

First and Second Corinthians

Unity in Christ

Lesson #3 for July 18, 2026

Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:1-4; 2 Corinthians 11:23-28; Philippians 2:5-8; Romans 1:29; Colossians 1:24.

1. Do we need unity in the church? Are divisions in the church really undesirable? Does the church need Christ to have unity?

[From the *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*=T-BSG:] In a small town, a group of volunteers came together to rebuild a community center after a storm. The foundation was strong, and the materials were good. They had bricks, mortar, tools—everything they needed.

But, as work began, disagreements broke out. One team insisted, “Bricks should be stacked this way—it’s more efficient.” Another team argued, “No, we’ve always done it *this* way!” Some workers refused to take instructions from others, saying, “We follow the lead of our crew chief only.” A few even walked off the worksite, saying, “If that group is involved, we want no part of this work.”

By the end of the day, what should have been a solid wall was a patchwork mess—some bricks crooked, others missing, and the whole structure unstable. A light push could have knocked it over. An old mason walked by, shook his head, and said, “A brick alone is just a rock. But bricks working together, with mortar holding them in place—that’s a wall. That’s strength.”

Just like those bricks, the church in Corinth—and today—can stand strong only when it is united in Christ, the foundation. Division weakens the body. But when we set aside pride and follow Christ’s model of servanthood, we become something unshakable.—*T-BSG** 39.†§

[T-BSG:] In the early church, one of the greatest threats to unity wasn’t persecution—it was pride.—*T-BSG** 39.†

The Threat of Personality Cults & Cliques in the Church – Unity with Diversity

2. This lesson focuses on the challenges of divisions within the church. What should be the solution to such problems? Paul makes various appeals to the church in Corinth to set aside their differences.

[T-BSG:] In 1 Corinthians, Paul addresses how believers were dividing themselves based on loyalty to different leaders—forming personality cults around Paul, Apollos, and Cephas [Peter]. These factions turned gifted leadership into a source of division, distracting the church from its true foundation: Christ.—*T-BSG** 39.†

[From the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*=BSG:] **Paul’s appeal that “there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10, ESV) dominates the first four chapters of 1 Corinthians. In fact, most scholars agree that unity is the all-encompassing theme that binds all the parts of the letter together.—BSG* for Sunday, July 12.†§**

1 Corinthians 1:10: By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ I appeal to all of you, my friends, to agree in what you say, **so that there will be no divisions among you. Be completely united**, with only one thought and one purpose.—American Bible Society. (©1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation*®* [GNT] (*Today's English Version*) [TEV], Second Edition (1 Corinthians 1:10). Philadelphia: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible-TEV** or *GNB-TEV**].†‡

[BSG:] Paul employs strong words to portray the lack of unity among the church members in Corinth. He uses the Greek terms *schisma* (“division,” 1 Cor. 1:10, NKJV) and *eris* (“contention,” 1 Cor. 1:11, NKJV). The noun *schisma* (as well as the verb *schizō*, “to split”) is used elsewhere in the New Testament to describe differences of opinion resulting in factions. In turn, the noun *eris* (“contention”) frequently appears in lists of vices that must not be practiced by Christians.—BSG* for Sunday, July 12.‡§

3. Paul pointed out exactly what he had in mind when he was talking about divisions or cliques.

1 Corinthians 1:12-17: ¹²Let me put it this way: each one of you says something different. One says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Peter”; and another, “I follow Christ.” ¹³Christ has been divided into groups! Was it Paul who died on the cross for you? Were you baptized as Paul’s disciples?...

¹⁷**Christ did not send me to baptize. He sent me to tell the Good News**, and to tell it without using the language of human wisdom, in order to make sure that Christ’s death on the cross is not robbed of its power.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*†

4. Paul did not waste any words in describing how he felt about the **divisions in the church**. He used three Greek words which could be translated *division*, *contention*, and *split*.

[BSG:] What other sins are listed along with *eris* (“contention,” “strife”)? What does this tell us about how bad it is?—BSG* for Sunday.‡§

Romans 1:29: They are filled with all kinds of wickedness, evil, greed, and vice; they are full of jealousy, murder, fighting, deceit, and malice. They gossip.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

Romans 13:13: Let us conduct ourselves properly, as people who live in the light of day—no orgies or drunkenness, no immorality or indecency, no fighting or jealousy.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

1 Corinthians 3:2-3: ²I had to feed you milk, not solid food, because you were not ready for it. And even now you are not ready for it, ³because you still live as the people of this world live. When there is jealousy among you and you quarrel with one another, doesn’t this prove that you belong to this world, living by its standards?—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

2 Corinthians 12:20: I am afraid that when I get there I will find you different from what I would like you to be and you will find me different from what you would like me to be. I am afraid that I will find quarrelling and jealousy, hot

tempers and selfishness, insults and gossip, pride and disorder.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

Galatians 5:19-20: ¹⁹What human nature does is quite plain. It shows itself in immoral, filthy, and indecent actions; ²⁰in worship of idols and witchcraft. People become enemies and they fight; they become jealous, angry, and ambitious. They separate into parties and groups.—*GNB-TEV*.*

5. Divisions in the church even were apparent at celebration of the Lord's Supper.

[BSG:] The disagreements in the church of Corinth came to the surface—even in the form of lawsuits against one another (*1 Cor. 6:1–3*). “I say this to your shame,” Paul told them (*1 Cor. 6:5, NKJV*), concerning these lawsuits between church members. In fact, they didn't lay aside their differences even when celebrating the Lord's Supper (*1 Cor. 11:17–22*).—*BSG** for Sunday, July 12.†§ [See **1 Corinthians 11:17-22**.]‡

1 Corinthians 6:1-6: ¹If any of you have a dispute with another Christian, **how dare you go before heathen judges instead of letting God's people settle the matter?** ²**Don't you know that God's people will judge the world?** Well, then, if you are to judge the world, aren't you capable of judging small matters? ³**Do you not know that we shall judge the angels?** How much more, then, the things of this life! ⁴If such matters come up, are you going to take them to be settled by people who have no standing in the church? ⁵Shame on you! Surely there is at least one wise person in your fellowship who can settle a dispute between fellow-Christians. ⁶Instead, one Christian goes to court against another and lets unbelievers judge the case!—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*†

6. ***Why do you think Paul considered these divisions in the church such a serious problem? Notice that it was the first thing he addressed after his greetings and his thanks to God. Why do you think the church in Corinth was divided in that way? Did they just have favorite church leaders? Favorite preachers? Or, was this a reflection of the society from which they had come?***
7. Paul made it clear that he believed that God will not tolerate any of these differences. If we are attracted to Jesus Christ, we should all make that our first priority.
8. What do you think would happen to a church that was completely centered on Jesus with no divisions, no cliques, and no conflicts?

[BSG:] The formation of cliques constituted here a denial of one's allegiance to Christ (*1 Cor. 1:10* [See #2 above.]). God called us “into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (*1 Cor. 1:9, NKJV*). Our Lord is Christ, and we must be centered on Him. Thus, the answer to the rhetorical questions “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (*1 Cor. 1:13, NKJV*) is a resounding “No!” Christ is not divided. **It is Christ who was crucified for us. We were baptized “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”** (*Matt. 28:19, NASB*).—*BSG** for Monday, July 13.†§

9. Think of how hard Paul had worked to try to raise up Christian churches in so many different places. To see the members of those churches end up fighting among

themselves must have been a terrible disappointment.

[BSG:] Paul mentions that we are “the body of Christ and *individually* members of it” (1 Cor. 12:27, *ESV*; *emphasis supplied*). While the body has many parts—each one with its function—it is still one body. For the body to function properly, each part has to do its work according to its capabilities. This metaphor indicates that **Paul is looking for unity, not uniformity. He is looking for unity in the diversity. More than that, he is looking for unity despite diversity.**

However, all thoughts and opinions must be submitted to Christ, our Lord. The fact that Christ is our Lord is such an important concept for Paul that he resorts to it repeatedly, in the opening of 1 Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:2, 7, 8, 9, 10). Thus, **before Paul deals with the issue of cliques and human leaders, he first emphasizes that all of us have Jesus as our Lord. The church is not centered on human leaders. Christians are** [supposed to be] **centered on Jesus.**—BSG* for Monday, July 13.^{†‡§}

1 Corinthians 1:7-10: ⁷That you have not failed to receive a single blessing, as you wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. ⁸He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be faultless on the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is to be trusted, the God who called you to have fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord. [Repeating verse 10.] ¹⁰By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ I appeal to all of you, my friends, to agree in what you say, **so that there will be no divisions among you. Be completely united**, with only one thought and one purpose.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*†‡}

[BSG:] By and large, cliques result from too high a view of human leaders. This is very threatening to the unity of the church and to the members’ spiritual health, for a distorted view of Christian ministry may lead a church to give excessive importance to certain leaders, all to the detriment of others. The consequence of such behavior is an atmosphere of competition, which can split the church. More than that, if we treat human leaders as central to our Christian identity, we risk moving Christ from the correct position in our lives.—BSG* for Tuesday, July 14.[‡]

10. Paul was apparently talking about the leaders who had developed among the church members in Corinth. Were these Corinthians themselves? If they were, how could they be regarded so highly by other Corinthians? Paul calls them *spiritual babies* because of their behavior!

1 Corinthians 3:1-4: ¹As a matter of fact, my friends, I could not talk to you as I talk to people who have the Spirit; I had to talk to you as though you belonged to this world, **as children** in the Christian faith. ²**I had to feed you with milk, not solid food, because you were not ready for it.** And even now you are not ready for it, ³because you still live as the people of this world live. When there is jealousy among you and you quarrel with one another, doesn’t this prove that you belong to this world, living by its standards? ⁴When one of you says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos”—aren’t you acting like worldly people?—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*†}

[BSG:] In 1 Corinthians 3:1–4, Paul hints that cliques result from a lack of spiritual maturity. However, before addressing this topic, he affirms, “We have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16, NKJV). This phrase likely refers to Christ’s way of thinking and acting. In other words, the believer has “the mind of Christ” when he thinks and acts like Christ. Putting this mind into practice in all matters of life is not that easy, though, is it? In the Greco-Roman world, there was much competition among political figures, philosophers, thinkers, and religious leaders. The longing for cultural approval apparently led the church of Corinth to follow secular standards. This may be a danger for the church today, too.—BSG* for Wednesday.^{†§}

[BSG:] Paul makes it clear that spiritual maturity leads the believer to appreciate the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 2:6, 7), which is communicated to us through the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:13), and which contrasts with the wisdom of this age (1 Cor. 2:6), human wisdom (1 Cor. 2:13). The wisdom of God is unveiled in the cross of Christ (1 Cor. 2:1–4). More precisely, the wisdom of God is revealed in Christ’s suffering, death, and resurrection. Thus, before resuming his appeal for unity (1 Cor. 3:1–17), Paul wants his readers to acknowledge the need for true wisdom and maturity in Christ.—BSG* for Tuesday, July 14.^{†§}

1 Corinthians 3:5-17: ⁵After all, who is Apollos? And who is Paul? We are simply God’s servants, by whom you were led to believe. Each one of us does the work which the Lord gave him to do: **6I planted the seed, Apollos watered the plant, but it was God who made the plant grow.** ⁷The one who plants and the one who waters really do not matter. It is God who matters, because he makes the plant grow. ⁸There is no difference between the one who plants and the one who waters; God will reward each one according to the work each has done. ⁹For we are partners working together for God, and you are God’s field.

You are also God’s building. ¹⁰Using the gift that God gave me, I did the work of an expert builder and laid the foundation, and someone else is building on it. But each of you must be careful how you build. ¹¹For God has already placed Jesus Christ as the one and only foundation, and no other foundation can be laid. ¹²Some will use gold or silver or precious stones in building on the foundation; others will use wood or grass or straw. ¹³And the quality of each person’s work will be seen when the Day of Christ exposes it. For on that Day fire will reveal everyone’s work; the fire will test it and show its real quality. ¹⁴If what was built on the foundation survives the fire, the builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵But if your work is burnt up, then you will lose it; but you yourself will be saved, as if you had escaped through the fire.

¹⁶ Surely you know that **you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you!** ¹⁷God will destroy anyone who destroys God’s temple. For God’s temple is holy, and you yourselves are his temple.—GNB-TEV.*†

11. It is hard to know how much the Corinthian church members knew about Hebrew history from the Old Testament. Who was there who could teach them beyond Apollos and Paul? Or, maybe Peter? We do not know how much the formerly-Jewish members of the church

there had available to them. In any case, it is interesting to notice that Paul wrote to young pastors in his book of Hebrews in a way similar to the way he wrote to the Corinthians.

12. **Read Hebrews 5:11-6:3.**

13. Clearly, Paul recognized that churches everywhere needed to grow in their faith and in their maturity. Paul used the example of a human body with all its different parts and also the idea of building a temple to illustrate what should happen in Christian churches.

[T-BSG:] First Corinthians 1:12 mentions several names. Some claimed to be followers of Apollos. Apollos was a Jewish Christian and a native of Alexandria, “an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures” (*Acts 18:24, ESV*). He must have been a good speaker and preacher who impressed his audiences with his rhetoric and his enthusiasm for preaching Jesus (*Acts 18:25*). Apollos had helped build up the church in Corinth while Paul was in Ephesus (*Acts 19:1, 2*); yet, prior to that, it seems as if he had not heard about the baptism of the Spirit (*Acts 18:25*).—*T-BSG* 41.†§*

[T-BSG:] Others claimed allegiance to Cephas, which is the Aramaic form of the name Peter. Peter was the first of the apostles to minister to non-Jews (*Acts 10*) and, because of his leadership role among the apostles, seemed to be regarded by many as the main Christian leader or figurehead of the movement. Others claimed to follow Paul. Although they seemed to have different approaches to mission, it is interesting to note that these leaders went out of their way to support, not criticize, one another’s work (see, for example, *Peter’s support of Paul in 2 Peter 3:15 and Paul’s endorsement of Apollos’s work in 1 Corinthians 3:4–7* [See #10 above]).—*T-BSG* 41.†§*

2 Peter 3:15: Look on our Lord’s patience as the opportunity he is giving you to be saved, just as our dear friend Paul wrote to you, using the wisdom that God gave him.—*Good News Bible-TEV.**

[T-BSG:] However, we also should note that they were willing to engage each other critically if a particular issue called for it. Paul’s engagement with Peter regarding the important issue of fellowship with Gentile believers and the question of the relevance and importance of ritual laws and righteousness by faith (see *Gal. 2:11–21*) offers a good example. **Despite the strong bonds connecting the different leaders of the early church, some believers still managed to play these different leaders’ teachings against each other to create division.**—*T-BSG* 41.††§*

Galatians 2:11-21: ¹¹But when Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him in public, because he was clearly wrong. ¹²Before some men who had been sent by James arrived there, Peter had been eating with the Gentile believers. But after these men arrived, he drew back and would not eat with the Gentiles, because he was afraid of those who were in favor of circumcising them. ¹³The other Jewish believers also started acting like cowards along with Peter; and even Barnabas was swept along by their cowardly action. ¹⁴When I saw that they were not walking a straight path in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, “You are a Jew, yet you

have been living like a Gentile, not like a Jew. How, then, can you try to force Gentiles to live like Jews?"

[Jews and Gentiles Are Saved By Faith]

¹⁵Indeed, we are Jews by birth and not "Gentile sinners," as they are called.

¹⁶Yet we know that a person is put right with God only through faith in Jesus Christ, never by doing what the Law requires. We, too, have believed in Christ Jesus in order to be put right with God through our faith in Christ, and not by doing what the Law requires. For no one is put right with God by doing what the Law requires. ¹⁷If, then, as we try to be put right with God by our union with Christ, we are found to be sinners as much as the Gentiles are—does this mean that Christ is serving the cause of sin? By no means!

¹⁸If I start to rebuild the system of Law that I tore down, then I show myself to be someone who breaks the Law. ¹⁹So far as the Law is concerned, however, I am dead—killed by the Law itself—in order that I might live for God. I have been put to death with Christ on his cross, ²⁰so that it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. This life that I live now, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave his life for me. ²¹I refuse to reject the grace of God. But if a person is put right with God through the Law, it means that Christ died for nothing!—*GNB-TEV*.[‡]

14. Paul challenged the Corinthians, especially the church leaders to focus on Christ.

[BSG:] A Lifestyle That Reflects the Cross

The fact that we should not form cliques, especially around human leaders, does not mean we should not support our leaders. We are supposed to appreciate and help those who lead out in church work. God commissions people to do His ministry on earth. Church leaders who display a lifestyle that reflects the submissions represented by the Cross are worthy of being heard and followed.

And this is so because only the Cross has the power to reverse any manipulative form of control in favor of submission to God's Word. Christlike leaders attribute the success of their ministry to God alone. In His earthly ministry, even Jesus as a human assigned glory to God (*John 17:4*).—*BSG*^{*} for Thursday, July 16.^{‡§}

John 17:4: "I have shown your glory on earth; I have finished the work you gave me to do."—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*}

15. Think of all the different so-called thought leaders that we need to deal with in our day: Social media influencers, sports superstars, megachurch pastors, superrich billionaires, charismatic world leaders, and others that could be mentioned. Do all of these individuals form a threat to our church unity? What do we know about some of the spiritual leaders that Paul mentioned by name?
16. Have you ever had great faith in a spiritual leader who then disappointed you and turned from following Christ? How did you respond?

Slaves, Servants, and Christlike Servitude

17. What do we know about slaves and slavery in the times of Paul and the New Testament?

[T-BSG:] **Background:** Slavery was an unfortunate reality in the world of the New Testament. The Greek terminology used in the New Testament does not clearly distinguish between “servant” (for example, an employee under a superior who performs specific tasks and receives payment for that task) and “slave.” The correct translation of the Greek term *doulos*, “servant, slave,” for example, could be either “servant” or “slave” and depended on the specific context. Historians estimate that **as many as twelve million people were enslaved in the Roman Empire** during the first century A.D. between 16 and 20 percent of the entire population of at least sixty million (see S. Scott Bartchy, “Slaves and Slavery in the Roman World,” in *The World of the New Testament*, eds. Joel B. Green and Lee Martin McDonald [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013], p. 170).

Slaves were often valued members of a larger household and sometimes held responsible positions in the household. Distinct from the practice of slavery in the New World, neither skin color nor ethnic/racial origins indicated slave status in the population of the Roman Empire. Roman law governed the treatment of slaves carefully, and many slaves could expect to be set free by their owners later in life. Nonetheless, slavery was not a benevolent institution. Many slaves suffered terribly under cruel masters and experienced all types of abuses.

The fact that several New Testament passages use terminology and imagery associated with slavery suggests its importance for those seeking to understand the cultural background of the New Testament: “Three keywords in Paul’s vocabulary—‘redemption,’ ‘justification,’ and ‘reconciliation’—draw directly on the process and results of manumission from slavery,” notes Bartchy (see Bartchy, “Slaves and Slavery in the Roman World,” in *The World of the New Testament*, p. 176). Such terminology and concepts helped readers to make sense of important theological concepts, including one that describes the release of the believer from the slavery of sin and alienation from God.—*T-BSG** 40.^{††Ω§}

18. What would be the meaning of the term *Christlike servanthood*?

[T-BSG:] **Christlike Servanthood:** Most of us don’t really understand adequately the term “servant” as used in the New Testament. Philippians 2:1–8 offers a helpful model of **servanthood within the context of unity**. Paul emphasizes to his readers the importance of unity. The semantic force of the four conditional “if” clauses in Philippians 2:1 [KJV] should really be understood “as an appeal based on the certainty (‘since there is’) of the spiritual realities expressed . . . in the Christian life.”—“Philippians,” in *Andrews Bible Commentary*, ed. Ángel M. Rodríguez et al. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2022), p. 1730. Paul then shares his personal hope and joy that the church should be “of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, and one mind” (*Phil.* 2:2, *ESV*), which ultimately means that his readers would not seek their own interests but be focused on the interests of others (*Phil.* 2:4).—*T-BSG** 41–42.^{††§}

[T-BSG:] **The Power of Christlike Servanthood**.... Philippians 2:1–8 [See below.] offers the antidote: Christlike humility. Paul urges believers to lay

down selfish ambition and look not to their own interests, but to the interests of others. He points to Jesus, who, though equal with the Father, took the form of a servant, humbled Himself, and became obedient to death. **That is the true model of unity: sacrificial love.**—*T-BSG** 39.†‡

Philippians 2:1-8: ¹Your life in Christ makes you strong, and his love comforts you. You have fellowship with the Spirit, and you have kindness and compassion for one another. ²I urge you, then, to make me completely happy by having the same thoughts, sharing the same love, and being one in soul and mind. ³Don't do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble towards one another, always considering others better than yourselves. ⁴And look out for one another's interests, not just for your own. ⁵The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had:

⁶He always had the nature of God, but he did not think that by force he should try to remain equal with God.

⁷Instead of this, of his own free will he gave up all he had, and took the nature of a servant.

He became like a human being and appeared in human likeness.

⁸He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death—his death on the cross.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

19. Paul says that the goal for all of us is Christlike servanthood.

1 Corinthians 4:1-2: ¹You should **think of us as Christ's servants**, who have been put in charge of God's secret truths. ²The one thing required of such servants is that they be faithful to their master.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*†

20. We as Christians should all immediately recognize that **our ultimate example is Jesus Christ**. That is spelled out very clearly in Philippians 2:1-8. Read those verses again. See Item #18 which is just above.

21. Paul suggested that true Christian leaders should have a Christlike servanthood attitude serving as assistants or subordinates to Christ in the church, and in other respects they serve as stewards looking after the Lord's business. It all belongs to Christ anyway.

22. How do you think the teaching of Philippians 2:1-8 could be applied in your life? Philippians 2 passes quickly over several different aspects of the life of Jesus Christ.

[T-BSG:] [Philippians 2] uses the example of Jesus as a model for the church. Church members are to imitate the full surrender of Jesus as they relate to one another. **Theologians refer to this text to describe Christ in His pre-incarnation (Phil. 2:6, 7), during His incarnation on earth (Phil. 2:7, 8), and His exaltation after His resurrection (Phil. 2:9–11). Jesus became a *doulos*, a servant or slave.** He “emptied himself” (Phil. 2:7, *ESV*) or “made Himself of no reputation” (*NKJV*). He voluntarily decided not to use His power and divine attributes so that He would be able to be the “servant of God” and save this planet that was in rebellion. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5, *NKJV*) is Paul's reminder to us that we, too, should imitate His love—imperfect though it will

be in the person of frail and sinful human beings—as we relate to our faith community.—*T-BSG** 42.^{†‡§}

[BSG:] According to Paul, faithful Christian ministry must be grounded upon what we can call a theology of the Cross. The Cross is God’s revelation of His wisdom and power to save. At the same time, it also displays human wisdom as foolishness. In 1 Corinthians 4:1–13, Paul makes it clear what such a theology of the Cross looks like. **First**, he indicates that it is God who sets the standard for Christian leadership (*1 Cor. 4:1–5*). **Second**, he points to the fact that **suffering is the trademark of true Christian ministry** (*1 Cor. 4:9, 11–13*). This second point deserves to be further developed.—*BSG** for Thursday, July 16.^{†‡§}

1 Corinthians 4:5b-13: ^{5b}**He will bring to light the dark secrets and expose the hidden purposes of people’s minds.** And then all will receive from God the praise they deserve....

⁹For it seems to me that God has given the very last place to us apostles, **like people condemned to die in public as a spectacle for the whole world of angels and of human beings.** ¹⁰For Christ’s sake we are fools; but you are wise in union with Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! We are despised, but you are honored! ¹¹To this very moment we go hungry and thirsty; we are clothed in rags; we are beaten; we wander from place to place; ¹²we wear ourselves out with hard work. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; ¹³when we are insulted, we answer back with kind words. We are no more than this world’s garbage; we are the scum of the earth to this very moment!—*GNB-TEV.*†*

23. Paul had a history of suffering for Jesus Christ. I am sure there are many parts of his story we do not understand; but, consider the words from Paul in **2 Corinthians 11:23-28**.

Colossians 1:24: And now I am happy about my sufferings for you, for by means of my physical sufferings I am helping to complete what still remains of Christ’s sufferings on behalf of his body, the church.—*GNB-TEV.**

24. Paul certainly set the example for one who believes it is right to suffer for Christ’s sake.

[T-BSG:] [This lesson calls] the church to reject pride and power plays and instead pursue unity through servant-hearted humility, following the example of Christ.—*T-BSG** 40.[‡]

25. Paul’s final book that we are aware of is 2 Timothy. Near the end of that book, he wrote:

2 Timothy 3:12: Everyone who wants to live a godly life in union with Christ Jesus will be persecuted.—*Good News Bible-TEV.*†*

26. Are we prepared for that?

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