

Introduction to the New Testament History and Literature

Lecture 15: Paul as Pastor

Transcript

<https://oyc.yale.edu/religious-studies/rfst-152/lecture-15>

Overview

1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians give us several snapshots of the development of the Corinthian church and Paul's relationship to it. In 1 Corinthians Paul is concerned with controversies that have been dividing the church, most probably along social status lines. The issues causing controversy include whether one should eat food sacrificed to idols, how one ought to conduct oneself sexually, the practice of speaking in tongues, and how Christians will be resurrected from the dead. 2 Corinthians shows that these issues seem to have been resolved. However, 2 Corinthians 10-13 (probably a separate letter) presents Paul in a defensive posture, struggling to justify his position over and against the new "super apostles" that have infiltrated the Corinthian church.

1. Paul to the Corinthians about the Resurrection of the Dead

[1] *Professor Dale Martin:* The situation with Paul's church in Corinth is very different from the situation we saw in 1 Thessalonians. 1 Thessalonians shows us a church that is new in its infancy, it has just been founded. 1 Corinthians shows us a church in its sort of adolescent period. They've had some growing pains, and they've got some problems, but you can tell that they're not all brand new Christians. Look at 1 Corinthians 15—take your Bibles out, remember you have to follow along—1 Corinthians 15; this is when Paul is addressing the issue of the resurrection of the body.

[2] Early Christian groups wrestled with the kind of question that people sometimes still do which is, what happens to you when you're dead? Are you dead like Rover and dead all over or does your soul go off to some other place, or does some part of you get reincarnated into somebody else's body? In the orthodox Christian confessions, you confess the resurrection of the body at the end of time, at the end of this worldly time. So Christians were dealing with this stuff. Paul has to address this question in 1 Corinthians 15 because there's some confusion or some debate in the church there. Read along with

me. 1 Corinthians 15:20, I'm going to skip around a bit but I'm going to cover a lot of ground in this lecture. You need to really follow along in the text as best you can so you don't get confused with where I am. 1 Corinthians 15:20:

[3] But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being. For as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and every power.

[4] Notice the resurrection of Jesus for Paul, this is going to be very important, the resurrection of Jesus for Paul is not different in kind from the resurrection that Christians can expect. The resurrection of Christians' bodies will be just like the resurrection of Jesus' body in kind. That's important because a whole lot of people think that what Jesus experienced, what the early Christians believe about Jesus, was something very different from what they confess about Christians, but for Paul they're the same kind of resurrection. That's why he

just calls Christ's resurrection "the first fruits." It's just the first apple on the tree, it just lets you know that harvest time is now here, but it's just the first apple, you'll have lots of other apples. Christ's resurrection is the first fruits and then there's a big war type thing and then Christ defeats all the rulers, and the authorities, and powers on earth and hands over the kingdom. Verse 25: "For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet, for the last enemy to be destroyed is death." That's good enough for that point, but now skip down to verse 35.

[5] What happens is that some people in Corinth are questioning this. Now what are they questioning? Are they saying that people don't live forever at all or that there's no afterlife experience? It looks like not, it looks like what they're really questioning is simply the resurrection of the body idea, because of course they're saying—they might be thinking like a lot of people in the ancient world, there were other—lots of Jews believed in the resurrection of the body and so it was an idea that was not unknown to people but think if the people in the ancient world also objected by saying, but how is that possible? We all know the body rots when you put it in the ground, it just decomposes and it just becomes all little molecules of other things, and how did—then that grows into trees and other grass, the molecules from a dead body become recycled in the universe. The ancient people knew this, they would even say, what about sailors who were lost at sea and fish eat their bodies, and then other fish eat those bodies of those fish, and then other fish eat those bodies of those fish, and then maybe one of those fish gets caught and you eat that body. You have some of the little pieces of Fred the sailor in your body, how is God going to pull all that stuff together and resurrect that body?

[6] This was a debate that people in the ancient world had too. Apparently some of the people in Corinth are having this same kind of idea. How is this possible? Paul addresses that.

Someone will ask, "How the dead are raised? With what kind of body do they come?" Fool! [that's just what it says] what you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives

it a body as he has chosen and to each kind of seed its own body. [Just like a seed goes into the ground, what comes up is a flower or plant, it doesn't look like the seed, it's not even necessarily all the same complete stuff, its new stuff, but it's still continuous with it.] Not all flesh is alike, but there is one flesh for human beings, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish.

[7] Now notice that's in kind of a hierarchy there of beings. Humans are higher than animals, animals are higher than birds, birds are higher than fish on this kind of ontological scale of different kinds of bodies that Paul is working with here. This is a common assumption in the ancient world also. There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. What are earthly bodies? Ours, this, dogs, cats, everything's a body that's physical for these people. What are the heavenly bodies? The sun, the moon, and the stars; all these things are themselves in ancient ideas bodies that simply actually are fixed into a kind of a dome that's the sky and they travel around on that dome. The earth—all these things in the sky are also bodies.

The glory of the heavenly is one thing that of the earthly is another. There is one glory for the sun, another glory for the moon, another glory for the stars. Indeed star differs from star in glory [again, a hierarchy of different kinds of bodies] so it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. [Now here you get into a translation problem. My translation here says in verse 44:] It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.

[8] Does anybody's translation have something different at that verse?

[9] *Student:* [Inaudible]

[10] *Professor Dale Martin:* "It is sown a natural body and it is raised in a spiritual body," is that what it says? Anybody else have a different translation for those? The problem is the word translated "physical" here is not really the Greek word "physical." There is a Greek word "physical." What they're talking about here is what is sown is as psychic—a body made of psuchos, the Greek word for "soul." What is

sown as a “soulish body” is what he’s talking about. It’s a heavy—it’s a denser kind of body, and what is raised is a spiritual body, but whereas in the modern world, we tend to think spiritual is something that’s immaterial, spiritual means not matter, it’s invisible, it’s something that doesn’t exist as matter. That’s not what *pneuma* means in the ancient world. In the ancient world *pneuma* is like—is a stuff, it’s like what air is made out of. When the wind blows around that’s *pneuma*, when you take in breath you’re taking in a form of *pneuma*. That Greek word *pneuma* does refer in the ancient world to some kind of stuff. It doesn’t refer to immaterial substance as it does later in Christian theology or in some philosophies. The translation here is misleading because what Paul says is, when your body is put into the ground, when you’re dead, what’s put in there is sort of a psychic body, it’s a body that carries life, sure, because that’s what psychic means for—in the ancient Greek world, it’s a living body but it is more like something—it’s a natural body. It’s kind of the body that you’re just given naturally. When it’s raised it’s going to be raised to say a pneumatic body, but now a pneumatic body—so it’s not the same thing as it was put in the ground, it’s raised a pneumatic body but it’s still some kind of stuff.

If there is a physical body there is also a spiritual body, a pneumatic body. Thus it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving *pneuma*. But it is not the *pneuma* that is first but the psychic and then the *pneuma*. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.

[11] Notice that he talked about heavenly bodies earlier, and he says the resurrected body is going to be a heavenly body also. This indicates that in a lot of ancient thought they thought that the sun, and the moon, and the stars were themselves pneumatic bodies. They were bodies made of the stuff of *pneuma*.

As was the man of dust, so are those from the dust; as was the man of heaven, so are those from heaven. Just as we are born in the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven. What I am saying, brothers, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

[12] “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” Notice that what he is saying is that the resurrected body that he is expecting is not a flesh and blood body. When Paul’s thinking about however the resurrection of Christ happened, he doesn’t imagine it as the very same flesh and blood. It’s not like it is in the movies, where the very same flesh and blood of the dead Jesus body somehow resuscitates and walks out of the tomb. That’s how people popularly imagine it, and that’s how clearly some early Christians thought of it. Some early Christians thought precisely that it was the flesh and blood body of Jesus that got up and walked out of the tomb. Paul must not have thought that because he says, the body that we will as Christians, as followers of Christ, have when we are resurrected is a pneumatic body, not a flesh and blood body. It’s still a physical body in Paul’s sense, but he believes that *pneuma* is matter, so what will be raised is this pneumatic body.

[13] Why is Paul getting into all this? For one thing it shows, like I said, this is a church that’s not a totally infant church but it’s also an adolescent church. These are people who have much more exposure to Paul’s teaching and to the Gospel, and different Christian ideas than, say, the Thessalonian Christians did. But they’re still very confused about a lot of things that Paul seems to be quite certain about. Apparently some of these people in this church, they had heard this teaching about the resurrection of the body, so apparently they have heard this already. They’re not like the Thessalonians who just don’t seem to know that anything’s going to happen to their brothers and sisters after their death so they’re—Paul has to say no, no, no, no the dead in Christ will rise, we’ll go meet Jesus in the air, there will be a big party, and if they’re dead now they won’t miss out on the party.

[14] The Corinthians don’t have that problem. They know that there’s some kind of afterlife preaching and teaching, but some of them seem to be rejecting the most obvious crude way of understanding the resurrection of the body: as if the very flesh and blood will somehow resuscitate and come back to life. And so Paul says no, no that’s not how it happens, it’s more complicated than that. There is a spiritual body and then there’s this natural body, and the spiritual body is the one that’s going to be raised. Now it’s perfectly

natural, though, for people to have raised these objections, precisely because if they heard Paul's preaching about the resurrection of the body, they precisely would think, well now how would that happen? They would be skeptical of it, especially if they had any kind of sort of more philosophical education. They would think that's superstition, the idea that bodies can—zombies can kind of get up of the grave and walk around, that's just superstition. Simple people might believe that, but we're more educated; we don't believe that kind of stuff. This shows that this church is in a bit of a different situation.

- [15] There's going to be some cosmic transformation that will happen at the end of time and this is not an individual thing either. It's not like every individual person sort of experiences your afterlife experience and your resurrection all at a different time. It's all the same time. Paul seems to imagine that people will sleep in the ground, and then, at the end of time, the Messiah will come back, and this big resurrection of pneumatic bodies will occur. Notice though that this is the issue he relates in just 1 Corinthians 15, and we're going to back up then and talk about how does that issue about the resurrection of the body relate to other parts of the letter and how—what does that tell us about this church.

2. *The Historical and Social Context of the Church in Corinth*

- [16] First a little background on what this is. Corinth is a very important city in the ancient Greek world. It's right on the isthmus of Corinth, that little narrow strip of land that connects the main part of Greece where Athens is, Achaia, to the southern part of Greece called the Peloponnese or the Peloponnesus. It was an important thoroughway, both by land, because all trade and travel that went from northern Greece to southern Greece, or vice versa, had to go right through Corinth so it was very important for trade. It was also, though, where they didn't—they have a canal there now so that you don't have to sail around the southern part of Greece, you can just go through the canal, but back then they didn't have a canal so they had these big tracks and so ships would come up on Cencrea, one part on one side of Greece and they would unload all their stuff, put them on

these big tracks, and they would take it across the isthmus and then load it back on other ships. So this is a hugely important city as far as trade went. It was also important for Rome. Rome had destroyed Corinth previously in the 140s BCE because Corinth was helping to lead rebellions against the Romans who were increasing their power in the eastern part of the Mediterranean. The Romans destroyed Corinth and then left it that way for about 100 years. It had been refounded again in the 40s and then settled with Roman veterans.

- [17] By the time that Paul writes this letter, in the middle of the first century CE, our era, Corinth is still a very Romanized kind of place. So it's got a blend of Greek cultures and a blend of Roman cultures. In fact, the inscriptions in Corinth up until the year 130 or so were still predominantly in Latin in Corinth, which was very unusual in the ancient world, but it shows that the Romans and Latin was very important. Corinth was a Roman colony which made it both a Greek place and a Romanized place. Paul founded the church there himself, it talks about it in Acts 18:1-18, and in this case we don't have a whole lot of way to dispute a lot of what Acts tells us about Corinth, although we can't take it as straightforward historically either.

- [18] Paul writes his letter to the Corinthians from Ephesus, as he says in chapter 16. And Paul has gotten his information about what's going on at the church in Corinth from several different sources. We're going to flip around a bit. Look at 1 Corinthians 1:11:

For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you. Some people say, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ."

- [19] Chloe's people, what does that mean? Well Chloe's obviously a woman's name, and when you hear this in Greek, somebody's people, those—it has to be those around Chloe, this refers to probably members of her own household. They could be slaves, they could be her freed persons, they could be clients, it probably refers to clients or slaves, or freed men of Chloe of herself. They're members of this church—now it doesn't tell us that Chloe herself is a member of the church. She might be because Paul names her out by name, but

we don't know that for sure, but at least some of the members of her household are, and they have gone to Paul and told him stuff that's going on. He gets some of his information from Chloe's people, and, like I said, those may well be slaves or freed persons. Is that important? Well at least it means they're probably not members of the upper class or high status members.

[20] He also gets information from a letter, so in 7:1 he says, "Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: 'it is well for a man not to touch a woman.'" Then he gets into the issues of sexuality, marriage, divorce, and those kinds of things. He's also, though, received a letter that—from at least other people in Corinth that raises different issues. What do we do about divorce? What do we do about marriage? What do we do about sex? So from chapter 7 on he raises different issues that may have been raised in their letter to him, so that's one place he gets information.

[21] He also mentions in 16:12 that Apollos has come and is with him in Ephesus, and Apollos has come from Corinth. So he probably gets some information from Apollos, who is not—Paul talks about Apollos as a coworker, not as his sort of servant, or his assistant, or anything like that. In fact, when Paul talks about Timothy it's clear that Timothy is Paul's assistant because Paul says, "I sent Timothy" someplace, but when he talks about Apollos he says, "I have urged Apollos to go, to come visit you." In other words, Paul doesn't say he sent Apollos anywhere. This indicates that Apollos is on something more of an equal status with Paul, maybe Apollos is considered another Apostle, or a teacher, or something like that in the early church. Paul may have gotten some of the information there.

[22] Then in 16:17 he talks about, "I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus, and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence." Now there are a couple of interesting things about these names. Achaicus would mean—would be sort of a name or a nickname for someone who's from Achaia, the area just north of Corinth; that means that area of Greece. Stephanas is a very Greek word meaning "a crown," and Fortunatus, though, is not a Greek word, it's from the Latin. Fortunatus means "fortune," someone who's fortunate or lucky, like having a person named

Lucky. Does this mean that this guy was himself Roman or maybe was a freed person of a Roman, therefore had a Latinized name? We don't know about that, but Paul apparently has gotten information from them also, and he talks about a church in that house. What's going on in Corinth is there seem to be different house churches in Corinth. It's not all one group meeting all the time in one place. We can imagine different house churches meeting in different places and maybe made up of different kinds of people.

[23] One of the ways we're going to talk about this is to see what was the social class of these people. In 1 Corinthians 1:26 we get our first major clue, "Consider your own call brothers and sisters not many of you," again the Greek doesn't have "sisters" they've added into the English to make it more inclusive. "Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth." Now all three of those words in the Greek are status symbol words. "Wise" doesn't mean just smart, it means "educated." Not many of you are well educated, not many of you are powerful, that is you're not people occupying government positions or anything like that and you're not of noble birth.

But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are.

[24] Now at one point those verses were taken to indicate that all of the Corinthian church were just completely low class, that they were all either slaves, or poor freed men, or lower class manual laborers. This kind of went along with the image that you saw a lot about Christianity in popular movies like "Ben Hur," or "The Robe," or things like this which has the earliest Christians all kind of hiding away from the Romans in little dark rooms and all being very much laboring class people. More recently scholars have said, yeah but that's not exactly what Paul says, he says "not many of you" were these things, which at least implies that some people in the Corinthian church actually were wise, maybe educated, of noble birth or having some kind of access to power. This is one clue that's caused scholars in the last

thirty, forty years to reread the Corinthian correspondence, both 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, precisely by looking at what's going on with regard to social status and social class.

- [25] And now it gets really interesting because the typical way to read the Bible that most of us grew up with is you read it very piously. You read it as having something to say about theology, you read it as having something to say about God, and all those are obviously important ways to read the Bible. It's also when you add in issues like, might this text not only have something to say about theology but also about issues like social class and power, and scholars have said it's precisely in 1 Corinthians, it's one of the places we see in the New Testament, the best evidence we have that the early churches weren't all homogeneous when it comes to their social status level and they may have actually experienced conflicts in their groups due precisely to differences in social status and social power. That's the way I have interpreted 1 Corinthians, and it's debated by some people, but it's much more the consensus view now among scholars that—especially the Corinthian correspondence does have these evidences of class levels.

3. *Issues of Controversy in the Corinthian Church*

- [26] Let's see, how is this working out, I just read the first passage where Paul seems to say, some of you are claiming I'm for Paul, I'm one of Paul's people, I'm one of Apollos' people, I'm one of the Cephas' people, and of course Cephas is just the Aramaic name for Peter, exactly. Peter is the Greek name, Cephas is the Aramaic name for "the rock," and some people in the church are saying, I'm one of Christ's men. There are parties that seem to have been developed or at least there are some kind of glomming onto different leaders. Some people have said these may actually represent four different specific delineable parties in Corinth. I tend to doubt that because I don't think you see any evidence the rest of the way in the correspondence that there are four distinct groups. I do think there are basically two groups that are going on in opposition to one another in Corinth and that's what I build my reconstruction on. People are having their favorite Apostles, what are some of the other—

the resurrection of the body is one thing but there are several other issues and now that you've all read 1 Corinthians so carefully in the last several days, and read it over I'm sure three or four times each day, you yourselves can tell me what are some of the other issues that come out in 1 Corinthians. First, we have favorite Apostles and we have differences about the resurrection of the body. Those are two of the issues that Paul has to address in 1 Corinthians, what are some of the others? Anybody?

[27] *Student:* [Inaudible]

[28] *Professor Dale Martin:* Okay, sexual conduct, and what kinds? because there are actually several different issues on sexual conduct in Corinthians.

[29] *Student:* [Inaudible]

[30] *Professor Dale Martin:* Exactly, a man is sleeping with his stepmother and Paul says that's a big no, no, even for the Greeks he says; even the Greeks don't do that kind of stuff. What other sexual conduct issues are going on? How about chapter 6 in Corinthians—1 Corinthians? Some men in a church are visiting prostitutes, what it means in 1 Corinthians 6 when it says, "Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her," so some men in the church seem to think, well what's the big deal, I'm in Christ, I'm a Christian? But what you do with your body is not that important, so every guy's got needs, so some of these Christian men are visiting prostitutes, and Paul has to address that issue. Any other issues of sexuality that Paul has to address in 1 Corinthians? There's one more major one.

[31] *Student:* [Inaudible]

[32] *Professor Dale Martin:* Pardon?

[33] *Student:* [Inaudible]

[34] *Professor Dale Martin:* Virginity. He does bring it up but that's not as big an issue for him as simply the idea of should you get married. Remember in 1 Corinthians 7:1 they seem to have asked him, this is actually put into quotation marks in some of your Bibles, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." Now scholars debate, is that Paul's view or is that a

quotation of a slogan of theirs that he's quoting back to them? So there's a debate about that among some scholars, but at least some people in Corinth have written him asking particularly about should we have sex at all or should we be totally ascetic, that is avoid sex and be totally continent. Sex and asceticism, which leads to also issues of marriage and divorce, so what other issues are going on?

[35] What about the first part of 1 Corinthians 6? "When any of you has a grievance against one another do you dare to take it to a court before the unrighteous instead of taking it before the saints?" Now notice this is the part in 1 Corinthians that's before Paul mentions the letter, so this seems to be part of the information he's gotten, maybe from Chloe's people, that some people in the Corinthian church are taking other members of the church to court and suing them; so court cases is one issue. Right after that it's the one about the prostitutes, then marriage and divorce in chapter 7.

[36] And then chapters 8-11 are all about one big complex issue, and that is food offered to idols. Now why is that a problem? Well in the ancient world most of the time—I'll talk about this a little bit further, most of the time meat was expensive, and if you were not rich it was hard to come by. The one place where most people in the ancient world actually had any chance to eat meat was in a sacrificial festival. What would happen in Greek sacrifices is that somebody rich, or the city, would pay for a bunch of cattle, or different kinds of animals, to all be slaughtered, the blood would be poured out and part of the animals would be put on an altar and burned for the gods, but all the rest of the meat would then be passed out, and different people who went to the festival would eat it. You would go with your buds and you would get a big hunk of meat from the sacrifice, then you'd go off and barbeque it, and have your own barbeque as part of this sacrificial festival; or you'd take it back to your family, store some it, boil some of it, that sort of thing. So the main place that most people in the ancient world ate meat was connected to some kind of sacrifice to some kind of god.

[37] Now of course this is part of the sacrificial cult, you're eating—you're sharing a table with that god by eating that sacrificed material. It's like

you're sitting down to dinner with Zeus when you do this, right? If you're a Jew in the ancient world this causes problems because it means you don't believe in these gods, you're supposed to avoid these gods, you're supposed to avoid idolatry, but if you eat that meat you're seen by many Jews as participating in that cult with that god. Also, some people believed, some of the people thought this was kind of superstitious, that if you ate that stuff then whatever the power that lie behind that god could get into your body by means of the food. You can imagine how this happened. A lot of Jews believed that—they didn't believe that the idols were just nothing but stone, or rock, or wood, or metal. They believed there was something there that was causing that thing to have power, because they looked around and they said, this person claimed to be healed by Asclepius. Well I can see he's now healed, so who healed him? I don't believe that Asclepius is actually a god, but I believe Asclepius is a demon. So a lot of Jews would go around—and Christians later saying—that the powers that lie behind the gods of other nations are not really gods but they may be demons, and if you participated in eating their meat, that demon could get in your body. Food offered to idols became a big problem in the early church. Should you eat it? If so, would it hurt you? Did it mean you were participating in sacrifice?

[38] In chapter 11 another issue: women praying without veiling their heads; Paul has to address that. Notice he doesn't say that women can't pray in church, but he says, if they are going to pray in church they need to put a veil over their heads because of the angels, whatever that means. There's been a lot of us who've written a lot on that, and I have my own theories, which most of my friends don't like. In chapter 11 later he gets into a big conversation about what they're supposed to do in The Lord's Supper when they come together to eat the Lord's Supper, and it's not turning out the way it's supposed to be, so that's another issue, the Lord's Supper. In chapters 12-14, nobody raised this issue, chapters 12-14 what's the big issue that Paul has to address there?

[39] *Student:* [Inaudible]

[40] *Professor Dale Martin:* Speaking in tongues, so the technical term for that is often glossolalia, which comes from the Greek word

for “tongues,” so speaking in tongues. Some people in the church are speaking in tongues. Speaking in tongues of course just refers to speaking some kind of unknown esoteric language that you’d only know by miracle, it’s a special gift. It’s not a language you learn. There’s a debate among people about when people talk about speaking in tongues, are they talking about speaking some other human language, which is known but not learned by you? That’s what it sounds like in Acts. In Acts the tongues of fire come down upon the Apostles, and they all start speaking these strange languages, and it says everybody who was there visiting from around the world could understand the Apostles speaking in their own language. So the writer of Acts seems to think that speaking in tongues in the early church refers to this speaking other known human languages. Other scholars think that at other times it referred to just speaking some kind of unknown language that would sound to anybody like gibberish, and that’s often how it happens nowadays. If you go to a church where they’re speaking in tongues, they’re not speaking another discernible human language. They’re speaking something else. Paul calls it, at one point, the language of angels, so some of these early Christians seem to think that when they spoke in tongues they were speaking the angelic language and they were learning it miraculously. So speaking in tongues is an issue, and Paul addresses that in those chapters, in 12 through 14. Then as we said, the last major issue is the resurrection of the body.

4. *The Root of These Controversies*

[41] Now what holds these different issues together? Are these just random sorts of things that are splitting the church? Is it just because some people like speaking in tongues and others don’t? Some people are doing it and others don’t, is it just because the court cases, it’s just an isolated incident here or there? Is the issue of food offered to idols, and their debate about that, is that at all connected to their disagreements about the resurrection of the body? Are those connected to their disagreements about sexual conduct? Because obviously they’re disagreeing about this, this is why Paul is getting different reports from people. He’s getting some reports from Chloe’s people and then some others write a

letter, and whoever wrote the letter is probably not the same people that are giving him the oral reports, so Paul’s getting information from different factions in this church.

[42] The big question is: do all of these issues just represent totally different disparate arguments or is there some bigger reason that these are a debate and is there some sort of major divide along which people are lining up? You get a really wonderful brilliant book written by a famous New Testament scholar, moi, called *The Corinthian Body*. What I tried to do in that book was precisely to take all of these different issues and show how they could line up on one or two sides of what was a social status issue. I argued that—it wouldn’t be totally neatly but I tried to say is that in a bunch of these different issues if you had more money, if you had more access to power, if you had a better education, likely you would end up on one side of these issues. If you didn’t have money, you didn’t have power, and you didn’t have education, you were more likely to line up on the other side of these issues. I argued that the Corinthian church, which, remember, was in different house churches, and it may have been that one house church tended to be on one side, and another house church tended to be on another, we don’t know that. We know that there were different house churches being represented here in the church in Corinth, so when we talk about the church in Corinth we’re not just talking about one house church, we’re talking about the collection of them, and apparently they may have all gotten together sometimes for a special sort of festival for the Lord’s Supper at times, but they apparently would have been meeting in other people’s houses at other kinds of times.

[43] Let’s look at how this would work. First, the whole Lord’s Supper issue, and here is something that I didn’t write about on my own, this was by a famous scholar named Gerd Theissen, a German scholar. He published a series of articles in the 70’s and 80’s in which he made this argument. He pointed out just like I already have, that meat—the availability of meat in the ancient world was very much linked to sacrificial cult, the argument I just gave you. Even if you weren’t going to participate in the sacrifice itself, chances are if you went to a butcher shop and wanted to buy meat, and it would be expensive if it was meat at all, the chances are that butcher had gotten

that meat from some kind of sacrificial activity because the priests sometimes would own the meat—sometimes in order to make money for themselves they would sell meat to butcher shops. It would be almost impossible, it would be very difficult unless you yourself were wealthy and you could raise your own meat, have it slaughtered your way, and consume it yourself and know that it wasn't connected to the sacrifices at all, but if you weren't wealthy and couldn't raise your own meat like that, and you just depended upon festivals or the butcher shop it would be very difficult to avoid meat that had not been sacrificed to idols. So he argued about that.

[44] He also pointed out that the Lord's Supper, when we look at the Lord's Supper, notice what is happening. This is in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. Start reading at chapter 11:17:

[45] Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. [I think he's being ironic there but it could be a debate.] When you come together it is not really to eat the Lord's Supper. For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry, and another goes drunk. What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in, or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?

[46] What's going on here apparently, remember I said, the early Christian Eucharist service, the Lord's Supper wasn't simply a little bit of wafer and a little bit of wine. It's a meal of which part of it would be then the saying the consecration thing; repeating what Paul says Jesus had said, "This is my body, do this in remembrance of me, this is my blood, do this in my memory." That might be part of it but it's clearly part of a wider meal and it looks like it was something like a potluck.

[47] Either the rich—the rich are members of the church and I don't mean to imply that they're really, really rich, we don't think any of these members of Paul's churches were actually

members of the top elite of the Roman Empire. They weren't senators, they weren't even equestrians but some of them clearly had their own homes, some of them clearly had slaves, some of them clearly had some kind of access to financial power. If they show up at the dinner first, chances are they've either paid for it themselves, because in the ancient world it was typical for people who were wealthier to supply something for the community. The wealthy people provided the sacrifices for town sacrifices if the town didn't buy it themselves. Usually the town didn't buy it themselves; usually what the town did was it expected wealthy people in the town to pay for big civic festivities and sacrifices, so that's what happened. Usually the wealthier people would provide the stuff for the festival or the supper by paying for it, or they might have brought it themselves.

[48] Imagine what you have is a potluck like this. If you're fairly well off you can show up at, say, five o'clock. I'm going to show up at five o'clock with my buds, we're going to have a little drink before dinner, brought a bottle wine, and then the other people will show up when they can when they get off work. Well, when you get off work, if you're a laboring person or a slave in the ancient world, and slaves didn't work at regular jobs so they would follow a work day. You got off work at sundown. If you're a working person or especially a slave you can't go to the church service until the sun is down. By that time, apparently some of the better off people have already been there, and Paul seems to say they're already drinking and eating, and having a good time before the rest of the people even show up. What he says, he talks about people who have nothing, and he says, don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Well a lot of people in the church would have said, no we don't have homes; we're poor. The poor lived kind of anywhere they could.

[49] Paul is addressing two different kinds of people in this very chapter, some of them have—in fact he calls them the haves and the have-nots, that's the Greek he uses. The Lord's Supper is splitting the church along this social status line and Paul's solution, Paul even says, if you take The Lord's Supper without discerning the body, and what I think he's talking about is discerning the body of Christ, that is the other people there, and discerning

the body of your neighbor, if you don't pay attention to the needs of the other bodies that are there, and you take the Lord's Supper, it will turn into poison and it will kill you. He says that's why some of you are getting sick. Paul believes that some of the Corinthians, because they're not taking the Lord's Supper with the proper ethical concerns for their neighbors, the other church members, are actually getting sick off the Lord's Supper rather than it helping them. What is Paul's solution? Wait. If you're that hungry, eat at home before you get there so you can wait on the other people to come who have to come later. Paul's solution is to alter the behavior of the higher status members of the church to accommodate the needs of the lower status members of the church.

[50] If you see what's going on here you can see that Paul does this over and over again with these different activities. I can't go into much detail, go out and buy the book, *The Corinthian Body*, you can get it on Amazon.com and you can read all about it. On each of these things I tried to argue there that food offered to idols, what is Paul's solution? Well he says it won't actually—you don't really have to worry about it, but those of you who think it's okay to eat food offered to idols should give it up if it's going to cause people who think it's wrong to do it, to do it anyway, because that might hurt their conscience. In other words—and it's also clear that the people who would have thought this whole thing about—worrying about demons getting to you because you eat idol meat, if they thought that was ridiculous, chances are they had some kind of exposure to ancient education because ancient education taught people that that was ridiculous, gods don't do that sort of thing. The food offered to idols, again, looks like it split the church along these social class lines. The resurrection of the body, I said who would have found the resurrection of the body to be a ridiculous idea, people with more education, people exposed to a little bit more education.

[51] Who would have been taking people to court? If you were poor in the ancient world you didn't take people to court because you would lose. Roman law was even explicit, telling judges if you have a rich man in your case and a poor man in the case, well of course you'll decide in the favor of the rich man because he has less incentive to cheat. The poor are the

ones who have incentive to cheat, so Roman law was clearly biased toward the wealthy and the people with power. If anybody is taking other Christians to court it would be people of higher status not people of lower status, and it may have been that people of higher status were taking their lower status Christian brothers to court. Paul then tells them, don't go to court. If you have a dispute let it be handled within the church itself. Now notice again, just like he talked about Philemon last time, who would have been the majority in the Corinthian church, rich people or poor people? Poor people. There may have been some people who were better off but they would have been vastly outnumbered by the poorer people. By telling the rich people they have to handle their problems within the whole church, he's placing the rich in a situation where they're the minority and that therefore increases the power of those of lower status. In each of these cases, in other words, I've argued that the Corinthian church's problems—were they were coming to different views about Christ, about the body, about sex, about women and covering their heads when they pray and prophesy and that sort of thing, they were coming to these different views because they had different exposures to upper class ideology or lower class ideology, to different exposures of levels of education.

[52] Now what happened? Well apparently, 1 Corinthians, as a letter did some good, because we have fortunately other materials. From most of Paul's letters we don't know whether they succeeded or not because we don't have any other writing. We do have 2 Corinthians, which is made up of at least two other letters. 2 Corinthians is actually—the first part of it is one letter and then chapters 10-13 of 2 Corinthians is another letter, and if you read them side by side you can tell because Paul's tone changes radically when he gets to chapter 10 in 2 Corinthians. In 2 Corinthians we have at least two more letters that Paul wrote. And then Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians another letter he wrote to them, so there was another letter going back and forth; we don't have that one probably. In 2 Corinthians Paul mentions a tearful letter, a letter he sent but was very difficult for him to write, he cried over it. Is that referring to another letter, or does that refer to 2 Corinthians 10-13, which is a very

angry letter? We don't know and there's a debate about that.

[53] What we can tell is that the basic things about Paul that Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians seem to have been settled by the time we get to 2 Corinthians, although he has other problems. The biggest problem is in that section 10-13 of 2 Corinthians, because here we get Paul having to defend himself. And this is very telling because Paul says, well you're talking about these "super Apostles," some other people must have come on the scene we don't know who they were, but Paul ironically calls them super Apostles. You talk about these super Apostles, they're perfectly willing to mistreat you, they're arrogant, they treat you as if they have all the power, pardon me that I was too weak to do that. I treated you well, but maybe that's my weakness showing itself. Somebody has said, well he's very strong in his letters, but in person he's kind of a wimp, he's very weak in person. His speaking style, well this was a social status thing. A man in the ancient world, if he was upper class, upper status he was supposed to be able to talk powerfully in public and if he couldn't he was servile. In 2 Corinthians Paul is forced to defend himself from charges that he is uneducated, weak, and powerless, and therefore not much of an Apostle.

[54] Now that goes on in 2 Corinthians, eventually what happens, we don't know what happened. Did writing this really scathing letter to them in 2 Corinthians 10-13, did that settle the issue? Did they all just say, okay, we were wrong, you're our Apostle, you're the big daddy, everything's fine? We don't know. We do have a reference in 2 Clement [correction: 1 Clement], which is a letter written in Rome around the end of the first century, beginning of the second century, in which an author talks

about the Corinthians as being an ancient and great church. So at least by the next generation the church in Corinth is strong and powerful and respected, so eventually Paul's work in Corinth succeeded. What we see by looking at 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians all together, is the struggles it took for Paul to get that church from this, what I call an adolescent phase, where they're arguing about everything, they're really confused about what they think about basic doctrinal or life issues, and then to finally settle down into some kind of coherence.

[55] That's what makes these letters really fascinating for us is that they give us little snapshots of one church that Paul founded at at least three different stages of its development. Those three stages being represented by what we can read from 1 Corinthians, which kind of gives us one snapshot of this problem they're having, what we can read from 2 Corinthians the first nine chapters, which sounds like they've made up and things are okay, and what we can read by 2 Corinthians 10-13, which we don't know whether that written after the first part of 2 Corinthians or before it. It's difficult to place these things, but it shows Paul in a very defensive posture with regard to this church. We get a very good idea of how churches struggled to actually start becoming what we are seeing will become Christianity. They've got a long way to go yet. Any questions or comments? I've covered a lot of area today, you can go back and read it. And I haven't even talked about Philippians because I wanted to make sure that you understood what was going on in scholarly opinion about the Corinthian epistles. Any questions, comments, outbursts? Okay, I will see you on Wednesday.

[end of transcript]