



(For access to all available commentaries and sermons of Charlie's click [HERE](#))

1 Corinthians

But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. 1 Corinthians 8:8

Taken in context with what Paul has been saying concerning "things offered to idols" this verse should be perfectly clear on several levels. And yet, it is astonishing that so many Christian sects and even aberrant cults fail to grasp the simple and clear language of his words. Here he starts with the word "but." It is then a contrast to what he just said, "...for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat *it* as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled."

The weaker in doctrine and understanding, the less informed in what Christ did, and those who are not yet properly instructed in the word may have reluctance to eat some type of food because it is perceived to be defiled and thus unclean. But that is not the case. There is no unclean food for the Christian. As Paul will later state in chapter 10 -

"Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake; for 'the earth *is* the LORD's, and all its fullness.'" 1 Corinthians 10:25, 26

It is the Lord's earth and He has granted the things of the earth to man to eat. Only a particular group of people, and for a particular set time and purpose, were given dietary restrictions. That time and purpose was fulfilled in Christ Jesus and is now set aside and obsolete. There are no dietary restrictions imposed by the Bible

for those in Christ. Paul explains why when he says, "food does not commend us to God."

It is not worrying about what we eat that is pleasing to God, it is a pure conscience, a right walk, and a heartfelt adherence to His word. Christ fulfilled the Law of Moses and we are to trust in His work, not our own. Concerning foods, the truth is that "for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse." Whatever we eat cannot harm our relationship, nor can it make it for a closer walk with Christ. It is a neutral matter.

If a thing sold in the meat market which had been sacrificed to an idol is not unclean, then this shows us that no foods are unclean. Pork is the typical example used by nutty cults and sects as being a "no no." And yet, it is certain that "whatever is sold in the meat market" includes it and any other type of meat. The pagans didn't care what meat was hanging in the market. They had no idea what the Law of Moses included. It is absurd to think that the act of sacrificing an animal to an idol didn't include pigs, dogs, horses, or any other unclean animal. Those sacrificing didn't pull out a copy of the Torah and search to see if the animal they were about to sacrifice to an idol was clean under the Law of Moses before defiling it by sacrificing it to an idol!

Life application: Think clearly on biblical issues! Don't be led astray by people with crazy agendas or ideas. If one doesn't eat pork because they are trying to please God, then anything else under the Law of Moses must also be adhered to. It is an illogical thing to pick and choose Scripture in order to make a point which actually doesn't exist. Instead, it only causes one to revert back to the need to fulfill the law in its entirety, an impossibility!

Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do

Do all to the glory of our great God

Give no offense, as the Bible instructs you

To the Jews or to the Greeks in this life that you trod

*Nor to the church of God, and those in it
Instead attempt to please all men in all things
Therefore, don't seek your own profit
But the profit of many in all your doings*

*This, so that they may be saved
By seeing your actions and how you have behaved*

But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. 1 Corinthians 8:9

Paul has been speaking of "knowledge" concerning the issue of "things offered to idols." He has clearly shown that eating something offered to an idol makes no difference at all and that the food is not defiled, because the idol is "nothing in the world." This is an inescapable truth when clearly reasoned out. However, his words today begin with "but." There is a contrasting thought which must be presented. When he began this chapter, he issued a parenthetical statement which introduced two thoughts. The first was "knowledge" and the second was "love." He will now begin to address that second issue.

Yes, we may have knowledge concerning our "liberty" in the matter, but is that the end of the issue? The answer is, "No." His understanding of the weakness of some leads him to state his contrasting thought. "But beware" tells us that this is a serious matter. The word translated as "beware" indicates to "look" into a matter or to "discern." If we have knowledge, we should mix that knowledge with discernment. And the reason is "lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak."

His use of the word "weak" is tied to "knowledge." In other words, where your knowledge is strong and sound, others may be wavering, unsure, or misinformed. If your knowledge isn't mixed with discernment, what will be the result in them?

It will become a "stumbling block." A stumbling block is something that trips one up. It is usually an unseen obstacle, such as an imperceptible raise in the level of one block on a path. It is just enough to cause harm, but not big enough to be noticed. At other times, a stumbling block may be perceptible, but the person may have their attention diverted to other things. Either way, the result is a fall.

Paul's coming explanation of this will move from the subject of knowledge in a person to that of love for another person. This then is a verse which transitions to that thought.

Life application: We are given rights (liberties) in Christ that are very clear and precise. However, they often require knowledge through study in order to be properly grasped. As study is something most people don't really cherish, have time for, or for whatever other reason, it is up to those who have studied to not use their knowledge to harm those without the knowledge, but rather to instruct them in right doctrine of what they already understand. As Paul noted, "Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies." Let us impart knowledge and do so in a loving manner.

For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? 1 Corinthians 8:10

Continuing with the discourse on "knowledge" in relation to "love" Paul now brings in an example from real life to help the Corinthians (and thus us) to understand more clearly what he has been speaking of. He begins with "for" thus showing that he is referring to a previous thought. This thought is that the knowledge of someone who uses their liberty in Christ may "become a stumbling block to those who are weak." This verse now explains that thought.

"For if anyone sees you who have knowledge" is speaking of the person who understands that an idol is nothing in the world. Their conscience is free from the superstition that an idol has any effect on anything. If such a person with that

knowledge is seen "eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols?" In this, the person of the "conscience of him who is weak" is the person who believes that an idol is actually something. It could be a weak believer or a person who is still trying to figure out if Christianity is true and worth following. What will be the result of such an action in their mind?

The answer is that they will then be "emboldened." The word for emboldened is "*oikodomēthēsetai*," and it is used only here in the New Testament. It carries the thought of "building up a house." In this then is an ironic expression because Paul is intimating that what he is building is actually destructive. Instead of being edified, he is harmed in a right understanding of the truth. Why? Because he may now believe that 1) it is ok to mingle the pure faith with other ideologies (syncretism); and/or 2) he may now believe that an idol is actually something with a force or power rather than "nothing in the world." Calvin translates this thought "a ruinous upbuilding."

In order to make this understandable to the readers in Corinth, Paul uses another word which is unique in the New Testament. It is the word translated as "idol's temple" here in the NKJV which is *eidóleio*. This was not a word used by the Gentiles. Instead, it was something that those who understood there was only one God used. A Gentile would name a temple based on the idol in the temple, such as "Athenaeum," the temple of Athens, or "Apolloneum," the temple of Apollo. To them, the temple was a reflection of the "god" within it. To the Gentiles, it was a reflection of any given idol within it; hence, the term "idoleum" was used to indicate "the temple of an idol."

Life application: The perception by others of our freedom in Christ is important. Until they have right knowledge of a matter, it is right that we not use our freedom in a manner which could destroy the very building which they are erecting in their knowledge of Christ.

*An idol is nothing in all the world, this I know
But others may not understand this yet
If to the temple of an idol I were to go
For a tasty snack or for lunch, I may later regret*

*What if they misunderstood my going there?
And thought that I worshipped the idol, just like the Lord
They may think that they also can worship anyone, anywhere
And that the Bible isn't God's only word*

*My knowledge may harm them in this way
Though it was not my intent for it to be
And so my actions are important, every where and every day
To reflect devotion to the Lord, yes to the Lord only*

And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? 1 Corinthians 8:11

This is speaking of those with a weak conscience who may be motivated to act in a manner contrary to their conscience by eating "those things offered to idols." If this happens, Paul says that "because of your knowledge" it will inevitably cause an offense to occur. This is written as a question - "...shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" However, some scholars argue that it is emphatic even if a question. Many translations actually cite it as an affirmative statement, such as the ESV - "And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died."

In other words, it is a predictable occurrence where one action follows another. In the weaker brother our actions will cause inevitable harm. However, what

should be considered is what it means when he writes "perish." There is no doubt that he is speaking of someone who is already a believer. The term "brother" is used and this indicates someone already in the faith. Further, the fact that Paul is referring to a weak conscience implies a believer as well. There is a conscience concerning Christ, but it is not a developed one.

So does the word "perish" imply a loss of salvation? The answer is, "No." There are several thoughts to support this notion. The first is that though he speaks as if something is leaning toward an occurrence, it doesn't mean the thing will actually occur (meaning a loss of salvation).

Secondly, though it says (as the ESV translates it "this weak person is destroyed"), is this referring to the whole individual or to the faith of the individual? Is the person's faith being used as representative of the person? This is the case because elsewhere a believer is noted as having "forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins" (2 Peter 1:9). It is also confirmed by Paul's coming words on the issue.

Thirdly, just because one thing typically will follow another, it is in no way conclusive that such a thing will inevitably follow, but that it is the normal, natural, and likely result of such a thing. Considering that a person is sealed with the Holy Spirit, that which is natural can (and will) be negated by the greater spiritual act which previously occurred.

It is sure that nowhere else does Paul ever indicate that a believer could lose their salvation. And the contrary is true. The sealing of the Holy Spirit upon belief (Ephesians 1:13, 14) is a "guarantee." The one who has placed their faith in Christ, weak though it may be, is saved by His work. He truly is a brother "for whom Christ died." If Christ died for this person, then Christ also lives for that person. He will ensure a good end results. The next verse will absolutely confirm this.

An excellent connecting verse to this one is found in Romans. Our actions, especially towards our fellow brothers, should be seen in a positive and edifying light. Here is how he states this -

"Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."
Romans 14:16, 17

Life application: Jesus died for all. Those who receive this gracious offer become children of God and are sealed with the Holy Spirit. Is it worth destroying the faith of such a person over our actions, particularly what foods we are willing to eat? We generally eat three times a day and the meal is forgotten as soon as it is done. Let us not consider such a temporary thing as worth harming the faith of another believer!

But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. 1 Corinthians 8:12

This verse begins with "but" which is set in contrast to what he just said. The preceding verse asked, "And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" The answer is actually stated by Paul in an interesting way. No, they won't "perish" in the sense of a loss of salvation as follows below:

"When you sin against the brethren" implies that we have caused an offense to occur. This person is weaker in their knowledge and thus more prone to falling or failing than another may be. Their lack of knowledge may cause them to act against their conscience in a matter that they are unsure of. Paul shows in Romans that any action which isn't in faith is sin -

"But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because *he does not eat* from faith; for whatever *is* not from faith is sin." Romans 14:23

Therefore, to act in a manner contrary to conscience (which means that faith is lacking in action) is to act in sin. The conscience is wounded because there is a lack of proper understanding and this has led to an action which was taken which was not in faith. What is immensely important in this is that "when you sin against the brethren" in this way "you sin against Christ." The person is "in" Christ, having been saved by Him and having been brought into the family of God.

John Chrysostom asks, "What can be more ruthless than a man who strikes one who is sick?" What is needed is the healing power of right doctrine, not an arrogant display of knowledge about freedoms in Christ which are not clearly understood by the weaker brother. To sin against another believer (in this or any way) is to actually sin against Christ. In this case, it was because of an exercise of knowledge instead of a demonstration of love. What is needed is to instruct in right knowledge (which is certainly loving) and then to act together as faithful believers in Christ and in adherence to His words.

Understanding this verse confirms that the previous verse was not speaking of a loss of salvation. Paul had asked "shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" His answer is implicitly "No." The reason is because if we sin against Christ when we sin against the brother, it implies that the brother is "in Christ." If he is "in Christ" then he is safely in that position. The offense affects both the weaker brother and Christ. In essence, it would be no less possible for that weaker brother to lose their salvation than it would for it to happen to Christ.

Life application: When we are saved, we move from Adam to Christ. We are once and forever united to Him and are positionally "in Christ." Therefore, when we sin against another believer, the offense is also against Christ. This is a sobering thought for us to consider and to remember. Let us act charitably towards those who are the redeemed of the Lord as we conduct our affairs.

Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble. 1 Corinthians 8:13

This is the last verse of the chapter which has dealt with "things offered to idols." However, right at the introduction of the thought, Paul divided that major subject into two over-arching issues. The first was knowledge and the second was love. He then explained how the two do not always work harmoniously together and that love is the preferred avenue to follow when knowledge in a weaker brother is lacking.

The exercise of knowledge without love can lead to sin and so the words of chapter 8 have been given to help the one with knowledge concerning a matter in order to consider it in a way which promotes love first and foremost. The issue of "things offered to idols" was the main area of discussion because it came response to a question submitted to him by those in Corinth. However, the concept rings true in whatever situation one may face, be it any liberty we have but which is not understood by the weaker brother.

To sum up his thoughts, he begins with "therefore." In this then we can see his final conclusion on this subject. It is an issue he also treated in Romans 14:19-22. Those verses perfectly compliment his thoughts in this chapter. He will also again speak on this subject in his words to the Corinthians. For this portion of the letter however, his conclusion is that "if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat."

The eating of meat no matter how tasty and delicious, and even if what he proposes to eat is actually acceptable, is not worth causing another to fall into sin because of what he knows to be right. Love towards the weaker brother is more important than what is consumed at mealtime. And this isn't just for one meal, but - as the Greek reads - "to the age." It is a term which means "forever." Paul would gladly give up on his liberties for all his days instead of causing his brother stumble.

If stumbling is an offense, and if he is the cause of the stumbling, then he is actually causing the offense. This is a lesson for each of us as we consider our actions before our weaker brothers. Whatever gain we think we might have from an action, if it causes another to stumble, then it is not worth it.

Life application: The old saying "little eyes are watching" isn't just true with children who see the example of their elders. It is also true of those who are "little" in the faith. Let's endeavor with all of our heart to keep our actions in line with this precept in order to keep those less informed from stumbling.

Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? 1 Corinthians 9:1

This first verse of chapter 9 appears to both look back to the concluding statement of chapter 8 and also forward to the main subject area of chapter 9 which concerns Paul's apostleship. Looking back, he has just noted that "if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble." Even as an apostle, which indicates that he had personally seen and been commissioned by the Lord, he was willing to make such a concession for his "weaker" brethren. If he was willing to give up such rights in this way, it should be considered an example for those in Corinth.

Looking forward, there are those who may have questioned his apostleship, something he will immediately defend in order to dispel such a thought. Additionally, there are those who may have felt he was abusing his rights, overstepping his authority, or unnecessarily inserting himself into their local affairs. He will defend himself concerning these and other issues as he progresses through the chapter.

And so to begin, he asks rhetorically, "Am I not an apostle?" In essence he is saying, "I am an apostle." He meets the requirements of apostleship and he carries the commission of the office. Continuing, he asks, "Am I not free?" Elsewhere, he calls himself "a bondservant of Christ." This is not what he is speaking of, but rather that he has the freedom found in Christ that all other Christians also possess, including those freedoms which belong to the office of apostle. He should be free from working for money, but rather should be paid for his ministry. However, he will discuss later why he didn't exercise that right. This is the type of freedom he speaks of.

After that, a third rhetorical question, "Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" The answer is with all certainty, "Yes." He saw the Lord on the road to Damascus; he saw Him in Arabia (as can be inferred from Galatians 1:17); he saw Him in Jerusalem (see Acts 22:17); he saw Him there at Corinth (see Acts 18:9); and, he had seen Him at least one other time as well (see 2 Corinthians 12:1). In having seen the Lord and been commissioned personally by Him (see Acts 9:15, 16), he met the necessary requirements of the office of Apostle.

Finally in this verse, he asks, "Are you not my work in the Lord?" The answer is surely once again, "Yes." He established the church in Corinth and was their "father" in the faith as he noted earlier in this epistle -

"I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn *you*. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *you do not have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." 1 Corinthians 4:15, 16

Paul is taking the time to note that he bears the apostolic authority because he meets the requirements of an apostle. He is doing this in order to logically defend his words and his position on important matters. All of this can ultimately be traced back to the beginning thoughts of the epistle which spoke of divisions within the church. As an apostle, he was working for harmony within the church, not divisions. There is one Lord and He is not divided. Therefore, in order to demonstrate that his words were intended as a unifying and valid set of instructions, he is taking the time to defend his position as an apostle.

Life application: There are certain requirements necessary in order to claim the title of "apostle." These were for a set duration of time known as the "apostolic age" of the church. There are no longer any true apostles within the church and people claiming such a title only demonstrate that they are not qualified to bear the title because they have not properly understood the very basis for claiming the title. Hold fast to what is sound and in accord with Scripture and don't be led astray by those who make claims to titles which sound impressive, but which bear no weight or authority.

If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 9:2

It can be inferred from these words of Paul that there were people who had come to Corinth and accused Paul of not being a true apostle. Some have speculated that it was from the camp of Peter, but this is unlikely, unless it was at a time before Peter fully grasped the nature of Paul's ministry. In his second epistle, Peter wrote the following words concerning Paul. They conclusively show that he believed in and supported Paul's apostleship, including the authority of his letters which he actually places on the same level as all other Scripture -

"Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; ¹⁵ and consider *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, ¹⁶ as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures." 2 Peter 3:14-16

Whoever it was who was attempting to undermine Paul's authority, he gives his own defense here to show that his ministry is a valid one. Beginning with "If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you." So what if others don't accept his status as an apostle? This shouldn't matter at all to those in Corinth because those in Corinth were brought to Christ through his ministry. If they had called on Christ after hearing his words, then their actions validate that he was a minister of Christ. One cannot lead someone to Christ if they are talking about someone other than Christ!

In substantiation of this, he continues by saying, "For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord." Their conversion is the proof needed that he is, in fact, an apostle. He has already shown that he meets all of the requirements of being an apostle. Using that status, his work resulted in their conversion and thus "sealed" those necessary requirements of the office; they were a convincing demonstration of his apostolic authority. The "seal" (or Greek *sphragis*), is a seal,

signet ring, or impression of the seal or ring which attests to the validity of what was conveyed. His words show that they are the attestation of his office, one that was sure and irrevocable.

Understanding this seal in the Corinthians, we can then rightly deduce that Paul's words are valid for doctrine, reproof, and correction. His letters, included in the pages of Scripture, are fully authoritative and they have been attested to by those who came to Christ through his ministry. Like Peter's comments about Paul above, the Bible is a self-validating document. It is a marvel and a treasure and it gives us the certainty that we are on the right track in the pursuit of our faith.

Life application: If you come to a time of doubt in your faith, the best place to go is to the Bible. The more you open it and read it, the surer you will be of He whom you have trusted. God has organized it in such a way that it will resolve your doubts, edify your walk, and correct your thinking. Be content in the fact that you have properly trusted in God's provision when you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ!

My defense to those who examine me is this: 1 Corinthians 9:3

The NKJV (cited here) phrases this verse as Paul's introduction to his defense when in fact he has already made his defense. The terms he uses for "defense" and "examine" are legal in nature, used during an inquiry. He had been legally challenged and he has legally defended his position. Therefore, this verse is referring not to what follows, which is a series of questions on which he bases his defense. Instead, they are a series of rhetorical questions in confirmation of what he has defended.

This verse then should end with a period, not a colon because the subsequent verses are merely rhetorical questions given as a follow up to these previously submitted facts:

- 1) He is an apostle (verse 1)
- 2) He is free (verse 1)
- 3) He has seen Jesus Christ our Lord (verse 1)
- 4) Those in Corinth are his work in the Lord (verse 1)
- 5) The Corinthians are the seal of his apostleship in the Lord (verse 2)

He has been challenged and he has responded in a manner which proves his apostleship. From this springboard of his certified status, he will next show what rights he is entitled to in that status.

Life application: Understanding Paul's method of writing allows us to more accurately interpret his words. He was trained under the law and was skilled at identifying an issue and then defending that issue preemptively. This is an excellent way of handling a sensitive discussion which will keep others from thinking they have outwitted you. Thinking of contingencies that may arise and responding to them in advance will usually bolster one's viewpoint in the end.

*Be my defense O God as I face the enemy's darts
When they speak against me, fill me with Your word
Though they may have graphs, notes, and charts
You are on my side; my Defender is my Lord*

*Knowing Your word is a most valued tool
Because it was given by You to guide me through each trial
Against the vain utterings of the wicked and the fool
By standing on it, the attacks will end after a short while*

*Every good lesson given there is a great defense for us
Because they are lessons which reflect the very heart of Jesus*

Do we have no right to eat and drink? 1 Corinthians 9:4

Paul's words concerning his rights as an apostle here have grown naturally out of his previous discussion about food sacrificed to idols. There, in verse 8:9, he said, " But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak." In that verse, the word "liberty" is translated from the same word as "right" which Paul uses here in 9:4. Though the subject has changed - from meat sacrificed to idols to the rights of the apostle, the example remains consistent.

Paul finished chapter 8 by saying that "if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble." This was immediately followed by his claim to apostleship. He has a "right to eat and drink" at the expense of the church. But he hadn't exercised that right as will be noted in the verses to come.

In not using this right, however, some may have come to the conclusion that he wasn't actually an approved apostle. In essence, "If Paul were an apostle, the church would pay his bills and he wouldn't be working side jobs in order to support himself." The same could be concluded today - "Peter Preacher isn't really a pastor because he has several part time jobs. He is just 'playing pastor' at the church he preaches at."

However, Paul has preempted this line of reasoning by stating the somewhat parenthetical thought of verses 9:1-3. His apostleship is, in fact, validated by those in Corinth; they are the seal of his apostleship. As this is the case, then why doesn't he exercise his rights as an apostle? The answer will come in due time, but before it does, he will continue to rhetorically ask several more questions concerning apostle's rights. These questions will be answered from the words of Scripture including words from Jesus Himself.

Life application: Is it a mark of an unacceptable ministry that a preacher has side jobs in order to pay his wages? Is a small home-church of less importance than a

large mega church? Using Paul as an example, surely the opposite may at times be true. The preacher, pastor, or priest who relies solely on the church for his expenses is in the comfortable position of preaching whatever he wishes without worry of where his bread will come from. Because of this, his heart may or may not truly care about the word which he has been called to present. But the one who stands behind the pulpit without receiving a full measure for his efforts is more than likely doing so because of a profound sense of care and respect for God's superior word. Which then is more likely to feed, defend, tend to, and be willing to give all for his flock?

Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as *do* also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? 1 Corinthians 9:5

In this verse, Paul continues to show that he bears the rights of an apostle, whether he exercised those rights or not. His question, which is composed of several parts, is rhetorical in nature. In essence, it is a strong affirmation, not a perplexed question needing validation. In this verse, much interpretive abuse has taken place over the centuries because of the policies of the Roman Catholic Church and the mishandling of concepts by early sects and individuals.

Paul begins with, "Do we have no right to take along a believing wife?" In this, the clear and obvious interpretation is that he is speaking of an actual wife. However, because of those who forbid the clergy to marry (and other confused thoughts), they interpret this not as a "wife" but as merely a sister in the Lord who would accompany an apostle. This however only brings in even greater difficulties and is certainly not the intent of the verse. Rather it is speaking of a right known among the Christians of that time. That right is that the apostles who were married could be accompanied by their wives and both the apostle and the wife were to be supported by the church.

This is the intent of "as *do* also the other apostles." Those apostles who were married were accompanied by their wives during their apostolic travels and they were supported by the church. Therefore, Paul's rhetorical question is, "Don't we have this right as well?" In response, a "Yes" answer must be given whether he

were to accept the right or not. The "we" is speaking of Barnabas who accompanied Paul (who will be mentioned in the next verse). They were also entitled to this right.

The question next includes "the brothers of the Lord." Accepting this portion of the verse at face value has caused a great deal of apoplexy among many over the centuries. The cult of "Mary" worship and the nutty ideas that she is a "perpetual virgin" has lead to unreasonable interpretations of these words. The word translated as "brothers" could be referring to children of Joseph and Mary, but it could also refer to children of Joseph from a former marriage, or even more distant relatives of the Lord.

Of course, those who heretically worship Mary will inevitably claim that one of the latter two was correct and that Mary never had relations with Joseph. Such biblical interpretations are inexcusably forced and unnatural. These were sons of Joseph and Mary, born after the birth of Christ Jesus as the Bible indicates elsewhere. They, like the other apostles, were entitled to this right and privilege as well.

And finally, a separate distinction is made for Peter - "and Cephas." This spirit-inspired wording was certainly intended to keep the church from heresy concerning leadership. The leader of a body is entitled to be married and is entitled to have the wife supported by the church. Despite the clarity here, the Roman Catholic Church, claiming that the Pope is directly linked to Peter, does not allow their Pope to be married; something completely contrary to the very model given in the person they claim as their first "pope."

Not only does this verse show that Peter was married, but other such indications are given in Scripture. In Matthew 8:14, 15 this is noted -

"Now when Jesus had come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever. So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them."

It would be rather nutty to acquire a mother-in-law and not a wife. A clear interpretation of this verse is that Paul had the rights of an apostle to be married and to bring his wife along at the expense of the church; that Jesus had half-brothers who were the sons of Joseph and Mary; and that Peter took a wife when he took a mother-in-law.

From these points we can deduce that 1) it is right and acceptable that the clergy of the church may marry and that the wife should be supported by the church. Further, the ideology of a church which forbids such marriage is contrary to Scripture. 2) When the church clergy travels for church business, including missionary work, the wife should be supported by the church, thus keeping the clergy member from possible temptations during that period of absence and for the general well-being of the husband and his wife. 3) There is no obligation of a clergy member to be married, but there is also no tenet which would forbid them from marrying.

Life application: When evaluating the Bible, keeping one's thoughts free from pre-suppositions is always the right approach. If one comes to the text already supposing something is the case, then he will manipulate what is being read in order to fit what is already believe. This is not sound interpretation and it can only lead to great problems in doctrine.

Many blessings You have upon us showered

Kindness beyond measure You have poured up us

Delicious food, clouds of white, and radiant fields which have flowered

But none of these compare to our Lord Jesus

You send us rain in due time to soften up the earth

And beauty adorns the mountains which stand before us

Our hearts are filled with joy, gladness, and mirth

But nothing compares to the delight of knowing Jesus

What kind of love! How You care for Your children!

What kind of love You have lavished upon us!

Indeed, You have been so good to the sons of men!

By sending us Your greatest Gift, our Lord Jesus!