommended above all others was being carried out by Corinthian women prophets.

These two facts help us when we return to the “Let women be silent in the church.” Our options:

1. Paul is blatantly self-contradictory, urging women to speak in church in chapter 11 and then forbidding them to speak in church in chapter 14.
2. Paul didn’t write 1 Cor 14.33-35, which was added by a later editor along the way. (Some scholars have proposed this, though there is no manuscript evidence for it.)
3. Paul does not mean his “Silence!” absolutely, but rather in a situation he and the Corinthians both understand, but we may not.

Most likely, the right answer is #3. The setting is a worship gathering. Paul is explaining how God conducts worship through the people God has gifted to lead. Three times in that context, Paul uses the Greek verb “*sigatosan*”, which means “let them be silent.”

In 1 Cor 14.27-28, Paul says, “any who begin to speak in a tongue, but have no one present to interpret, *sigatosan* (let them be silent).”

In 1 Cor 14.29-30, Paul says, “any who are prophesying when another member of the group gets a fresh prophetic word from God, *sigatosan* (let them be silent).”

In 1 Cor 14.33-35, Paul says, “if women have questions during worship, let them be silent (*sigatosan*) and ask their questions later.”

The picture Paul paints is of an orchestrated worship service that is not to be interrupted by personal interest. The same logic that has guided the letter since chapter 6 pertains here: “Defer to the good of the community. Don’t interrupt with your question.”

This picture makes especial sense when we realize how rare it was for women to receive education in the Roman world. A new member of the group sees someone reading from a scroll and interpreting what the “book” says and has questions. For Paul, worship is the chief concern here. Chasing a curiosity can wait.

Unfortunately, literal readings of this passage out of context have been used to restrict the role of women throughout Christian history. Up to the present, even some people

who are trying to be faithful to God deny women the opportunity to minister and deny congregations the gifts of women – all because of 1 Corinthians 14.33-35.

I believe this fact would grieve Paul. Some of his most effective colleagues and partners were women. I imagine he would have felt very limited if they had not been free to minister alongside him. Paul was not an “enlightened” twenty-first century male. But in the context of male-female relations in first-century Rome, he was veritably liberationist. Women played a key role in his ministry. Women occupy the most valuable station in Corinthian worship at his urging. He puts women on an equal footing with men in marital relations (7.1-7).

I believe Paul would have cheered the great women leaders of Christianity, from his friends Priscilla and Phoebe to the 2nd-century martyrs, Perpetua and Felicitas, through the 12th century saint, Hildegard of Bingen, and on to St. Teresa of Avila and Mother Teresa of Calcutta. I believe he would have wanted to hear Barbara Brown Taylor and Joanna Adams and Lillian Daniel and Nadia Bolz-Weber preach. He would have listed, and then debated with them.

Whatever your interpretation of Paul’s teaching on women, my advice to followers of Jesus is this: keep reading him. Paul can hardly be blamed for the misinterpretation of his letter. And, as we have seen and will see, this well runs deep!

Resurrection

The fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians has supplied Easter sermons and sacred musicians for 2000 years. It’s beautiful. “O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?” The chorus echoes through the ages. As such, it is often treated as a stand-alone, an island to itself, ready to supply later liturgists and answer later skeptics. In our reading, though, we’ll treat this letter as a designed, interconnected whole. For that reason, we’ll ask the exegetical question, why does Paul feature the resurrection at the end of his letter?

The answer is complex. We’ll consider together several possible factors.

Partly, this is a reply to another Corinthian “issue” of which Paul has learned. 1 Corinthians 15.12, he writes, “how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” Some in Corinth have denied that people live after we die. In response, Paul recounts the early reports of Jesus’ resurrection, and then quickly moves from that event to the ultimate resurrection of all the faithful. “If Jesus rose from the dead, how can some of you still not believe that we will too?”

I believe, though, that Paul would have come to resurrection next, even if the Corinthians had not raised it. Because, as with Jesus, so with Paul, crucifixion, and the

cross-shaped living to which it calls the faithful are not the last word. For the Corinthians and for us, Jesus' resurrection, and our own supply the divine answer to our discipleship. Self-sacrifice is everywhere in 1 Corinthians. Jesus himself said, "If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me." (Mark 8.34) Whether Paul knew that Gospel saying or not, his way of imitating Jesus matched it. The long train of Paul's exhortation to deference, which spans chapters 6-14, must have felt demanding to the fledgling and often-self-centered Corinthian Christians. This letter has applied the cross of Jesus to all aspects of their daily lives and into their gathered life as a Christian community. Paul has met their self-interest with a relentless call to other-interest.

For Paul, then, the resurrection comes last, because it is the bright light that awaits deferential disciples. For, as much as we believe Jesus' words about "abundant life," faithful Christian disciples empty themselves for others. Resurrection lies ahead, not as some kind of reward for that faithfulness, but as a proper culmination. Ahead lies the entire fullness of God, experienced intimately and immediately. Paul lets a foretaste slip out in his immortal words about love: "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known." (1 Corinthians 13.12)

Resurrection is God's ultimate answer to the sacrifices of disciples' mortal life, and so it becomes an encouragement amid those sacrifices. After fifty-three verses he hopes will persuade the Corinthians to see Jesus' resurrection as the mere beginning of their own, Paul trumpets good news: "When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:

*'Death has been swallowed up in victory.'
'Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?'*

And then, without skipping a beat, he recalls them to this life and their deferential discipleship:

"Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." (1 Corinthians 15.54-55, 58)

We know not how the Corinthians responded to Paul's words on resurrection. But they weren't just for those ancients. By God's grace, these immortal words on immortality have traveled across space and time to us. So, how does resurrection change the way you live your daily life? Does your ultimate destination in the presence of God free you to give yourself out to others now?

We'll talk more. And I'll see you Monday night!