Alright, let’s go ahead and get started. One item of announcement before we get going is: your first quiz and exam of both been graded and maybe your second quiz. It's in the process of being put up on Blackboard now. So hopefully within the next day or two your scores will be up. So keep checking in Blackboard and in a while you also get you get the exams and quizzes back. You can ask to see them. But they'll be up in Blackboard before they get put back in your boxes. So just keep watching those, and hopefully within the next two days, you will be all caught up and on your scores for quizzes and exams. That's where you can find the scores from now on. We were the last class period talking about 1 Corinthians and a looking at a number of texts within 1 Corinthians attempting to reconstruct a plausible background and scenario for what the issue was that the author was addressing and how the author addresses that issue, etc. So we’ll look at another section of 1 Corinthians, actually two more sections one of them in a little more detail, one little more briefly, today.

But let’s open with prayer: Father we thank you for your faithfulness to us for sustaining us emotionally, spiritually and intellectually. I pray that we will concentrate all our abilities in thinking and to analyze and to ask the right questions in studying your word. As we look at 1 Corinthians, I pray that not only would we be able to analyze and understand it in light of its historical and cultural context but we would also understand it in light of our context today and how it continues to speak to us as your word to your people today. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Alright, to the wrap up our discussion of 1 Corinthians 11, we looked at the second half of 1 Corinthians 11 where Paul addresses the issue of the Lord's supper, or communion
or the Eucharist, depending on what you're used to calling it. I suggested that the way to understand that section of text especially when we come to the commands towards the end, when Paul tells them to examine themselves and not to partake of the Lord's supper in an unworthy manner, and we'll look at one other command just briefly, is we need to understand the context that gave rise to that. We said the social economic distinctions and this whole issue of status social status between the elite, wealthy and everyone else had now trickled down into the church. What had Paul so upset is that they perpetuating those social distinctions in the context of a meal that should have been celebrating their union and their unity as the one body of Christ and as God's people in light of the gospel, in light of the cross, Jesus’ death for them in light, of their union in the Christ. The Lord's supper should've been indicative that an expression of that, instead they were using the Lord's supper as an expression of the ongoing social economic distinctions of status that existed in secular Corinth that now had infiltrated the church. So Paul tells them that the command to examine themselves was not a command to think of all the sins you did and confess them. The taking the Lord's supper in an unworthy manner was not to take if you had forgotten some sins and didn't confess them all. Instead of those work it was directed at the specific situation. To participate in the Lord's supper in an unworthy manner was to do so in a way that promoted division. To use a meal that promoted or expressed the unity of God's people, to use it in a way that promoted and perpetuated the division and social economic division in the Corinthian church was unthinkable to Paul. So he says, examine yourself, that is, make sure that you understand the significance of the Lord's supper and you're using it in a way not to create and promote the division in the church.

I would suggest today that the same thing holds. The primary sin that one needs to realize and examine is taking the Lord's supper when we have dispute and division with someone else in the body of Christ. That seems to be the primary problem that had Paul so upset.

So towards the very end of the chapter then, verse 33 says, “So then my brothers and sisters when you come together to eat, wait for one another.” That is, the problem was most
likely the wealthy members arrived at church first, perhaps because they were less encumbered by the need to work and the poorer members who had to work longer hours would arrive at church later and would actually be in a separate room in the house church and would be served different lesser food as well. So Paul now says, instead, wait for each other that is make sure that you eat this meal together as an expression of your unity in Christ. No more using this meal as a means of perpetuating these social distinctions that are found in secular Corinth. So instead, wait for each other and eat this meal together expressing your equality as members of the body of Christ which Paul will talk about in this image of the body of Christ: unity. Paul will continue to talk about that in chapters 12 and 14.

Alright, so chapters 12 to 14 then brings us to the next major text that I want to talk about briefly. Notice how it begins in verse 1 of chapter 12: “Now concerning spiritual gifts.” Actually we see that Paul often introduces when he starts to deal with the different problems that have been made known to him in the Corinthian church by word of mouth or by written form, he often signals out by this phrase, “now concerning meat offered to idols,” “now concerning spiritual gifts,” “now concerning the matters about which you wrote,” etc. etc. So that, “now concerning” is a sign posted that Paul is introducing a new problem that he will now address. This problem though is similar to chapter 11 in that they both occur within the context of the church as it gathers for worship. In fact, most of the issues Paul deals with in 1 Corinthians do. He's not so much addressing what they do at home, although he's concerned about that, he’s not so much addressing their lives at home or out in the workplace; but he is addressing what the church does when it comes together. All of chapter 11 of 1 Corinthians deals with problems that emerge when the Corinthian church comes together for its worship.

The same is true of chapter 12 through 14. Chapters 12 through 14 address a problem that emerges when the Corinthians meet together for worship. I would suggest to you that the problem is similar to chapter 11 in that it's a problem that would have reflected some of the ideals or values in the secular Corinthian society and now that has infiltrated
the church and caused a number problems that Paul's now going to address. So chapters 12 through 14: let me just read the first portions. These chapters 12 through 14 have become kind of the common overarching theme is the church and its use of spiritual gifts. We’ll talk a little bit about that and what problem was but starting with chapter 12: “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says ‘Let Jesus be cursed!’ and no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.”

Well what is Paul doing? First of all we need to ask what is the problem that Paul seems to be addressing. Why did he have to sit down and talk about spiritual gifts? First of all, just very quickly, I would define the spiritual gift according to this context as: it is any ability supernatural or natural that is energized by the Holy Spirit and used for the building up of the entire church.

So Paul is concerned with the Corinthians having apparently exercised and received and being aware of these gifts that the Holy Spirit has as poured on them in order for the church to grow and to be built up. Yet Paul is also aware that they are being abused. Now here I think is the problem when you read chapters 12 through 14. It appears that once again the Corinthians were using spiritual gifts to further promote this distinction in status. So the social economic status that we have seen in a number of issues; the patron
client relationship, the clamoring force for a following among the leaders, and in boasting in their social status, the division between the wealthy elite and the poor. Now that had infiltrated the church and was also affecting their view of spiritual gifts.

That went something like this: some of the Corinthians most likely the elite, the socially elite and wealthy in society, were associating their elite wealthy social status with certain gifts that they thought went along with that status, mainly their ability to speak in tongues. The ability to speak in the first century was a supernatural gift that under the Holy Spirit one could speak in a language, either a different language or some would even say a heavenly exalted language that’s not identifiable with a human language, but that the ability to do that having never studied or learned that language before. Now some of the Corinthians were promoting this gift of tongues, the ability to supernaturally speak in a different tongue. They were promoting that as a sign of their spiritually elite status. Everyone else was obviously at a lesser status demonstrated by the fact that they did not possess that gift.

Now one of the reasons for this is to understand that the Corinthians and Christianity was not the only religion in that day to have a phenomenon like tongues. Speaking in some other language or some ecstatic type of speech. Interestingly, other religions also had ecstatic type of speech where one would speak in a different tongue or language. Interestingly, a lot of other religions associated that with a socially elite status.

So think about it, the Corinthians perhaps coming out of the situation many of them belonging to these different pagan religions who had belonged to religions where tongues or ecstatic speech was associated with a certain social status now that was being transferred into their newfound Christian faith. So in the church, again, probably the more socially elite and wealthy members of the church were boasting in their ability to speak in tongues as a sign of their elite spiritual and social status. Just as they perhaps had learned in other pagan religions; now that have been carried over into Christianity. So that what has Paul so upset. That is the attitude in the problem that he is going to try to combat.

So the way he does that is, Paul demonstrates in chapters 12 through 14, Paul is
basically going to demonstrate that no one gift manifests, and noticed the English
translation, called these gifts are “manifestations of the Spirit.” In other words, no single
gift is a sign that someone has the Holy Spirit more than any other. That's why Paul
mentions this, did you catch that list of gifts. Paul says, “to one is given to the spirit that the
utterance or spirit of wisdom, to another knowledge according to the same spirit, to another
the gift of faith, to another gifts of healing,” etc. etc. What's Paul doing? He’s simply trying
to show that tongues is only one possible gift and has no pride of place over any other. All
these gifts whether it's miracles of healing, works of faith or the ability to speak knowledge
or whatever, they all equally manifest or show the Spirit. So how dare the Corinthians
isolate or elevate one gift as a sign that somehow they have arrived spiritually or they have
possessed spiritually and socially elite status. All these gifts equally show and manifest the
Spirit.

Did you notice the other thing about that list is that Paul lists the very last gift on that
list is tongues? That is because again that was the one that the Corinthians were blowing
out of proportion. So Paul puts it on the end of the list because he’s leveling the playing
field. Paul is trying to demonstrate the same God and the same Holy Spirit is behind every
gift equally. So the person that has the gift of faith doesn't have any less of the Holy Spirit
then the person who speaks in tongues. The person that speaks in tongues does not have
any more of the Holy Spirit then someone who exercises the gift of hospitality or other
possible gifts. So the Corinthians had a presumably kind of the hierarchy of gifts where
tongues was at the top. Now Paul takes that and levels the playing field so that all gifts are
an equal level. So Paul's instruction is no more promoting certain gifts as a sign of your
spiritual status. Everyone equally possesses the spirit because every gift equally shows the
Spirit, no matter how insignificant or menial it might appear.

That’s why Paul also evokes the body imagery. He’ll compare the church to a body
which was not unusual. This is not new for Paul. Other writers in the Greek world
compared different institutions and associations to a physical body to express its unity but
the fact that also manifests diversity. So notice that Paul says in verse 12, “For just as the
body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” Now listen to this, Paul then will elaborate on this body imagery. Notice what he is doing: he's trying to level the playing field to show that all the gifts are of equal importance. He says, “Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but many. If the foot would say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be?” Do you see what Paul is doing. Imagine how grotesque it would be if you consisted of one gigantic eyeball or one gigantic ear. It's ridiculous. And Paul's whole reasoning then is no more true in the physical realm than it is in the spiritual realm. So for the Corinthians to promote one gift as somehow being more indicative of possessing the Spirit is equivalent to having a body that consist of just a gigantic eyeball or an ear or a foot or something like that. For the body to function properly it requires all the parts working in tandem although in their diversity they contribute to unity and so the physical body then provides a perfect illustration of what Paul wants to get at. There's no one gift that is any more important than the other. How dare the Corinthians exalt or promote the gift of tongues as a sign that some of them are of a spiritually elite or socially elite status.

In fact, notice how he begins, before he ever talks about spiritual gifts he says in verse three: “No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.” Why did he say that? Because he’s saying that the true evidence that one possesses the spirit is not speaking in tongues or miracles or any other gift. The true evidence is the ability to confess Jesus Christ as Lord. It's almost as if Paul is saying if you've done that that is proof that you have received God's Holy Spirit because no one can confess that apart from the Holy Spirit. So again Corinthians no more boasting in certain spiritual gifts, no elevating tongues or any other gift as a sign that you have the spirit or as a sign that someone else doesn't. Instead, all the gifts equally manifest the Spirit and all the gifts contribute to the working the one
body in the same way as all the body parts that contribute to the operation of the physical body on the physical plain.

Now, in chapter 12, Paul ends by saying, “but strive for the greater gifts and I will show you more excellent way.” First of all, what does Paul mean when he tells them to strive for greater gifts? But I thought he just said that the playing field is level. There is no gift greater than any other; all gifts equally show the Spirit. Why now does Paul all of a sudden tell the church to strive for the greater gifts? The other thing is when you read chapters 12 through 14, chapter 13 seems to be an intrusion at first glance. That famous “Love chapter” that we read it at weddings and things like that. My wife and I had it read of our wedding. Chapter 13 “love is kind, love is patient,” etc. etc. We often take that out of its contextual environment in 1 Corinthians and read it on various occasions. 1 Corinthians 13 does have a poetic quality that allows us to do that with it. But I want to return to ask: what is chapter 13 doing there because if you took out chapter 13, chapter 12 would lead very naturally into chapter 14? So we will come back and ask what is chapter 13 doing there?

But if we do that I want to ask the question what are the greater gifts that Paul has in mind in chapter 13? Because chapter 14 begins: “Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.” Now, the greater gift, when Paul says, “pursue the greater gifts” I am convinced that he means prophecy in 1 Corinthians chapter 14. So chapter 12 that ends with the command strive for the greater gifts, then leads naturally to chapter 14 were Paul’s going to talk about the gift of prophecy and what it is and how the Corinthians should use it. But the question becomes again: why Paul called this a greater gift? And why is he telling them to strive for prophecy? I thought he was trying to do away with this idea that certain gifts are better than others and level the playing field. Why does he tell them to strive for the gift of prophecy?

Prophecy, it seems to me, is simply the ability to communicate a message, an intelligible message, to God's people. Again remember we are in the context of the church. In chapter 12 through 14, Paul is not addressing what the Corinthians do in their homes or in the workplace, he's addressing what they do when they come together for worship in
what we would say, is their church service. Why do you think Paul tells them to pursue the 
greatest gift which is prophecy? Why would he do that? Especially when he’s tried to tell 
them there's no gift is greater than the other, how dare you elevate tongues or any other gift 
as a sign that you have more the spirit? Now he says by the way, I want you to pursue 
prophecy the greater gifts which I think in chapter 14 is prophecy. All of chapter 14 is 
devoted to this gift of prophecy; the ability to speak an intelligible message to the people of 
God for their building up within the context of the church. Okay, because it's the most 
useful gift for the entire church.

Again notice what he says back in chapter 12. He said that the purpose of gifts. 
 Numerous times, he said the purpose of gifts was for the building up of the entire church or 
to use his metaphor--the body of Christ. Now notice in chapter 14, he says, “Pursue love 
and strive for the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy. For those who speak 
in a tongue do not speak to other people but to God; for nobody understands them, since 
they are speaking mysteries in the Spirit.” Now Paul doesn’t say that’s wrong, he just says 
that is a reality. Tongues is primarily for the benefit of the person speaking in tongues. On 
the other hand, verse 3 says, “On the other hand, those who prophesy speak to other people 
for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. Those who speak in a tongue 
build up themselves, [which is not wrong, Paul’s just saying that’s just the way it is, 
tongues are primarily of benefit for the one speaking in tongues] but those who prophesy 
build up the church.” So again why Paul emphasizes tongues is not because he contradicts 
what he said earlier that all gifts are equal, but he’s counteracting what the Corinthians are 
doing.  The Corinthians are boasting. Not only are they guilty of boasting in their social 
status and causing more division but they’re also emphasizing a gift that is primarily 
beneficial to one person--the person speaking in tongues. Where Paul would rather 
remember the context here is the church when they gather for worship, when the church 
gathers for worship, Paul would rather that they pursue prophecy. Why? Because it is 
intelligible and of immediate benefit to everyone. As he said, “the one who prophesies 
speaks to everyone.” The one who prophesies speaks an intelligible message that everyone
can hear and benefit from. The one who speaks in tongues basically speaks to God speaking mysteries that not everyone may benefit from. So what Paul is saying is:

“Corinthians when you gather for worship, pursue those gifts that are intelligible that have an immediate effect of building up the entire body of Christ. Not tongues, which, again, Paul is fine with that and wants them to speak in tongues but not when you gather for worship. You should primarily pursue prophecy because it's prophecy that is an intelligible message that the one receives from Lord and communicates to the church as a whole. Since it's understandable and intelligible it has the best chance of building up the whole body of Christ. Where as one who speaks in tongues may be uttering mysteries that not everyone understands.

QUESTION

Again probably when Paul says, “I’d like every one of you to speak in tongues” I think that is part of his rhetoric and his argument again he is saying, tongues is fine but when it comes to worship. Paul argues like that throughout Corinthians. He’ll agree with something to say, “Yes you're right; however you've missed the point.” So “yes it be great if everyone would speak in tongues,” my paraphrase. “Yes it be great if you all spoke in tongues, but when you gather together as a church it's a time for building up the entire body of Christ. Prophecy is the gift that has the best chance of doing that. So therefore pursue the best gifts.” Very good question. I should have talked to you before I taught this class to anticipate all your questions.

QUESTION

That's right Paul does say if it is going to be used it requires an interpreter because that's the only way that it could be intelligible to the entire church right.

I would want to ask: why is that the case? Again following Paul's advice what I resist is not so much how many people speak in tongues or whether the whole church, it's why that's the case. I think following Paul's instructions there are two ends of the spectrum. Some have suggested tongues is no longer a valid gift for today. With the completion of the New Testament now that we have the full revelation of God, we don't
need tongues. It was only for the first century and is no longer valid today.

At the opposite end of the stream, at the other end of the spectrum, is some of the more charismatics. I'm not labeling all charismatic movements the same. But some of them still see tongues as a criteria for having received the spirit. In other words, it's not just enough to become a Christian, to express your faith in Christ; at some point you must speak in tongues and receive the Holy Spirit. But that seems to be the very thing Paul is speaking out against that tongues is a necessary sign that one has the Spirit. So, in principle I'm not against an entire church speaking in tongues. What I think I'm against, not because I'm against it but because I think if I'm reading 1 Corinthians correctly is suggesting that everyone has to speak in tongues as a sign that one is spiritual and has received the spirit. That seems to be the very thing Paul is acting against. So my question would not be whether tongues exist, I think tongues still are valid. I don't see anything in 1 Corinthians that said it was only for the first century and is no longer valid. I think it is and I've known persons who spoke in tongues. But what I do think is incorrect is when it's made a criteria that one has the Spirit and its forced upon everyone that all have to speak in tongues as a sign you received the spirit. That's exactly what Paul is saying is not true.

QUESTION:

Tongues does seem to be a fairly diverse phenomenon in a sense. You go back to Acts 2, when we talked about Acts 2, of course, you remember that. When the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the people in fulfillment of the Old Testament they spoke in tongues. And there's some evidence in the text that a lot of that was a recognizable languages that some of them recognize their language. But 1 Corinthians talks about it in terms of “speaking mysteries to God.” It seems that it could be also something else. So I'm not sure what I think about that but, certainly, I don't think we can pin it down and say this is what tongues is and what it always looks like. But again, I think the main thing is for churches to ask what they're doing or what’s their emphasis. What is the function of tongues? It's interesting that when the church comes together the very thing that some people emphasize is the very thing that Paul says should be deemphasized, that is, what should be emphasized
when the church gathers together is the building up of the entire body of Christ, not what benefits me or shows that I have the Spirit or something like that. Good questions.

A couple of the things about this text too that I would suggest are interesting because of this background, it does not appear that Paul gives us anything close to complete list of the gifts--of all the gifts. I think he's just giving a representative list just to show the Corinthians there are a variety of ways the Spirit shows himself within the church. In fact, when you identify the New Testament talks about spiritual gifts it is found in just a handful of places. There's a section in Ephesians 4. There's another section in Romans 12. We looked at Romans already but didn't spend time in chapter 12 where there other gifts mentioned. Some of them overlap with this list here in 1 Corinthians 12. Other gifts mentioned in those passages are in addition. But even when you add them all up, I don't think the New Testament authors intention was ever to say this is a complete list of all the gifts. In fact, I'm convinced that Paul would've thought that the way the Holy Spirit can work is simply too diverse to ever pin it down to a simple list of gifts. So Paul is simply saying here's an example of the kinds of ways the Spirit manifests itself, as opposed to giving you an exhaustive list. For me that's important because when I was growing up, maybe some of you have done this, again I'm kind of getting pastoral now but I took one of those spiritual gifts inventory tests. You answer all these questions.

Paul wants to show them that the Holy Spirit cannot be limited to any one gift. All of the gifts equally show the spirit and he gives them just a sample list. So there's probably a lot of variety in the way that we approach spiritual gifts, how we figure them out, and whether we have more than one gift, whether some gifts can be developed and whether we can change gifts, etc. Paul doesn't answer those questions and there’s probably room for some differences in opinion in those areas. But the primary thing from 1 Corinthians is to make sure we use them in a way that immediately builds up in the body of Christ, the church, when it gathers for worship. There's no room for a promoting our own spiritual experience or emphasizing our own spiritual or social status by virtue of what certain a gift or position we occupy in the church. Paul rules that out of bounds immediately.
Having said that, what about that chapter 13, that’s kind of thrown in the middle--this famous “Love chapter.” Again I won't read the whole thing but it begins: “if I speak.” It's clear that Paul does tie it in with his this discussions of gifts because when he talks about gifts he doesn't just talk about love in chapter 13. He begins by saying, “If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.” But now notice Paul’s going to turn back to the spiritual gifts “But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will come to an end.” Then he ends by saying, “And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.”

Now a couple of questions to answer, first of all why does Paul single out love. We’ll ask that in a moment: Why this chapter on love is right here where it is? But why does Paul single out love as one of the greatest of these gifts? He says, “and now faith, hope and love--the greatest is love. You need faith in Jesus Christ. It is important. Or hope expresses my expectation of the fulfillment of all God's promises for salvation that we will one day enter into in the future, certainly that's important too. Why do you think he isolates love at this point?

(QUESTION)

OK. So love then could be the visible manifestation. If one really has faith and hope it will demonstrate itself in love. Good!

Student Answer.
Ok. If they act out of love then that will be evident, visible, apart from these gifts.

Good. I wonder and I'm not fishing for one particular answer. I think those are all right. I wonder too, when you look at those three things, it's always puzzled me why Paul would emphasize love when you look at those three. It's love that is the character that we can see most reflected in God's character. Never does it say “God believes” or that “God hopes and expects,” but he does love and God is love. So I wonder if part of it is out of those three it's love that God himself reflects and does and it is by loving not so much by believing and hoping but loving that we reflect God’s character and his loving attributes and his loving activity as well.

Question:

Response: Okay, yeah, right that could be. Certainly we’ll no longer have to hope for heaven because we’ll be participating in that. But love will still remain. There is nothing that says we will stop loving once we get to heaven. Good!

Question:

It might also reflect Jesus command, that the greatest commandment is: “you should love the Lord your God and your neighbors yourselves.” That might be way exactly right.

Why is chapter 13 here? Especially since chapter 12 if chapter 13 were missing you could glide very naturally transitioning from chapter 12 right into 14. Why is chapter 13 here? We all know it's about love. It does have a poetic quality that allows it to be removed from its contextual environment and moorings and be utilized in different contexts such as weddings, etc. But what in his literary context? What is chapter 13 doing here in the middle of this discussion?

Again in chapter 13 Paul does mention tongues and prophecy so there is obviously some connection. But what is it? Why at this point does he launch into this kind of exalted prose or almost a poetic type of text, exalting the virtues of love? Why here?

Okay. Back down to reality then would be not using these gifts as the Corinthians were to boast about their status. So, in other words, again think of his description of love in chapter 13 when he says, “love is patient, love is kind, it's not boastful, or arrogant, or rude,
it does not insist on its own way” etc. etc. “It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all
things, and endures all things.” I think what Paul is saying is: if you exemplify this kind of
love then you will not be using your gifts as a way of boasting in your spiritual status.
Instead, if you have the kind of love described in chapter 13, that will be manifest in using
your gifts for the building up of the entire body of Christ, not just yourself.

So I think this chapter is completely pertinent to what Paul is doing. Again if they
will exemplify the kind of love in chapter 13 they will not boast in their spiritual status and
gifts or social status. Instead they will only pursue the gifts if they really have the true love
as spelled out in chapter 13, then they will pursue those gifts that are relevant for the entire
body of Christ. They will be concerned for the building up of the entire church and not just
what benefits them. So chapter 13, I think we missed something. It's not wrong to take
chapter 13 out and use it other contexts about love but also with remember why Paul put it
here as it has to do with if they have that kind of love in the use gifts appropriately in the
church for the building up the body of Christ not for boasting about their spiritually elite
status and things like that.

Alright, any other questions on 12 -14? Again Paul doesn't tell us everything there
is to know about spiritual gifts. How many are there?  How do you find them, or how do
you discover your gift?  He’s not interested in those questions. He's addressing a very
specific problem and only communicates the information necessary to address that
problem. That’s probably why you don't find the issue mentioned other letters of Paul
because it wasn't a problem. It seemed to have been in the Corinthian church but probably
most other churches it wasn’t a big issue so he never really says much about it.

QUESTION:

ANSWER: Yeah, I don’t know if I want to say that Christianity borrowed it from
other religions. It's simply that other religions emphasized it. Just like other religions
emphasize singing, and praising that doesn't mean necessarily that Christianity borrowed it
from them, it just means that was an area of similarly. So all I'm saying is that Christianity
may not have borrowed tongues from any other religion, it’s just that that was an area of
similarly that may have caused the problem. If some of the Corinthians did belong religions where there was ecstatic type of speech and may have associated it with their elite status, they may have carried it over into Christianity or had a similar phenomenon. That's a very good point. Yes, I don't want to say that Christianity borrowed tongues speaking from other religions they just may have had similar phenomenon and some the Corinthians were perhaps carrying over what they may have learned in certain religious context in their use of tongues into Christian context. That's a good point.

QUESTION:

Response: Sure, yeah, you’re right. Most of the stuff Paul condemns in Corinthians is what seems to have come from secular Corinthian culture from either just their political culture, historical culture, background, or religious background, is that had now infiltrated the church. One well-known New Testament scholar wrote a book called: “After Paul left Corinth.” That was his thesis that after Paul established his church we read about in Acts 18, after he left Corinth then all these problems that came from secular Corinth, their religions, their political background etc. they now are creeping into the church and causing all these problems; especially problems related to status, class and social distinctions within religions and within other sectors of Corinthian life. Good!

Chapter 15 is probably the longest and most sustained treatment by Paul or any New Testament author on the topic of resurrection. Where Paul begins by discussing Jesus’ resurrection, the fact that Jesus has arisen and this is part of the early apostles teaching that had been passed on in the early church. So Paul says, “I passed on to you, what was passed on to me” which got into technical language of passing on a tradition and part of that was that Jesus died, he was buried and he rose again as well. And then after that, through the rest of chapter 15, Paul launches into a more detailed discussion of resurrection in general--the validity of understanding physical resurrection in general. So what is interesting is chapter 15 seems to be a defense of Paul for a physical bodily resurrection not primarily of Jesus Christ, although that's an important that’s the center of it, but he argues for our resurrection as well. The fact that there must be a physical resurrection at the end of
history, and we’ll see why that's important, but let's think again for a moment. Why would Paul need to address that? Does Paul just stop, think I haven’t said anything about the resurrection of Christ. We’ve kind of gotten off topic and the gifts things, we better get back to Christ so I’ll talk about his resurrection. Why do you think Paul had to address that issue? Because from what we seen so far every chapter appears to be addressing a specific problem in the Corinthian church. Why now do you think that Paul needed to address the issue of physical resurrection? Any guesses?

**ANSWER**

Alright, so maybe this kind of platonic thinking of the distinction between the physical and the spiritual had at some level infiltrated the Corinthian church. And maybe in combination with other features that, now led to the denial, not so much a general resurrection, but a physical resurrection because they may have argued the appropriate resurrection is going to be a spiritual one and not a physical one, because of this kind of platonic type thinking that the physical is not important but the true reality is what is spiritual. I think you’re right. Notice too that with chapter 15 you don't really have a break with chapter 14. Interestingly, in other words, you don't have in chapter 15 “now concerning the resurrection.” You’ve had “now concerning those things you wrote me about,” “now concerning this,” “now concerning meat offered to idols,” “now concerning spiritual gifts,” and now that’s absent. He just launches in “now I would remind you of the good news I proclaimed which you in turn received in which also you stand.” Then he goes on and launches into a discussion, not so much a defense or apologetic, but as a reminder of Jesus resurrection and its importance.

I wonder too if this dualistic type thinking would've also been reflected in following hard on the heels of chapter 12 of 14. This spiritually the fact that some of them thought that they had arrived spiritually, were of the spiritually elite status, meant that there was no need of anything else in the physical resurrection. So that again the idea that certain gifts demonstrated that their spiritually elite status the implication was therefore there's no need for physical resurrection because I've arrived spiritually. All I need is spiritual resurrection
now or in the future perhaps. So now Paul in addressing that thinking again along with this platonic type dualism, now has to remind them and argue for the necessity of not just the resurrection but a physical resurrection in bodily form, not just a spiritual resurrection.

What Paul will do basically in chapter 15, there’s more than this, but just two key things he argues: number one is he tells them, he tells the Corinthians if you deny physical resurrection then you deny that Christ physically rose from the dead. That has serious implications, Paul will say, if that's true then your faith is in vain. I like to tell people if someone could prove to me beyond a shadow of a doubt Jesus Christ did not raise from the dead, I be one of the first to scrap my Christianity. That’s basically what Paul saying. If Jesus didn’t rise from the dead you're still dead in sins. You have no hope whatsoever. Christianity's a fake without the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. So that the first thing he says by denying the physical resurrection the Corinthians have also denied Christ’s resurrection, and that has serious implications for their faith.

But the second thing he said he argues is in order for the last enemy to be defeated, the physical resurrection must take place. So Paul makes it clear the last enemy to be defeated is death. If death is going to be defeated that requires not just a spiritual resurrection but a physical one as well. I think reflection on this passage may help us to at times to rethink and challenge some of our conceptions of what we think of being a Christian means and our future hope. It is interesting Paul is clear that our salvation and our future hope contains a physical earthly element to it.

I like to tell people, at the risk of being mis-understood, “I don't know about you but I'm not going to heaven and hopefully you are not either.” When I read 1 Corinthians 15, my ultimate destiny is not some heavenly existence floating around in clouds playing harps. How boring! What a boring existence if that's what heaven is like. But Paul's convinced from Genesis chapter 1 from the creation of humanity God created us to a live and exist as physical beings on a physical earth. And so Paul, again naturally envisions that our ultimate existence is not escaping, it’s not the immaterial part escaping the physical body; that was a Gnostic platonic type idea. But our salvation consists of not only saving
our souls, some of the jargon we often use in Christianity to save our souls. It's not just saving my spirit or soul, but my body as well. Therefore Paul argues for the physical resurrection as a necessary part of our salvation. And as we'll see when we get the Revelation, it's interesting the last two chapters of Revelation have us ending up not in heaven, but on a new earth. So I think chapter 15 challenges us to rethink our understanding of Christian existence, and what that means for now and in the future. God's intention for us has always been a physical bodily existence. Yes, it will be a very different one stripped of all the effects of sin and death, but it will be a physical bodily existence nonetheless. Paul is convinced that is the case and argues for it in 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

Alright, what is the major theme of 1 Corinthians and that is always dangerous. I don't know, I shouldn’t say as it’s dangerous at times. It may not be necessary to boil a book down the one theme. There's no reason why a book cannot have more than one theme, or the author try to accomplish more than one thing at the same time. But I used to think that the main theme was the unity of the church because a number of the problems in Corinthians stem from disunity, this idea of social classes and this elitism causing division in the church. But now I think I'm more convinced that the main theme is probably the church's purity in the midst of a secular culture. All of the problems in Corinthians seem to stem from allowing the values, attitudes, and morality of the secular Corinthian culture to infiltrate the church and that's what caused many of these problems to emerge. Paul's consistent response where he often compares the church to a Temple and to the Old Testament people of God, in Corinth his consistent response is for the church to pursue purity and to remain pure in the midst of the secular culture in which they live. So I think if I were to choose a theme for Corinthians, it would be the purity of the church in the midst of the pagan culture in which it finds itself. All the problems seem to stem from allowing that to infiltrate church.

Alright, I will see you Wednesday and for an exam,… no that’s another class.